

**Meramec Regional Planning Commission**  
**Minutes**  
**Feb. 8, 2024**

**Call to Order**

Chairman Mary Heywood called the Feb. 8 2024, meeting of the Meramec Regional Planning Commission to order at 7:33 p.m. The meeting was conducted via Zoom and in-person.

**Welcome**

Chairman Heywood welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made around the room. Board members Tammy Bruckerhoff, Rich Eisterhold, Patricia Heaney and Bob Parsons participated via Zoom. Board members participating in person were Erik Lowes, Gary Larson, John Smith, Tim Schulte, Duane Kraettli, Vic Stratman, Steve Vogt, Ray Schwartze, Darryl Griffin, Joey Auxier, Tom Coots, Kent Bagnall, Sean Wilson, T.R. Dudley, Donald Claycomb, Jan Haviland, Shane Anselm, Tai Kimes, John Casey and Mary Heywood. MRPC staff attending in person were Bonnie Prigge and Caitlin Jones. MRPC staff members Donald Keeney and Anne Freand participated via Zoom. Dawn Bell, Rolla Community Development Director, LaKeisha Palmer, a St. Robert small business owner, Grant Wilson with Rep. Jason Smith's office; and Payton Ruddy with Rep. Mark Alford's office participated in person.

**Introduction of New MRPC Employee:** Bonnie Prigge, MRPC Executive Director

Bonnie introduced Ben Simpson, a new addition to the MRPC staff. Ben is a Community Development Specialist working on the HRSA grant.

**Consent Agenda**

The following consent agenda items were presented for approval:

- a. Minutes – Jan. 11, 2024
- b. Local Review
  - 1. Missouri EMS Association, Linn, MO  
93.912 – Rural Health Care Services Outreach, Rural Health Network  
Development and Small Health Care Provider Quality Improvement  
Missouri Rural Mobile Integrated Healthcare Network (MIH) Replication  
Federal: \$100,000  
Total: \$100,000
  - 2. Phelps County Regional Medical Center, Rolla, MO  
93.912 – Rural Health Care Services Outreach, Rural Health Network  
Development and Small Health Care Provider Quality Improvement  
South-Central Missouri Rural Health Network  
Federal: \$100,000  
Total: \$100,000
- c. State Review
  - 1. State of Missouri, Jefferson City, MO  
81.041 – State Energy Program  
TREC – State-Based Home Energy Efficiency Contractor Training Grant  
Program  
Federal: \$2,779,120  
Total: \$2,779,120

The Office of Administration issues the Missouri Federal Assistance Clearinghouse grant reviews weekly. Staff is sharing reports in between meetings with board members. If you have questions about grants listed, you can call MRPC staff, or the Office of Administration as listed on the reports.

d. Contracts

- Midwest Recycling Center

Permission is requested for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to enter into a one-year contract extension with Midwest Recycling Center to provide e-waste collection services at four scheduled special collections in Cuba, Rolla, St. Robert and Vienna as part of an ORSWMD funded project and to sign all documents associated with this contract.

- MoDOT Highway Safety

Permission is requested for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to submit an application to the MODOT Highway Safety and Traffic FY25 Grant program for a bicycle/pedestrian safety program for kindergarten through college and to sign all documents associated with this contract, should it be awarded.

- MoDOT Highway Safety

Permission is requested for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to submit an application to the MODOT Highway Safety and Traffic FY25 Grant program for docudrama planning for high schools and to sign all documents associated with this contract, should it be awarded.

- City of Salem

Permission is requested for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to approve and enter into a technical assistance contract with the city of Salem for a CDBG Environmental Review and to sign all documents associated with this contract.

- Great Mines Health Center

Permission is requested for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to approve and enter into a technical assistance contract with the Great Mines Health Center for assistance with a Neighborhood Assistance Program Tax Credit Application and to sign all documents associated with this contract.

- U.S. Department of Transportation

Permission is requested to submit a grant request to US DOT for a RAISE planning grant for the entire length of the trail. There is no match required. The planning grant, if funded, would allow for the development of a cost/benefit analysis that is required for a RAISE implementation grant. The CBA, once completed, would be available to any city/county wishing to apply for implementation funds for trail development. Permission is requested for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to sign any application documents and grant award contract, if one is issued.

