

# MERAMEC REGIONAL COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

## MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

**Members Present:** Jared Niederer (Gasconade), Ashley Harris (Maries), Tony Hayden (Osage) by Zoom, T.R. Dudley (Washington), Steve Vogt (MRPC At-Large), Bonnie Prigge (MRPC Executive Director), Richard Cavender (MRCF At-Large), Gary Larson (MRPC At-Large)

**Members Absent:** (None)

**Staff Present:** Nichole Zielke

**Luncheon Guests:** Shelley Emperato (Grantee – Armed Services YMCA), Abbey Sale (Armed Services YMCA) by Zoom, Joann Goethe (Fostering Together), Ray Walden (MU Extension), Sherry Stites (Phelps County Commissioner), Judy Cantoni (Community Foundation of the Ozarks), Roger Louderman (Bourbon Youth Athletic Assoc/Bourbon Econ Dev Group), Kayla Stack (Life House Youth Center) by Zoom

**Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance:** Chairman Niederer called the meeting to order at 11:44 a.m. and led the group with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Introduction of Guests, Board, and Staff:** Each person in attendance (including Zoom) introduced themselves to the group, providing a brief explanation of their professional and philanthropic activities in the community.

**Approval of Minutes:** The board reviewed the meeting minutes from February 11, 2025. Vogt made a motion to approve the minutes as presented; seconded by Harris. Motion passed.

**MRCF 101:** Prigge gave a presentation explaining the history of MRCF, its current fund holdings and activities, and the goals of the organization. Established in 2010, MRCF provides awareness for philanthropy and has simplified the process of donating to local causes. MRCF currently holds 50 funds under its umbrella, 17 of which are scholarship funds, with a total market value of almost \$4.5M. The MRCF Community Grantmaking Fund originated via a \$30,000 contribution from MRPC and \$1,500 is awarded annually. Prigge briefly discussed the four vacancies on the Board of Directors and the need to fill those. Emperato asked, as a representative of a non-profit organization, if serving as an MRCF board member would render the non-profit organization ineligible for grant funding. Prigge explained that the organization would still be eligible, but the board member must abstain from voting.

**Community Foundation of the Ozarks:** Cantoni gave a presentation about CFO and its newest endeavor: the 5% Solution. CFO was established in 1973, taking on its first affiliate partner, MRCF, in 2010. Since then, they have grown to 55 regional affiliate foundations, with \$526M in assets. The 5% Solution focuses on the transfer of wealth between generations, with the goal of encouraging philanthropic giving as part of estate planning. Cantoni reported that, in the Meramec Region, there is currently about \$2.45B of personal assets. Donors should be

encouraged to assess their philanthropic interests and include a 5% legacy gift to an endowment in their will or estate plan. Zielke asked about disseminating the information to estate planners and attorneys as a connection point to potential donors, and if this has been found to be successful. Cantoni said that this is encouraged, but warned that some financial planners have no motivation to pursue this avenue, considering that their livelihood is contingent on investing the funds. She reported that CFO recognized this concern and set up a process that allows for donations to be made, and then funds are returned to the financial planners to manage. If interested, she can provide more information about this process. Stites shared her perspective as an insurance agent, and the potential of philanthropic agencies being the assignee of life insurance benefits.

**Presentation of MRCF 2025 Grant Awards:** Chairman Niederer reported that there were two \$750 recipients selected for the Community Grant: Armed Services YMCA and KidSight. KidSight was not in attendance at the meeting. Emperato accepted the donation on behalf of Armed Services YMCA and a group photo was taken. Emperato shared more information about the organization, including an upcoming Patriot Day Festival in September that is free to military families.

**Report on Phelps County Disaster Fund:** Prigge presented information about the Phelps County Disaster Fund and the local response to the March 14, 2025 tornado damage in Rolla. Within one day, approximately 1,700 volunteers registered to help with the cleanup, and about 10 municipalities sent crews and equipment. The Phelps County Disaster Fund was created several years ago in response to flooding disasters. Since that time, it has remained dormant, but because of the recent tornado damage, staff reactivated the fund. Since it was reactivated, \$34,000 in donations have been received from donors all over the country.

**Discussion about Scholarship Review Committee:** Prigge reported that applications have been received for four scholarships and a meeting is scheduled for April 23, 2025 to discuss and award. MRCF Board Members that are interested in being involved in the process were invited to participate as part of a Scholarship Review Committee. Members will be responsible for completing evaluations of the applications by April 16. Seven members volunteered for the committee: Bonnie Prigge, T.R. Dudley, Ashley Harris, Richard Cavender, Jared Niederer, Steve Vogt, and Tony Hayden.

**Discussion about Board Vacancies:** Prigge reported four vacancies on the board, representing Crawford, Dent, Phelps, and Pulaski counties. Three of the meeting attendees – Ray Walden, Sherry Stites, and Roger Louderman – were invited to the meeting because of an interest in serving on the board. Cavender made a motion to appoint Sherry Stites (Phelps County), Roger Louderman (Crawford), and Ray Walden (Dent) as members; seconded by Dudley. Motion passed. Pulaski County still has a vacancy.

**Comments for the Good of the Order:** Dudley reported major tornado/storm damage in Des Arc, Missouri (Iron County). He said that approximately 54 buildings were destroyed, only 17 structures remained intact, and many residents are living in tents. Members suggested possible contacts that could help, including the Southeast Missouri Regional Planning Commission, Grant Wilson at Congressman Smith's office, and Lt. Governor David Wasinger.

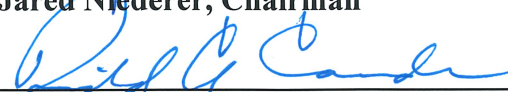
**Closing Remarks & Adjournment:**

Scholarships Committee Meeting – April 23, 2025, 9:30 a.m.

Being no further business, Harris made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:28 p.m.; seconded by Dudley. Motion passed.

Approved by the board on 4-23, 2025.

  
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**Jared Niederer, Chairman**

  
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**Attested by Secretary or other MRCF Officer**

