

MINUTES
McLEAN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MCRPC)
REGULAR MEETING (Virtual and Live-Streamed)
WEDNESDAY, December 2, 2020, 4:00 P.M.

Members Present:

Mary Kramp, Chair; Carl Teichman; Mark Wylie; John Burrill; Jim Fruin; Bart Bittner; Diana Hauman; Taunia Leffler; Carl Olson; Michael Pettorini

Members Absent:

None

Others Present:

MCRPC staff – Melissa Robinson; Lauren Gibson; Raymond Lai; Alyssa Cooper; Timothy Riley, Assistant Planner; Jennifer Sicks; Melissa Quimby.

Others - Gretchen Monti

1. Call To Order:

Ms. Kramp called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum.

2. Attendance:

See above

3. Public Comment:

None

4. Consent Agenda:

- A. Minutes of the October 7th, 2020 Commission meeting
- B. Financial Reports
- C. MCRPC Staff Report

Ms. Kramp called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Ms. Hauman moved for approval. Mr. Teichman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

5. Regular Agenda:

a. Items removed from the Consent Agenda (if any)

None

[Ms. Leffler had phone connections issues and could not stay on after 4:07pm]

b. Vision Zero Project Services Agreement – Extension of Time

Mr. Lai provided information regarding the need for a contract extension on the Vision Zero project. The contract that was in discussion was between MCRPC and the consultant Hile Group. Mr. Lai noted that the project kickoff meeting was held in June 2020. The original contract was

to expire November 2020 but because of unforeseen delays, such as the MCRPC Executive Director turnover and COVID – 19, there is a need for an extension of time. Staff is recommending a contract extension which would end in April 2021. Since this project is being federal grant funded, MCRPC has an inter-governmental agreement with IDOT. This agreement has been extended to June 2021.

Mr. Lai explained that an extension of time would not change the total consultant fee for this project. It would remain at \$66,300.

Mr. Pettorini asked if the MCRPC staff were confident that the consultants would be able to finish the project by April 2021. Mr. Lai answered that the project has been moving along well so far. Staff will make sure that they are staying on track and will push them along if another delay deems possible. The consultant group is planning on giving their draft proposal by the end of March 2021, so there is a cushion of time built into the proposed extension of time in case of further delays.

Ms. Kramp asked what the course of action would be if there needed to be another extension of time. Mr. Lai explained that because MCRPC is also in a contract with IDOT and some staff work is needed after the consultant work, he would try his best to monitor the consultant progress to avoid needing another extension from IDOT.

Mr. Teichman asked if MCRPC has made all payments to the consultant. Mr. Lai said that MCRPC had paid two invoices with the third payment in process.

Ms. Kramp called for a motion to approve an extension of time for the Vision Zero project. Mr. Wylie moved for approval. Mr. Bittner seconded the approval, which passed unanimously.

c. McLean County Old Route 66 Historic Catalogue Project Services Agreement Amendment – Extension of Time

Mr. Lai explained that the goal of this project is to identify significant historic sites along Route 66 in McLean County. The consultant, Farnsworth Group, was selected to assist MCRPC with this project on August 1, 2019.

Although a good amount of work was completed on this project from both Dr. Bliss and past MCRPC intern Jacob Engelman, the project became delayed when Dr. Bliss disengaged from Farnsworth Group. As of now Dr. Bliss has re-engaged again with Farnsworth Group and is working diligently in completing the work on the Route 66 project.

Mr. Lai affirmed that staff is confident that the work will be completed in a timely fashion and glad to have Dr. Bliss working on this project again as she is well-qualified and hard working. They are asking for this extension of time to end in February 2021. The extension will not change the total project fee amount, which will stay at \$30,000.

Mr. Olson asked who from the Farnsworth Group is overseeing this project. Mr. Lai responded that is John Bishop from the office in Normal.

Ms. Kramp called for a motion to approve an extension of time for the McLean County Old Route 66 project. Mr. Burrill moved for approval. Mr. Olson seconded the approval. The project extension of time was approved with a vote of nine and one abstention from Mr. Wylie.

6. Items of Information or Discussion:

a. Regional Housing Initiatives – CDBG Housing Assistance Update

Ms. Gibson provided an update on the regional housing initiatives. The Housing Assistance Coalition started in late April 2020 due to a loss of income from COVID-19. This was to help individuals in the community with rent, mortgage, and utility payments. They have seen the need for assistance increase and don't see that slowing down any time soon. The Housing Coalition has provided \$1.5 million in assistance locally. For November, they have given \$125,000 in rental assistance and \$168,000 for utility assistance. The need for utility assistance has increased as the temperature drops, and bills are going up. Regarding mortgage assistance, that need stills remains on the low side with them only receiving about one application a month.

Ms. Gibson discussed that the eviction moratorium has been extended again which will run through December 14th, 2020. Tenants who want to be protected from eviction due to a loss of income will have to sign a declaration provided by their landlord. This moratorium is a bit more restrictive than it has been in the past and does not know if this will be extended again. The utility shut-off moratorium has been extended to March 31st, 2021. United Way has bought social media spots to post, flyers, billboards, and one member made a Public Service Announcement (PSA) video to share.