Ray Schwartze made a motion to approve the consent agenda; T.R. Dudley seconded. The motion carried.

**Presentation: Idea Exchange with Federal Legislators:** Mary Heywood Chairman and Bonnie Prigge, MRPC Executive Director

Bonnie shared that board members would like to bring some of the Meramec Region's top priorities to the attention of the legislators. She informed the legislators that a full copy of the priorities would be provided to the legislators when a delegation from MRPC visits Washington, D.C. in March. She added that, each year, MRPC goes through a process of surveying board members to determine federal priorities. These priorities are then voted on and the top priorities are summarized in a report that will be presented to the region's legislators. Tonight, Bonnie said the board would like to share some of those top priorities.

**General Recommendations:** Shane Anselm asked that the legislators support encouraging production in the US and not overseas, especially the manufacturing of computer chips. Shane said the US needs to become less dependent on foreign sources and suggested incentives could be provided to bring manufacturers back to the US soil. He said he thinks it can be done and that there is movement towards it. We have the resources, he said.

**Transportation:** Presiding Commissioner Vic Stratman asked legislators to support increased funding for interstate road repairs and US highways as well as bridges. The board would also like to see more resources allocated to public transportation, especially in rural areas. Vic reported a need for additional federal funding for improvements to the US Highways 63 and 50 corridors.

**Environment:** Don Claycomb addressed the importance of not selling any land to adversarial foreign interests such as Cuba, Russia, Venezuela and China, especially land located near military installations.

**Economic and Community Development:** MRPC Executive Director Bonnie Prigge addressed the issue of reducing the percent of match requirements for small communities for grants. She said sometimes even a 10% or 20% match is fairly hefty for some of the region's smaller communities, especially since there have been a lot of larger grants. As the percent of match stands, it sometimes eliminates those smaller communities from applying for much needed grants.

**Health Care and Social Services Issues:** T.R. Dudley presented the top priority in health care as the need to address critical healthcare workforce shortages in rural areas by establishing talent pipeline and training efforts, such as the Work Opportunities for Rural Communities (WORC) grant in Washington County, funded by the Delta Regional Authority and the Department of Labor. He asked for the legislators to continue to adequately fund and expand the Sate Loan Repayment Program (SLRP), the National Health Service Corps through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), which provides loan forgiveness to those who agree to practice in rural areas, and the J-1 Visa Program to address the critical shortage of doctors, dentists, nurses and psychiatrists in rural areas. T.R. said it's at a crisis level and unless some sort of incentive is provided, it's going to be difficult to get these types of positions filled in rural areas. He also said it is important to promote workforce development to specifically address, rural physician recruitment and retention, workplace violence and oppose minimum staffing rations.

**Energy:** In the area of energy, Jan Haviland said there is a need to continue to explore opportunities to decrease our dependence on foreign fuel consumption by incentivizing environmentally conscious American resources and focus on the US being energy independent by accessing our own oil production.

**Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness:** Tai Kimes presented the top priority and homeland security as the need to improve and address border security. The board believes that jail time should be implemented for criminals on the terrorist want list, and major jail time should be

implemented for drug smugglers. She said the US needs to consider a better way to assist, and make it easier, for those who want to enter the country through the legal process and become productive citizens.

**Education:** In the area of education, John Casey said there is a need to expand vocational education opportunities and training through federal incentives. Increase funding for workforce training to address critical shortages in key areas such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, technology and skilled trades, including carpenters, plumbers, electricians, HVAC workers and mechanics.

**Local Government:** Mayor Sean Wilson brought up the need to preserve the current tax exemption for municipal bonds. He said tax-exempt financing, used by both state and local governments to raise funds to finance public capital improvements is critical to sustain economic growth. Mayor Wilson said this is especially true in small communities where it's a way to attract those big businesses and help the community thrive.

Bonnie reported that the external relations committee made a couple of changes that would appear in the finalized document. Support for Fort Leonard Wood was added as a top priority and ensuring election security was removed from the list. It was determined that this was more of a local/state issue than a federal one.

