

**Meramec Regional Planning Commission
Minutes
March 13, 2025**

Call to Order

Chair Mary Heywood called the March 13, 2025, meeting of the Meramec Regional Planning Commission to order at 7:30 p.m. The meeting was conducted in person and via Zoom.

Welcome

Chair Heywood welcomed everyone to the meeting. Board members participating in person were Jason Ward, Gary Larson, Tim Schulte, Duane Kraettli, Vic Stratman, Steve Vogt, Darryl Griffin, Joey Auxier, Dawn Bell, Kent Bagnall, Donald Claycomb, Matt McCarter, John Money, Jan Haviland, Shane Anselm, Taisia Gordon and Mary Heywood. MRPC board members participating via Zoom were Tammy Bruckerhoff, John Casey, Rich Eisterhold, Patricia Heaney and Kevin McFadden. MRPC staff members participating in person were Bonnie Prigge, Tammy Snodgrass, Linda Loughridge, Caitlin Jones, Linda Carroll and Samantha Sherman. MRPC staff participating via Zoom were Anne Freand and Donald Keeney. Michael King, Vesper Energy, participated in person.

Consent Agenda

The following consent agenda items were presented for approval:

- a. Minutes – Feb. 13, 2025
- b. Local Review
None.
- c. State Review
 - 1. Missouri Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Dept., Jefferson City, MO
10.025 – Plant and Animal Disease, Pest Control, and Animal Care
FY25 MO US SHIP
Federal: \$56,322
Total: \$56,322
 - 2. Missouri Department of Natural Resources Jefferson City, MO
15.916 – Outdoor Recreation Acquisition Development and Planning
29-01808 Excelsior Springs Boundless Backyard Phase II
Federal: \$500,000
Local: \$500,000
Total: \$1,000,000

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

• Delta Regional Authority

Permission is requested for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to enter into the annual memorandum of agreement with Delta Regional Authority to continue to serve as the Local Development District, and for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to sign any necessary documents associated with this agreement, retroactive to the date requested by DRA.

- Meramec Regional Development Corporation

Permission is requested for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to sign the MRPC board resolution for the Disaster and CARES annual RLF certification for the period ending March 31, 2025, as required by the Economic Development Administration.

- City of Stoutland, MO

Permission is requested for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to enter into a technical assistance contract for asbestos inspections on four buildings in the city of Stoutland, MO, and for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to sign any necessary documents.

Presiding Commissioner Joey Auxier made a motion to approve the consent agenda with noted additions; Presiding Commissioner Tim Schulte seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Presentation: Vichy Solar Project in Maries County—Michael King, Vesper Energy, Developer for Vichy Solar

Mr. King shared information on the Vichy Solar project in Maries County. Through contract with private landowners, Vesper Energy is developing a 1,600-2,000 acre solar farm, which is expected to generate power for 20 years with potential for up to 30 years of additional operation. The project's transmission upgrade costs are estimated to be around \$20-23 million, he said. He also mentioned the project is located near a transmission line and is in close proximity to the Rolla Airport.

Mr. King highlighted the project's potential benefits, including long-term annual lease payments for property owners, creation of construction jobs, and contributions to local and state tax rolls. He also mentioned the project's community grants program and its commitment to preserving farmland.

Mr. King explained the construction process of a solar field, including the use of pile drivers and equipment for power conversion. He mentioned the decommissioning process, which involves removing facilities and setting up a bond for financial security. Mr. King also highlighted the integration of local requests into project setbacks and vegetation, such as rebuilding a Christmas tree farm around a project in Pennsylvania. Additionally, he introduced the concept of agrivoltaics and pollinator habitats in solar farms.

He discussed the development and sale of their project, which has attracted interest from Ameren. Mr. King clarified that the decommissioning and landowner payments would carry over to the next owner. He also mentioned that they wouldn't sell to a foreign entity and that their investment comes from private financing. He said the company has seen an increase in calls from landowners and entities interested in developing projects due to the impact of tariffs on electricity from Canada. Mr. King also addressed the potential financing scenarios for their project and the challenges of developing in Missouri due to environmental constraints. He said Vesper's systems are designed to withstand category 5 hurricanes and that they would clean up and rebuild in case of damage.

Mr. King discussed the increasing demand for solar panels and their long-lasting technology, which could potentially reduce the need for replacement. He also mentioned the possibility of repurposing decommissioned solar panels for other solar projects.

Updates from State and Federal Legislators:

No reports were given.

Transportation Advisory Committee: Anne Freand

No report was given.

External Relations Committee: Shane Anselm, chair

Commissioner Anselm reported on External Relations activities as follows:

Commissioner Anselm reported staff did not travel to Washington D.C. to meet with federal legislators for the Meramec Region. A copy of the federal priorities will be sent to the legislators.

The committee discussed the need for bids to host the Annual Dinner in October. Commissioner Anselm said one bid has been received but the committee is looking for other options. Proposals are due May 2.

The committee discussed the use of Facebook and YouTube for marketing and the opportunity for members to create short videos promoting the organization's work in their communities.

Commissioner Anselm reported that the committee discussed the at-large positions for disabled and seniors that need to be filled.

