

Minutes  
**MCLEAN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Tuesday, January 9, 2018, 3:30 P.M.**  
**Government Center – Room 404**

**Members Present:** Chair Mary Jefferson, Michael Gorman, Mark Peterson, Steve Rasmussen, Bill Wasson (partial attendance)

**Members Absent:** Vice-chair Michael Buragas

**Others Present:** Executive Director Vasu Pinnamaraju

**Discussion:**

Ms. Jefferson called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

A motion by Mr. Gorman, seconded by Mr. Peterson, to approve the meeting minutes from the August 15 meeting passed unanimously.

A motion by Mr. Peterson, seconded by Mr. Rasmussen, to approve the meeting minutes from the August 15 executive session meeting passed unanimously.

Ms. Pinnamaraju presented on a proposal to update the MCRPC bylaws. FHWA requests periodic reviews. We have never formalized the existence of Transportation Policy and Transportation Technical committees in our bylaws; the proposal would formally create these committees. Further, the bylaw change would update the makeup of the Executive Committee; the revision would make the city managers of Bloomington and Normal and the County Administrator nonvoting advisory members.

Mr. Rasmussen asked for clarity on whether the City Managers and the County Administrator would then count for quorum; Ms. Pinnamaraju clarified that they would no longer qualify.

The third major change to the bylaws is to remove the term limit for Commissioners. This is to better align with the county resolution that initially created the MCRPC. Officers within the Commission would be eligible to serve three consecutive terms.

Mr. Peterson asked whether there would be the possibility to remove people from office if they didn't show up to meetings regularly; Ms. Pinnamaraju said there would be.

Ms. Pinnamaraju also discussed a change to language regarding eligibility of elected officials to serve on the Commission. One goal of the Commission is to build bridges between communities, and this language could prevent some qualified candidates from serving.

Ms. Pinnamaraju cautioned that further bylaw revisions could be necessary a year from now, depending on how the visioning process goes.

Ms. Jefferson and Mr. Peterson recommended that the language be amended to suggest periodic reviews of the bylaw language.

A motion by Mr. Gorman, seconded by Mr. Peterson, passed unanimously to approve the amended bylaws with an amendment to article 9 to suggest a review of the bylaws at least every three years.

Ms. Pinnamaraju presented on the next topic - release of the previous meeting minutes. The State's Attorney recommended to Ms. Pinnamaraju that no minutes containing personnel issues be released for several years. Mr. Peterson clarified that we are under no legal obligation to release such minutes.

A motion by Mr. Peterson, seconded by Mr. Gorman, passed unanimously to not release the minutes and to revisit in six months.

Ms. Pinnamaraju discussed the cooperative agreements with Bloomington, Normal, and McLean County for the MPO function for MCRPC. FHWA would like to see the agreements updated. Anything related to the MPO function has to go through a significant input process. Ms. Pinnamaraju requested that Mr. Rasmussen and Mr. Peterson take the proposal to their legal departments for review and input. All comments are requested by February 17th.

Mr. Peterson asked when this should go on council agendas; Ms. Pinnamaraju suggested we wait until it goes through other processes - potentially in March.

Mr. Rasmussen asked whether Ms. Pinnamaraju had already provided a copy of the proposal to the respective agencies; Ms. Pinnamaraju indicated she had not and that she requested Mr. Rasmussen to do so.

Ms. Pinnamaraju gave a presentation on the MCRPC's strategic planning process. She has been using the Hile Group's report for her first few years on the job, but at this point she is ready for a major update to the plan. Ms. Pinnamaraju suggested that the MCRPC begin to play a more proactive and vocal role in implementation of plans.

Ms. Pinnamaraju gave some background on the history of the agency. We are currently celebrating 50 years of existence, which is a great time to work on strategic planning. In the early years, there was a strong connection between elected officials and the MCRPC. In 1993, there was a major restructuring to focus specifically on long-range planning and many of those strong ties were severed. Before that time, they worked on many different types of plans for many different issues throughout the area; after then, only long-range plans could be created within the organization. At this time, the organization focused heavily on Bloomington, Normal, and McLean County.

Since 2013 (when Ms. Pinnamaraju started working here), some additional work has been done in new areas, but the focus is still broadly on long-range planning. Ms. Pinnamaraju would like an idea from this group as to what types of work MCRPC should be doing. She suggested potentially increasing MCRPC's role in education and advocacy.

