

Meramec Regional Planning Commission
Minutes
August 8, 2024

Call to Order

Vice Chairman Darryl Griffin called the Aug. 8, 2024, meeting of the Meramec Regional Planning Commission to order at 7:40 p.m. The meeting was conducted via Zoom and in-person.

Welcome

Vice Chairman Griffin welcomed everyone to the meeting. Board members participating in person were Jason Ward, Erik Lowes, Gary Larson, John Smith, Duane Kraettli, Tim Schulte, Vic Stratman, Steve Vogt, Ray Schwartze, Darryl Griffin, Joey Auxier, Taisia Gordon, Tom Coots, Sean Wilson, T.R. Dudley, Donald Claycomb, Matt McCarter, John Money, Jan Haviland and Shane Anselm. MRPC staff members participating in person were Bonnie Prigge, Tammy Snodgrass, Linda Loughridge, Caitlin Jones, Samantha Sherman, Linda Carroll and MRPC intern Finn Meggitt. MRPC staff members Anne Freand and Donald Keeney participated via Zoom. Guests participating in person were Taylor Blackwell with Sen. Josh Hawley's office and Grant Wilson with Rep. Justin Smith's office. Guest Payton Ruddy with Rep. Mark Alford's office participated via Zoom.

Consent Agenda

The following consent agenda items were presented for approval:

- a. Minutes – June 13, 2024
- b. Local Review
None.
- c. State Review
None.

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

- Missouri Office of Administration State Regional Planning Commission Grant Application
Permission is requested for MRPC to submit the grant application to the Missouri Office of Administration for the State Regional Planning Commission Grant, and authorization is requested for the executive director and/or MRPC's chairman to sign the application. Permission is also requested for the executive director and/or chairman to sign a grant agreement, and any related documents should the grant be funded.
- City of Salem
Permission is requested for the chair and/or executive director to approve and sign an addendum to the Salem floodplain technical assistance contract for the period of July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

- BJA Second Chance Act Grant Application

Permission is requested for MRPC to submit the grant application to the Bureau of Justice Administration for the BJA FY24 Second Chance Act Improving Reentry Education and Employment Outcomes program, and authorization is requested for the executive director and/or MRPC's chairman to sign the application. Permission is also requested for the executive director and/or chairman to sign a grant agreement, and any related documents should the grant be funded.

- Benchmark

Permission is requested for the executive director and/or chair to sign an agreement with Benchmark to complete the Fort Leonard Wood Region Military Installation Resiliency Study and Action Plan that was recently funded by the Department of Defense, Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation. Proposals were received and Benchmark was determined to be the lowest and best bid.

- City of Bland

Permission is requested for the executive director and/or chair to sign a technical assistance contract for CDBG project administration with the city of Bland for street upgrades. Permission is also requested for the executive director and/or chairman to sign a grant agreement, and any related documents should the grant be funded.

- City of Potosi

Permission is requested for the executive director and/or chair to sign a technical assistance contract for CDBG project administration with the city of Potosi for Sayers Senior Center upgrades. Permission is also requested for the executive director and/or chairman to sign a grant agreement, and any related documents should the grant be funded.

- Gasconade County

Permission is requested for the executive director and/or chair to sign a technical assistance contract for CDBG project administration with Gasconade County for road upgrades. Permission is also requested for the executive director and/or chairman to sign a grant agreement, and any related documents should the grant be funded.

Commissioner T.R. Dudley made a motion to approve the consent agenda with noted additions; Commissioner Jason Ward seconded. The motion carried.

Presentation: Overview of the 2024 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Anne Freand, Planning Manager

Ms. Freand shared the draft goals and strategies for the Meramec Region CEDS for 2024-2028. She also thanked Finn Meggett, MRPC's intern, for his assistance with the CEDS.

She informed the board the CEDS is a five-year document that MRPC uses in its strategic planning efforts in the region. MRPC's grant writers also use it when they are writing grants and need to be able to point to a planning document that went through a public process that identified gaps in the region or in a specific community.

Ms. Freand said the CEDS document was a year-long process of data gathering and obtaining input from the people who live and work in the Meramec Region. Among the statistics the committee looked at were regional demographics and economy, equity and resiliency, general

population numbers, poverty statistics, housing, childcare, median income, internet and educational opportunities.

