

Minutes
McLEAN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, February 13, 2018, 2:00 P.M.
Government Center – Room 404

Members Present: Chair, Mary Jefferson; Pam Reece; Steve Rasmussen; Bill Wasson; Michael Gorman

Members Absent: Vice-chair, Michael Buragas,

Others Present: Executive Director, Vasudha Pinnamaraju; Office Manager, Jordan Brown

Call to Order:

Ms. Jefferson called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. noting the presence of a quorum.

Public Comment:

None

Minutes:

Following a motion by Mr. Gorman and a second by Ms. Jefferson, the minutes of the January 9, 2018 Executive Committee Meeting were approved.

Items of Business:

Approval of MCRPC Strategic Priorities for FY 2019 – FY 2023

Ms. Pinnamaraju discussed the three highlights for MCRPC's strategic priorities: 1) evaluate merits of re-organizing the Commission; 2) engage funding agencies in a five year project prioritization plan; 3) offer additional services, and pursue new funding opportunities.

Ms. Jefferson asked for a clarification of the non-voting members on the Executive Committee. Mr. Wasson explained that by making the Town of Normal Manager, City of Bloomington Manager, and the McLean County Administrator non-voting members, MCRPC's bylaws will be consistent with that of the McLean County. Mr. Rasmussen suggested increasing the number of voting members of the MCRPC Executive Committee. Ms. Pinnamaraju indicated that that was part of the strategic priorities. Mr. Gorman then questioned why there was an Executive Committee as a separate body. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that not all items need to go to the Commission and used the example of personnel issues. Ms. Jefferson clarified that taking personnel issues to the Commission could cause trouble and agreed with Mr. Rasmussen on increasing the number of voting members on the MCRPC Executive Committee. Ms. Pinnamaraju followed up with the need to engage the three administrators in MCRPC matters and to seek input from them. Ms. Jefferson asked for clarification on the format of the new Executive Committee layout and provided the following format – Ms. Pinnamaraju brings the information to the Executive Committee, the three administrators provide their input, then the Executive Committee votes. Ms. Pinnamaraju agreed. Mr. Gorman questioned if there was flexibility in restructuring the Executive Committee. Ms. Pinnamaraju indicated that MCRPC would have to go back to the County Board for approval.

Ms. Jefferson then requested input from the three administrators on MCRPC Strategic Priorities for FY 2019 – FY 2023. Mr. Wasson indicated that he had an opportunity to examine these with Ms. Pinnamaraju prior to the meeting and there was nothing on there that surprised him. Ms. Reese pointed out that the priorities were pretty comprehensive. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that during the last two comprehensive plans, MCRPC noted gaps in some areas and used that information in coming up with these priorities. Ms. Reese asked for clarification on MCRPC's role in certain priorities (pointing out BN Advantage as an example) and questioned if other entities could help fund these activities. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that they could provide funding for roles that are beyond what is already assigned to MCRPC. Those roles would be upcoming but unidentified at this time.

Mr. Gorman questioned if staff utilization would be intense one year and not the next. Ms. Pinnamaraju clarified that staff is currently working on what their hours will look like for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Rasmussen questioned if there was going to be another sheet that broke down what the total number of staff hours looked like in dollars. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that the UWP would provide that break down. Mr. Rasmussen indicated that the funding for certain projects (i.e. rural planning) should balance out with the man power. Ms. Pinnamaraju verified that MCRPC will try to match rural dollars with grant funding to the extent possible. Mr. Wasson added that there is opportunity to leverage between existing RSA's and new funding. Mr. Gorman asked who puts forth the most effort to apply for rural planning grants. Ms. Pinnamaraju stated that no one at the moment but she would like MCRPC to step up and take that lead. Ms. Jefferson asked if the resources should be found first before reaching out to take on new projects. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that in order to start a Regional Plan, MCRPC needs to bring the rural communities up to speed. Right now, there are not many resources available to provide planning resources for every rural community, but there is a possibility to work with a couple.

Mr. Rasmussen asked for clarification on the fundamental projects that MCRPC has to achieve. Ms. Pinnamaraju pointed out that the Transportation Planning is where most of the efforts will be directed. She then pointed that since transportation is not an isolated issue, MCRPC is involved in comprehensive planning as well. Mr. Rasmussen then asked where that funding originates from. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that 80% of that funding comes from IDOT and the other 20% comes from a combination of Town of Normal, City of Bloomington, and McLean County in the form of Regional Service Agreements (RSAs). She then provided a brief history on MPOs and their role in communities. Mr. Gorman added that with additional funding from elsewhere, MCRPC can do more. Ms. Pinnamaraju agreed. Mr. Rasmussen then questioned how the 80% from IDOT comes through if there is not a state budget. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that the actual grant money is Federal dollars and as long as there is the transportation bill that is passed, MCRPC will be fine.

Ms. Jefferson asked if there was any more input or comments. Mr. Gorman questioned what the timeline looks like. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that it will be laid out in the Unified Work Program (UWP) which she plans to bring to the Executive Committee at the March Meeting and then approved by the Commission by June. Mr. Gorman then inquired if the Indirect Rate is looking any more stable. Ms. Pinnamaraju said no. She then explained the MCRPC has been in close contact with GATA but still do not have an Indirect Rate for FY18.