Once the report is finalized, a copy will be shared with the federal legislators when a delegation visits Washington, D.C. in March, she said. A copy will also be shared with the local offices.

Justin Adams with Congressman Blaine Luetkemeyer's office thanked the board for sharing its priorities and said he will pass along the information to the Congressman. He said the Congressman is on the sub-committee that is focusing on the Chinese Communist party and the effects it could have on the US. He said this is a top priority for the Congressman.

Mr. Adams reported that HR5585 had passed. This act protects border patrol agents, law enforcement officials and local communities from the dangers they face at the open border. He said that under the current law, federal criminal penalties do not exist for individuals who are intentionally trying to evade border patrol agents. The act will impose criminal penalties for that behavior.

Payton Ruddy with Rep. Mark Alford's office:

Payton Ruddy with Rep. Mark Alford's office referenced the issue of not selling any land to adversarial foreign interests as brought up by Don Claycomb as one of the federal priorities. She said the Congressman introduced the American Land Property Protection Act, which would specifically prohibit non-resident aliens, foreign businesses, an agent trustee, or fiduciaries associated with China, Russia, Iran and North Korea from purchasing land in America. It's all real estate, said Ms. Ruddy, not just agricultural land.

Ms. Ruddy said the Congressman introduced the FAIR Labels Act which will provide more transparency and more appropriate labeling of products. This bill would require protein products that are plant based or lab grown to be labeled with wording that specifies its origin. She said support for the bill is both bicameral and bipartisan.

She reported that the speaker of the House has said that the border proposal by the Senate is dead on arrival when it comes to the House. He has said it doesn't fit their goals and it's not a good deal.

Ms. Ruddy said the Congressman was really disappointed with the failed result of the impeachment of Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas. He said it's a loss for the American people, a loss for



truth, a loss for justice and a loss for the security of America. America is facing a humanitarian crisis he said, and if we can't get someone in that position to enforce the law and secure the border, then we're in trouble as a nation.

Grant Wilson with Sen. Justin Smith's office reported the House passed HR7024, the Tax Relief for American Families and Works Act, a pro-growth, pro-worker tax policy. He said it restores three key incentives from the 2017 tax cuts: research and development expensing, interest deductibility expensing and child tax credit.

Mr. Wilson also mentioned a Build Up Main Streets Act that would help rebuild communities struck by disaster. It would also raise the threshold for businesses to report payments to some contractors and subcontractors. The act would provide tax relief for some individuals/families affected by federally declared disasters. Added into this act as well, he said, was the Low-income Housing Tax Credit. If passed, Mr. Wilson said this act will save taxpayers \$70 billion as it eliminates the fraud and waste that came through with the Employee Retention Tax Credit.

Mr. Wilson reported that the Senator was in favor of HR2 the earlier border security proposal, as was Congressman Alford, but said the Senator opposes the newest version.

#### **Update from State Legislators:**

No state reports were given.

#### **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC): Anne Freand**

Anne Freand reported on transportation activities as follows:

Preston Kramer, MoDOT engineer, provided an update on the I-44 environmental study planning activities. The project is divided into segments where two engineering companies will be looking at what is needed for improvements and what the cost might look like. Phase 1 will kick off on the 20<sup>th</sup> and will identify the highest priority and what would be necessary for environmental clearance. Phase 2 will be obtaining the environmental clearance and preparing to build.

Anne provided an update on the Safe Streets for All grant. She said MRPC has received the grant, but the agreements have yet to be signed. It is hoped the program will be ready to go in March. MRPC will be going to the cities and counties to conduct planning activities. The grant runs through 2026, Anne said.

Steve Englebrecht gave an update on the Bridge Engineering Assistance Program (BEAP). Anyone with any interest in the program can either contact the MRPC office or Steve.

Staff provided an update on the RAISE Planning grant. Four regional planning commissions and several communities have joined together to apply for this grant. Anne said the grant will cover a cost benefit analysis for building out the Rock Island Trail where it crosses through those regions plus a couple of extensions from Union to Warsaw. If anyone has any ideas, they were instructed to reach out to Bonnie.

Bonnie Prigge and Caitlin Jones gave updates on the Show Me Zero Fatalities.