New this year is a section on equity and resiliency, said Ms. Freand. The CEDS Advisory Committee and MRPC emphasized the importance of incorporating equity into economic development planning by ensuring that all residents benefit from a stronger region. Ms. Freand reports that equity was incorporated into the process and into the document. Resiliency refers to how the region would recover from significant events.

The committee set objectives and action items for each of the four goals. Those goals are economic development, infrastructure, healthy communities and housing. It is these goals and action items that the committee is seeking public input on. Ms. Freand informed the board that MRPC's Kelly Sink provided information on funding sources for the goals and Housing Program Manager Donald Keeney provided assistance with housing information.

The planning committee approved putting the CEDS out for public review and comment and recommended the full board approve as well. The draft CEDS for 2024-2028 can be found on MRPC's website.

Commissioner Shane Anselm made a motion to approve putting the CEDS out for a 30-day review and comment period; Commissioner Ray Schwartze seconded. The motion carried.

Presentation: Meramec Local Emergency Planning District (MLEPD), Tammy Snodgrass Ms. Snodgrass provided a presentation on the Meramec Local Emergency District (MLEPD), including the responsibilities the group has in the area of planning and training for hazardous materials emergencies and current funding issues with the legislature's failure to extend the sunset on Tier II fees.

Ms. Snodgrass informed the board that emergency planning districts were created in the 1980s by state and federal statutes to improve hazmat response. However, ultimate responsibility for planning for hazardous events falls on local government, she said. Volunteers from Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Maries, Osage, Phelps and Washington counties serve on this group. Pulaski County chose not to join the MLEPD.

Although anyone who is interested may join, the targeted groups for membership are:

- Elected state and local officials
- Local environmental groups
- Law enforcement
- Hospitals
- Emergency management
- Transportation
- Fire departments
- Broadcast and/or print media
- Emergency medical/first aid
- Community groups
- Health departments
- Owners and operators of covered facilities

The MLEPD is looking for representation from the highlighted areas. Any suggestions for membership are welcome, said Ms. Snodgrass.

Ms. Snodgrass explained what the MLEPD does to keep the region in compliance with state and federal law. The group maintains records of every facility in the region with hazardous materials (Tier II forms). Hazardous materials include everything from unleaded gas at local gas stations to anhydrous ammonia at local co-ops. Facilities can be anything from convenience stores to oil refineries. She said the group is responsible for maintaining and updating a regional hazardous emergency response plan, making the public aware of their "right to know" what hazardous materials are located in their communities. The group also provides training to emergency responders on hazmat.

The MLEPD also contacts every emergency response agency in the district and conducts an annual training needs survey to determine what type of training they need and then applies to the state for grants. Ms. Snodgrass said the group also applies for grants to provide funding for hazmat training, the purchase equipment and supplies and training funds for local emergency responders on hazardous materials response. The group organizes and participates in hazardous materials exercises. She said a tabletop exercise on hazardous materials train derailment was held just last week at the MRPC office. There were 34 participants from all seven counties in the Meramec Region.

Ms. Snodgrass reviewed what's in a hazmat plan. The hazmat plan can be a stand-alone plan or as a hazmat annex of Local Emergency Operations Plans. Some of the items included in the plan are information on hazmat facilities, maps of transportation routes, points of contact for local and state and federal agencies, incident command system, containment procedures, how to assess and evaluate hazmat, public warning and emergency information, guidance for emergency medical services and standard operating procedures for chemical accidents and evacuation.

MLEPD is able to accomplish the work it does due to the fact that it is multi-jurisdictional and resources for all participating counties are pooled together. MLEPD contracts with MRPC to carry out the requirements of state and federal laws, said Ms. Snodgrass. As part of this contract, MRPC provides staff to coordinate meetings, implement the MLEPD's programs and the committee provides oversight and direction.

Ms. Snodgrass provided examples of why MLEPD does what it does. She mentioned several train derailment incidents and reminded board members that there are two freight trains that run through the Meramec Region. Volunteers provide these services to keep individuals in their communities safe.