At this time (4:09 p.m.), Mr. Bill Wasson joined the meeting.

Ms. Pinnamaraju continued discussing potential new work areas. She mentioned data dashboards and tracking metrics on a variety of issues; a more active role in implementation of transportation plans, smart community initiatives (underpinned by technology), and housing; rural planning; and neighborhood planning. In the 4.5 years Ms. Pinnamaraju has been here, she has received many requests from rural communities and neighborhoods to help with planning.

Next, Ms. Pinnamaraju discussed challenges facing MCRPC in the future. Funding is one major challenge. The commission structure has also been a challenge; it is disconnected from elected bodies and members feel like they don't know how much of a role they can play. Further, the idea in having representatives from many different bodies was originally to facilitate collaboration; in practice, that doesn't seem to be happening. We also lack rural representation.

She next discussed key strategic proposals. First, she recommends evaluating the merits of re-organizing the Commission. Second, she wants to engage funding agencies in a five-year project prioritization plan. Third, she thinks there is an opportunity for additional funding via additional services, such as funding from service consolidations; service charges; pursuing grants and other funding; and adding contract-based staff positions.

Ms. Pinnamaraju opened it up for discussion. Mr. Peterson noted that he really likes the area of data collection and metrics. He thinks that having one place that data is consistently available in a consistent format would be very valuable. He thinks that MCRPC may be the place to do that.

Mr. Peterson also noted the area of economic development. He wants to acknowledge that MCRPC should be an important player in the efforts toward economic development in the community. Ms. Pinnamaraju noted that we have thus far not created an economic development district, but typically RPCs are in charge of those areas. Mr. Peterson also mentioned the idea of an innovation district, suggesting that MCRPC could play a leadership role in such an initiative.

Mr. Peterson also acknowledged the many challenges associated with additional funding. Ms. Pinnamaraju noted that she feels it's important that MCRPC continue to be as effective and efficient as possible in between comprehensive planning periods, and suggested that MCRPC staff could be a key asset to other agencies during those periods.

Mr. Wasson followed up on the idea of an innovation district. He also noted that he wanted to be sure that all entities are aware of the work that MCRPC can do to assist with projects so we could keep our consulting dollars local.

Ms. Pinnamaraju noted that MCRPC is in the process of updating the website. Part of the goal is to make the plans they've developed as accessible as possible.

Mr. Rasmussen asked Mr. Wasson for clarity on his suggestion that MCRPC could potentially serve the role consultants might otherwise play. Mr. Peterson called the comprehensive planning process a case in point; Bloomington almost hired an expensive consultant for that work but instead decided to use MCRPC. The end result was likely a much better plan for much less money. Ms. Pinnamaraju noted that MCRPC would be very open to such partnerships and would be very clear about what they can and cannot do. She also clarified that MCRPC would intend to charge the agencies for these additional services, though likely MCRPC would charge less than consultants because they are a government agency, not a for-profit corporation.

Mr. Peterson made the point that there are many organizations in our community that offer overlapping services. He suggested that there may be a better way to collaborate among entities to save money. MCRPC, he suggested, could be a lead agency to bring the entities together to have these discussions. Ms. Pinnamaraju noted that, as she was recently reviewing historic annual reports, she noticed many different services MCRPC used to provide that are now done by many different agencies throughout the community.

Mr. Wasson, with regrets, stepped out of the meeting at 4:31 p.m.

Mr. Peterson mentioned that the current revenue challenges can create painful discussions, but MCRPC may be able to help shape some of the discussions to help ease the pain.

Ms. Pinnamaraju followed up with a mention of intended next steps in the strategic planning process. She will figure out who needs to be involved in which pieces of the discussion. She will also ask people for input on the process itself. Mr. Peterson suggested that it could be done by a third-party, but we would have to think critically to ensure that it was the right third-party.

Mr. Rasmussen said he could give Ms. Pinnamaraju a lengthy list of services the City could use help with. He has been under pressure from elected officials to reduce the number of outside consultants hired.

A motion by Mr. Rasmussen, seconded by Mr. Peterson, passed unanimously to adjourn at 4:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Michael Gorman  
MCRPC Executive Committee Representative