Ms. Jefferson called for a motion to approve MCRPC Strategic Priorities for FY 2019 – FY 2023. Mr. Gorman moved for approval. Ms. Jefferson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Approval of the proposed Regional Housing Advisory and Staff Committee

Ms. Pinnamaraju provided a background on the concept of a Regional Housing Advisory and Staff Committee. There will be 3 different groups involved in this Committee: 1) Innovative housing solutions group; 2) Affordable housing group; 3) Supportive housing issues group. Mr. Gorman inquired if there will be homelessness initiatives. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that those initiatives are currently led by PATH and MCRPC will work closely with them. She then explained that once the concept of the Committee has been approved then MCRPC can start putting budget numbers together. This will not be new funding but use of existing funding like CDBG more efficiently.

Ms. Jefferson asked how the housing staff feels about MCRPC coordinating and helping with planning. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that the Bloomington Housing Authority (BHA) will be and has been an important part of the discussions. Ms. Jefferson inquired if BHA has been welcoming. Ms. Pinnamaraju responded in affirmative and explained that BHA has reached out to MCRPC before this committee proposal and other entities (HUD, LISC, etc.) want to help this process as well. Mr. Gorman added that this proposal is nothing that the McLean County region has seen. Mr. Wasson indicated that this proposal will bring the different agencies with different focuses on housing together to do a better job of coordinating those jobs and processes. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that by working together there is a better chance of receiving state and federal grants. She also indicated that she hoped for dedicated resources to provide and track data for anyone who wants to apply for grants. Mr. Wasson added that McLean County has worked with a private developer who has a wide range of experience in affordable housing for a proposal to IDHA but was not successful. One of the reasons cited by IDHA was the lack of comprehensive regional process in planning the project. Mr. Wasson added that this committee will help assist in this and can bring more dollars back to the community for projects like affordable and supportive housing.

Mr. Rasmussen inquired what the next steps would be. Ms. Pinnamaraju pointed to the timeline in the proposal. She indicated that this proposal needs to be approved by the 3 public bodies. Mr. Wasson corrected that the 3 public bodies (City Board, Town Council, and County Board) would need to formally approve the final recommendations. Mr. Gorman questioned that council approval was nowhere on the timeline. Ms. Pinnamaraju asked for clarification from Mr. Wasson as to when this should happen. Mr. Wasson indicated that the 3 public bodies need to approve the concept prior to assembling the groups. He also added that service needs should be clearly outlined in the RSAs to the bodies. If additional funding not outlined in the RSAs is needed, then MCRPC will have to go back to the policy bodies for formal approval. Ms. Pinnamaraju indicated that once the proposal has been approved then she will start aligning dollars to it.

Mr. Rasmussen requested a recess at 2:53 PM. Discussion resumed at 3:02 PM.

Mr. Gorman suggested that annual priorities should be approved by the administrators and not the councils as long as the priorities are within the larger approved framework. Ms. Pinnamaraju indicated her support for that idea. After further discussion, the group agreed that the Councils should approve the regional housing efforts concepts and Administrators approve priorities thereafter. Ms. Pinnamaraju said that she plans on taking the approval process through Councils and Commissions between March 13th and April 4th.

Ms. Jefferson called for a motion to approve the concept of the Regional Housing Advisory and Staff Committee. Mr. Gorman moved for approval. Ms. Jefferson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Approval of regular Executive Committee meeting schedule

Ms. Pinnamaraju suggested a meeting schedule so that everyone stays up to date. She also indicated that the meetings will be every other month except for March and April due to the amount of information that needs to be presented in those two months. Ms. Jefferson indicated that she would not be available for the April 10th meeting and that Mr. Buragas would have to fill in as Chair. Mr. Gorman indicated that he has no objections. Mr. Wasson requested an Outlook Calendar Meeting invites for the meetings.

Ms. Jefferson called for a motion to approve the regular Executive Committee meeting schedule. Mr. Gorman moved for approval. Ms. Jefferson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Discussion Items:

MCRPC and Connect Transit collaborative efforts

Ms. Pinnamaraju informed that MCRPC has been working closely with Connect Transit recently. Connect will be consulting with MCRPC for planning services. She added Connect and MCRPC are in the process of further investigating this proposal. Mr. Gorman added that Connect had a planner leave. Ms. Pinnamaraju responded in affirmative and added that this will be a productive collaboration. Ms. Jefferson inquired if there were any other comments or questions.

That which may arise

Ms. Pinnamaraju welcomed Ms. Reece to her new position as the Town of Normal City Manager. Ms. Jefferson added that MCRPC is excited to work with Ms. Reece. Ms. Reece indicated that she was very excited to serve in the new capacity.

Adjournment:

Mr. Gorman moved for adjournment. Ms. Jefferson seconded the motion, and the meeting adjourned at 3:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jordan Brown
Office Manager