She explained that when Local Emergency Planning Commissions (LEPCs) were mandated in the 1990s, it was an unfunded mandate. Member counties provided funds to cover costs. In the late 1990s, state legislation was passed that attached a fee to the annual reporting require of hazmat facilities with reportable quantities of hazmat. The Missouri Emergency Management Commission also distributed federal dollars to LEPCs based on federal highway miles. When it first started and the counties joined together, all of the counties pitched in funds until other funding was available.

With several leadership changes, how funds were accessed changed and there was a drop in funds, said Ms. Snodgrass. Four years ago, MLEPD saw a drop of about \$6,000 in Tier II funds after a new computer system was installed at the MERC. Due to an error in how funds were calculated, the LEPD had two years of losses of over \$5,000 per year in Tier II funds. Those funds were sent to St. Louis, and she said she's waiting to hear if the region will be able to recoup those funds. Ms. Snodgrass reported MLEPD received its normal amount of funding for last fiscal year, but it wasn't received until the end of the year. MRPC has been cash flowing MLEPD for the last year. She said reserves had been available in the past but said the current reserves are insufficient to cover a full year of operations.

Ms. Snodgrass addressed the issue of future funding concerns. The Tier II fees sunset at the end of 2024, and the Senate wasn't able to pass critical legislation to extend the fees. She said the 2024 funds will be distributed during the 2024-25 fiscal year, but funds won't be collected in January 2025. This results in no funding for FY 2025-26, even if legislation passes in the 2025 session. Ms. Snodgrass informed the board that the MLEPD doesn't have sufficient reserves to operate and meet its mandated responsibilities during FY 2025-26.

Bonnie Prigge mentioned that there was no opposition to extending the Tier II funds and that it passed out of the House. She said it passed out of the Senate committee but never made it to the floor for a vote. Time just ran out.

Ms. Snodgrass mentioned several other funding issues. The previous MERC director forced the MLEPD to become an independent organization, rather than remain as a sub-committee of MRPC. As an independent organization, MLEPD now has to pay for its own audit and board errors and omission insurance. She said this amounts to an additional \$6,000-\$8,000 annually. The MERC has said that both are ineligible expenses for Tier II funds.

Ms. Snodgrass informed the board that some of the committee members feel an audit is necessary for them to be transparent and accountable. Some members are also concerned about no insurance coverage for the board, and she said she is concerned about the loss of members with the board not having insurance.

A meeting with legislators will be held at end of month to discuss the issue and request their support for Tier II funding extension. However, funds will not be available in FY 2025-26, even if legislation passes by May 2025, she said. The funding issue also affects the MERC at the state level.

Ms. Snodgrass presented a possible fix for funding. She said the MLEPD has discussed asking each county to contribute funds annually to continue work and to cover costs deemed ineligible by the MERC. This would provide funds for:

- Audit and D & O Insurance that MERC refuses to approve as eligible expenses and for which the MLEPD does not have funds to pay.
- Cover the gap in Tier II funding.
- Provide a means to build up reserves for potential future projects such as:
 - Updating the commodity flow study,
 - Completing an in-depth hazmat hazard analysis for the region, and
 - Providing additional training opportunities for emergency responders in the region – conferenced, classes, exercises.

Ms. Prigge said that industries have been supportive of paying the Tier II fees. Ms. Snodgrass said that in the overall scope, the fees paid by both local gas stations and large chemical plants are minimal. There was a suggestion of partnering with St. Louis and sending folks to trainings in that area. Ms. Snodgrass said the group is always open to partnering with other agencies, the problem is that most of the volunteers have full-time jobs and aren't able to travel that distance.

Ms. Prigge mentioned the point of this presentation was to make the board aware of what MLEPD does and what problems the group is facing. She said if the issue isn't resolved quickly, the counties may be contacted to help until it does get resolved.

Update from State and Federal Legislators:

Taylor Blackwell with Sen. Josh Hawley's office:

Ms. Blackwell reported the Senator would be at the State Fair on Thursday of next week and encouraged members to stop by if they were at the fair. She also mentioned that a bill banning congressional members, including the President and Vice President, from stock trading has passed committee. Ms. Blackwell informed the board that the Senator sponsored the Reauthorization of the Supporting and Treating Officers in Crisis (STOIC) Act.