Staff provided an overview of roadway safety activities that MRPC can provide to area communities and schools. This includes programs such as Back to School Fairs, Bike/Pedestrian Program, Buckle Buddy Program and Docudrama events. Anyone interested in these programs was instructed to reach out to the MRPC office.

**External Relations Committee:** Darryl Griffin, chairperson  
Darryl Griffin reported on External Relations activities as follows:

The committee discussed the vacant at-large for small business position. (Tai Kimes brought a guest, Lakeisha Palmer, who may have interest.)

Staff and participating committee members shared information on the trip to the Capitol. The MRPC group were able to meet with all but three of the legislators face-to-face. Bill Gamble was also present and shared a Senate update during the meetings. Shane Anselm said he thought it was a good meeting and the room worked well.

Committee members reviewed the federal priorities survey results after the edits submitted at the January meeting.

Steve Vogt made a motion to approve the federal priorities survey as presented; Tai Kimes seconded. The motion carried.

Staff reported that the federal priorities would be delivered to legislators during the March 10-13, 2024 trip to Washington, D.C.

Staff provided a handout on legislative updates.

**Operations Committee:** Jan Haviland, chairman  
Jan Haviland reported on operations activities as follows:

The committee reviewed MRPC/MRB and MRPC/MRDC-RLF and IRP program financial statements for the period ended Jan. 31, 2024.

Mayor Sean Wilson made a motion to approve the financials for the period ending Jan. 31, 2024. John Casey seconded. The motion carried.

The committee tabled its annual review of the Investment Policy statement until March.

Staff presented the revised budget for FY2023-2024, including revised leases.

T.R. Dudley made a motion to approve the revised budget for FY2023-2024, including revised leases. Darryl Griffin seconded. The motion carried.

The committee reviewed the MRPC and component units FY2022-2023 audit report.

Vic Stratman made a motion to approve the FY2022-2023 audit for MRPC and its component units. Mayor Sean Wilson seconded. The motion carried.

If there are any major changes to the draft audit, it will be brought back to the board.

**Planning Committee:** Anne Freand  
Anne Freand reported on planning activities as follows:

Committee members were asked to review the SWOT analysis in preparation for prioritization at the next Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) meeting.

Staff provided a handout on the final activities for the four Regional Planning Commission's and 14 counties involvement in MS&T's Tech Hub Phase 2 grant application to the Economic Development Administration (EDA).

The committee discussed federal priorities for presentation at the MRPC Board meeting.

**Housing Board:** Vic Stratman, chairman

No report was given.

**Environmental:** Tammy Snodgrass, Assistant Executive Director/Environmental Programs Manager

A handout was provided.

**Business Loans:** Linda Loughridge, Fiscal Officer

A handout was provided.

**Meramec Community Enhancement Corporation (MCEC):** Vic Stratman

No report was given.

**Meramec Regional Community Foundation (MRCF):** Bonnie Prigge

She informed the board that the community grant program received nine grant applications. Two projects will be selected for funding at the Feb. 20, 2024 meeting.

#### **Chairman and Director's Report**

Topics Bonnie addressed included:

- MRPC will be assisting Maries, Gasconade, Dent and Crawford counties with planning and finance management of opioid settlement funds.
- A list of surplus equipment up for bid was provided. Bids are due by March 15.
- MST has requested MCEC act as the lead applicant on an EPA grant requiring a 501(c)3 organization. The grant will look at improving air quality and reducing air pollution in underserved areas in Rolla, St. James and Dent County. The program will include transit issues and a pilot on other energy solutions besides wood reduction.
- MS&T Tech Hub grant – MRPC is a part of this application, which is coordinated by MS&T.
- Military Installation Resiliency Report (MIRR) – The grant request has been submitted to the Department of Defense.
- The Washington, D.C. NADO Conference will be held in March. Chairman Heywood, Bonnie and Anne Freand will be attending.
- Bonnie said she, TAC chair Steve Vogt and Anne Freand would be participating in the MoDOT statewide planning partners meeting on Feb. 29.

#### **Adjourn**

Shane Anselm made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m.; Tim Schulte seconded the motion. The motion carried.

  
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Mary Heywood, chairman

  
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Attest