The committee discussed concerns they had surrounding SB57, which modifies provisions related to sales tax exemptions. If passed, it would have devastating effects on the smaller communities in the region. It was suggested a letter be sent to the legislators representing the Meramec Region stating MRPC's opposition to the passage of this bill.

Presiding Commissioner Darryl Griffin made a motion to approve sending a letter to the legislators representing the Meramec Region stating MRPC opposes passage of SB57; Presiding Commissioner Joey Auxier seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Staff provided a handout on legislative updates.

Operations Committee: Jan Haviland

Commissioner 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 Feb. 28, 2025.

Commissioner Jan Haviland made a motion to approve the financials for the period ending Feb. 28, 2025; Commissioner Jason Ward seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Staff presented for discussion and approval the RLF annual certification board resolution required by the Economic Development Administration. The annual certification was revised to exclude MRDC from the board resolution.

Commissioner Haviland made a motion to approve the revised RLF annual certification board resolution; Commissioner Jason Ward seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Commissioner Haviland also reported that the committee received an update on requirements to close the IRP loan program and transfer the current loan to the RLF program.

Commissioner Haviland made a motion to close the IRP loan program and transfer the current loan to the RLF program; Commissioner Jason Ward seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Planning Committee: Joey Auxier, chair

Presiding Commissioner Auxier reported on planning activities as follows:

The committee discussed accident statistics, particularly in relation to pedestrian safety, ATV/UTV incidents and intersections with high injury or fatality rates. Members examined data from 2015 through 2024, identifying trends and key problem areas, like Washington County's high ATV accident rate and issues at specific intersections.

Presiding Commissioner Auxier reported that the committee also explored possible safety improvements, though many of the issues stemmed from driver choices – such as alcohol use, underage operation of ATV's and lack of

protective gear – making solutions challenging. The committee discussed how to improve road user safety through infrastructure adjustments and public awareness efforts.

Housing Board: Tim Schulte, chair

No report was given.

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

Ms. Snodgrass reported on the successful waste collection event held in Dixon and mentioned upcoming collections, as well as the Earth Day trash art and poster contest. She also mentioned a cleanup event in Dent County and the Heartland Trail Trash initiative. Ms. Snodgrass also provided updates on the upcoming Ozark Rivers, MLEPD, and Region I Homeland Security meetings.

A handout of environmental activities was provided.

Business Loans: Linda Loughridge, Fiscal Officer

Linda Loughridge, MRPC Financial Officer, discussed the final business loan, stating that they have been approved to close and will transfer all SBA 504 files to the Birmingham, AL SBA office once the loan has closed. Ms. Loughridge also discussed the need for a marketing push. She also mentioned sending flyers to banks in the region to promote their program. Bonnie Prigge and Ms. Loughridge also explained the eligibility criteria for small businesses and the role of the board in approving policies. Ms. Loughridge said she and Ms. Prigge are planning to review the disaster loan plan and explore potential flexibility within it. The goal is to get the money on the street and create jobs, even if it means taking on more risk.

Meramec Community Enhancement Corporation (MCEC): Kelly Sink

No report was given.

Meramec Regional Community Foundation (MRCF): Bonnie Prigge

Ms. Prigge reported on the Meramec Regional Community Foundation's activities, highlighting the upcoming invite-a-friend to lunch on March 25. She also mentioned it is scholarship season, with scholarships being due March 17. Ms. Prigge also reported that the Maries County R-2 Schools Foundation would be holding its annual mouse race fundraiser.

Director's Report

Ms. Prigge provided the following updates:

- Associate Commissioner in Washington County
 - Governor Mike Kehoe appointed Lynn Portell to fill the vacant associate commissioner position.
- State Highway Safety Planning Committee
 - Ms. Prigge reported she is serving on this committee, which focuses on teen drivers, ATV's and post-crash care.
 - Ms. Prigge suggested those cities and counties that issue ATV/UTV permits hand out MoDOT's ATV/UTV rules and regulations card at the same time the permit is issued.
- Upcoming Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety sub-district meeting is April 2
 - Project Graduation grants will be awarded.
 - There will be a discussion about the installation of a traffic safety garden at Belle Elementary.
- Federal Funding
 - Funds for the Homeland Security Oversight Committee (HSOC) are currently frozen.
 - Conversations are occurring between the Governor and the federal government.
 - The Rock Island Trail project is stalled due to the President's executive order on new grant projects.

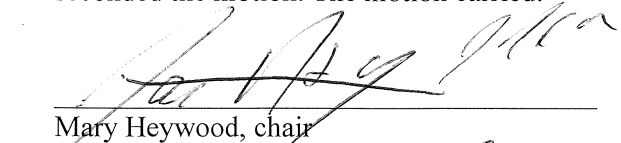
Miscellaneous

Presiding Commissioner Tim Schulte encouraged members to contact their legislators and let them know that they oppose SB57.

Ms. Prigge said she would draft a letter stating that the MRPC board opposes passage of SB57 and then send it out to all of the legislators in the Meramec Region.

Adjourn

Presiding Commissioner Vic Stratman a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 p.m. Commissioner Jason Ward seconded the motion. The motion carried.



Mary Heywood, chair



Attest