Payton Ruddy with Congressman Mark Alford's office:

Ms. Ruddy reported the Congressman is in district during recess and will be at the state fair on the 15th.

She also mentioned the Congressman introduced the Regulatory Agenda Clarity Act. This piece of legislation will support American families and business owners by requiring federal agencies to fully disclose how their regulations would impact small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Ms. Ruddy informed board members the Congressman would be doing his second town tour. He will be in Camden County on Aug. 20, 2024 holding a town hall meeting at 7:00 p.m. at the Camdenton Public Library. The Congressman will be visiting 12 or 13 counties on this tour.

Grant Wilson with Rep. Jason Smith's office:

Mr. Wilson reported the Congressman visited the remaining seven counties in his district while Congress has been on recess. He also mentioned the Congressman was a big supporter of the Education and Workforce Freedom Act (HR8915). This legislation allows tax-exempt distributions from 529 plans to be used for additional educational expenses related to attending K-12 school (including homeschool). It passed out of committee.

Mr. Wilson gave an update on the expiration of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 that was mentioned at the June MRPC meeting. He informed the board that the Congressman put out the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act of 2024. This act will:

- Increase child tax credits.
- Allow farmers to fully deduct the purchase of any equipment.
- Allow businesses to deduct costs related to research and development.
- Strengthen the relationship with Taiwan.
- Increase the low income housing tax credit.

Mr. Wilson mentioned the Congressman would be at the state fair on Aug. 16 and would be holding a field hearing at the Iowa State Fair. He said he would share a link to Bonnie for that field hearing.

Ms. Prigge thanked Mr. Wilson and the Congressman for their help in getting Meramec Community Enhancement Corporation's (MCEC's) non-profit status reinstated.

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC): Anne Freand
Anne Freand provided an update on transportation activities:

Ms. Freand reported the TAC elected new officers and she thanked Commissioner Steve Vogt for his service this past year. Officers for FY 2024-2025 are:

Sean Wilson – chair Joey Auxier – vice chair T.R. Dudley- Secretary

The committee received an update from the consultant with the Forward 44 project. Comments are accepted through Aug. 21, 2024. The project is expected to be completed in 2025.

Joanie Prenger with MoDOT provided an update on the Bridge Engineering Assist Program (BEAP) and the Transportation and Engineering Assistance Program (TEAP). She said the BEAP has no match, but the TEAP does require a match.

Ms. Freand provided a road safety audit update. An audit was conducted at the Kingston K-14 entrance on Highway 21 in Washington County, and it was determined there were some signing and striping issues to correct.

Steve Englebrecht with MoDOT provided a STIP update. More information on the STIP can be found on MoDOT's website.

Ms. Freand reported a group will be formed to discuss multi-modal issues in the region. This includes rails, trails, bike/ped, air and ports. The group will hold quarterly meetings. Staff will bring a recommendation to the MRPC board to officially form the multi-modal advisory committee.

Other items discussed in the meeting included:

- An update on the Safe Streets and Roads for All program. MRPC will begin meeting with all counties this fall.
- Ms. Bonnie Prigge and Ms. Caitlin Jones gave an update on the Show-Me Zero program. Statewide, fatalities are down but in the Central District fatalities are up about 10.5%.
- Staff provided roadway safety activity updates. Staff have been busy attending various Back-to-School fairs.
- Ms. Jones reminded the board there were signage and stencils available to promote Buckle Up, Phone Down (BUPD).
- Ms. Prenger gave a brief MoDOT update.

External Relations Committee: Shane Anselm, chair

Commissioner Griffin reported on External Relations activities as follows:

The committee discussed the at-large vacancies for lending. There were no nominees at this time. Commissioner Shane Anselm said he would check with Ben Tipton at Phelps County Bank and Gary Larson said he would check with AJ Seay with the Bank of Salem.

The committee elected new officers:

Shane Anselm – chair

Tim Schulte – vice chair

After a brief discussion, it was determined that TAC would meet for its regularly scheduled meeting in October, but there would be no MRPC meetings. If an MRPC meeting is needed, it will be an abbreviated meeting held immediately after the TAC. No committee meetings or meal will be planned.

Ms. Jones shared the cover for the annual report and a draft of the annual dinner invitation. Board members were reminded the annual dinner would be held on Oct. 24 at Osage View in Linn. Prior to the reception, Commissioner Jan Haviland is offering a tour of her business, Haviland Corporation. The tour will begin around 4:45 p.m. Invitations will be going out in early September, said Ms. Jones. She added that it's important to submit an RSVP if you plan to attend.

The committee also discussed the need for silent auction items, and members were encouraged to reach out to their contacts for donations.

Staff provided a handout on legislative updates.

Operations Committee: Jan Haviland, chair

Commissioner Haviland reported on operations activities as follows:

The committee elected new officers:

Jan Haviland – chair

Jason Ward – vice chair

The committee reviewed MRPC/MRB and MRPC/MRDC-RLF and IRP program preliminary financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2024.

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

Commissioner Darryl Griffin made a motion to approve the financials for the period ending July 31, 2024; Jason Ward seconded. The motion carried.

Linda Loughridge discussed the issue of MRPC's deficit of nearly \$100,000 for FY 23-24, and talked about ways to fix the issue moving forward so it doesn't happen again. MRPC does have reserves to cover the shortfall.

Planning Committee: Joey Auxier, chair
Anne Freand reported on planning activities as follows:

The committee elected new officers:

Joey Auxier – chair T.R. Dudley – vice chair

Orin Pogue provided an update on Naturally Meramec activities including composting training, Taste of Washington County and other programs scheduled for the end of the grant period. The composting training is taking place on Aug. 23 from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at RGM Farms in Bourbon. Lunch will be provided. Mr. Pogue reported the Taste of Washington County will be held in Potosi.

Ms. Freand presented the final CEDS document that will be sent to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) by the end of September.

Housing Board: Vic Stratman, chairman
Commissioner Stratman reported on housing activities as follows:

The board reviewed and approved the preliminary financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2024.

The board reviewed and approved the proposed budget for FY 2024-25.

The board reviewed and approved the financial statements for the period ended July 31, 2024.

New officers were elected.

Tim Schulte – chair Steve Black – vice chair Gary Larson - secretary

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

Ms. Snodgrass mentioned that Maries County and St. Robert would be hosting special collections this fall. Maries County's collection will be at the Lakes Prairie Road shed and is scheduled for Sept. 28 and St. Robert is on Oct. 26.

She also reported that Ozark Rivers district grant applications are due Aug. 16 by noon.

A handout was provided.

Business Loans: Linda Loughridge, Fiscal Officer

Ms. Loughridge reported the next full board meeting for MRDC is scheduled for Aug. 14, 2024, at noon. This will be the board's annual meeting.

She informed board members that staff are working to close the Beemis loan.

Ms. Loughridge stated that the RLF/IRP has about \$844,000 available.

She said that SBA loan rates are down a bit at about 3.5% below prime.

A handout was provided showing a summary of the current loan portfolio.

Meramec Community Enhancement Corporation (MCEC): Gary Larson

No report was given.

Meramec Regional Community Foundation (MRCF): Bonnie Prigge

Ms. Prigge reported there were a few vacancies on the MRCF board, and she would be reaching out for suggestions. The vacancies are in the counties of Dent, Phelps and Washington.

Chairperson's Report

Chairman Griffin said several counties have been discussing the need for an HR advisor and a suggestion was made to join together and share an advisor. He asked anyone that was interested to reach out to him.

Director's Report

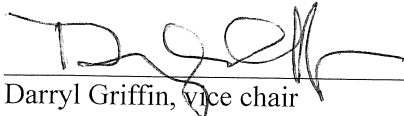
Ms. Prigge said the Military Installation Resiliency Review (MIRR) is getting ready to kick-off with meetings being planned in Pulaski County. Benchmark has been hired to conduct the study. A housing study and a tabletop exercise are also planned.

She mentioned MRPC held an abbreviated board training in July. If anyone else is interested in attending a board training, she asked that they reach out to her and MRPC would schedule another meeting.

Ms. Prigge reported that the MRPC offices will be closed on Aug. 19 for off-site staff training.

Adjourn

Gary Larson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.; Shane Anselm seconded the motion. The motion carried.


Darryl Griffin, vice chair


Attest