The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) had a statewide rental assistance program in place. This program gave \$5,000 to households that were approved. This money was given directly to landlords for current rent and back rent that they couldn't collect. There were 900 households that applied.

At the start of the increasing need for assistance, the Housing Coalition wanted to create a model in which they could see what to expect regarding these needs. At that time, they were lacking the much-needed data and what the current economic state would be. Ms. Gibson explained that they were able to go back and based on new model developed by the NYU Furman Center for Housing Studies. This estimates the number of rental households that have been vulnerable to job loss in McLean County and the estimated rental need.

b. Census – Complete Count Committee (CCC) Update

Ms. Cooper provided the final update on the CCC efforts for the 2020 Census in McLean County. She presented a PowerPoint [see attached] that compared 2020 Census numbers in McLean County to the state and the 2010 Census total numbers. In comparison, McLean County surpassed the 2010 response rate. Ms. Cooper explained that the Town of Normal (TON)

numbers look slightly lower from the 2010 count because the Census Bureau counted college students differently and were not included in the numbers in her presentation.

Throughout the months of the 2020 Census, staff participated in 80 events which reached about 39,000 people. These events included back to school backpack events, food pantries, library events, peace meal congregate and home delivery sites, and more.

A big component of staff and CCC efforts was in signage. These were placed in the airport, Uptown Normal, and every Connect Transit bus and bus stop. In total they dispersed 30,000 signs, posters and fliers, gave out 11,000 free items and distributed over 350 yard signs for placement. There have been 8 news articles written about the CCC efforts locally between McLean County and Peoria. They did 60 Facebook posts, and had postings in newsletters with up to 76,000 subscribers.

Mr. Lai thanked Ms. Hauman and Mr. Wylie of the Commission for serving on the Complete Count Committee (CCC) and their efforts in this as well.

Ms. Hauman acknowledged Ms. Cooper for everything she has done in coordinating the various efforts for the 2020 Census and being a great leader in the CCC.

c. Vision Zero transportation safety project update

Ms. Sicks provided an update on the Vision Zero project. There has been ongoing progress being made. At the beginning of the project the subject expert panel was pulled together to discuss what the underlying safety issues were and how that related to infrastructure. The consultant then identified three focus areas: infrastructure; culture change; and data, technology and research.

Once the three focus groups were formed, a series of virtual meetings by all three groups were held to review the information. They had to come up with group responses and perspectives based on their specific focus area.

Based on the varying feedback gathered from these focus groups, the consultant will prepare a draft final report. Once this is written, everyone will have the opportunity to review and comment for the final report. Ms. Sicks said that they are hoping for this to happen over the next month or 6 weeks. The consultant is planning to finish the project by the end of March/early April 2021. When the consultant is finished working on their work, MCRPC staff, the project steering committee, and the subject matter experts will finalize other aspects of this project that the consultant group is not commissioned to work on.

d. Bloomington-Normal Innovation Alliance (Smart Cities Initiative)

Mr. Lai provided an update on the Bloomington-Normal Innovation Alliance (BNIA). He stated that this project has been in the MCRPC work program for the past couple of years ago. In the past this project was called the Smart Cities Initiative however few months ago they adopted the new formal name of Bloomington-Normal Innovation Alliance (BNIA). This group is composed

of elected officials and county and city administrators/managers from the three local governmental entities, and representatives of the two universities, Illinois State University (ISU) and Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU). Other partners include the McLean County Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Corporation of Bloomington-Normal, and the Central Illinois Regional Broadband Network.

The objective of this group is to link problems in the area to solutions through research and technological focuses. He said that this is still a young group, but members have high energy, great teamwork, and high hopes for what they can accomplish. Mr. Lai explained that one of the projects they are working on is the 5G small cell project for Bloomington/Normal area. This regional significant project is a good example of all local governmental entities working together in finding the best outcome for our region.

In the near future, MCRPC staff will be asking the commission members for approval of a memorandum of understanding (MOU). This memorandum has two focuses, one being to ensure communication and coordination among the various partners. The second being to collaborate together and expand one's knowledge to pursue further research and solutions to enhance quality of life in our area.

Mr. Teichman, who is also a member of this group, added that he believes that they are ahead as a community especially with addressing the technological advances in terms of planning and development. Regarding the 5G project, they are working with providers to identify sensible ways of placing the 5G towers throughout the community.

Mr. Pettorini asked Mr. Teichman if he was aware if there were going to be more tower placements in the community since they need to be in a line of sight. Mr. Teichman answered yes but they will be on a smaller scale, which is one of the issues that the group is working on addressing with the utility companies.

Ms. Kramp asked if the municipalities in Illinois are working together to gain more influence on these tower placements. Mr. Lai responded that municipalities are willing to work together but have faced the challenge of being one voice. This is due to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) making changes to a model ordinance, which has been adopted by various municipalities. The other challenge that they face is that the service providers have their own lobbyists in Springfield.

e. That which may arise

Mr. Lai advised the commission members that election of officers will be held in the next MCRPC meeting and that all three positions (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Executive Committee Representative) are open.

7. Adjournment:

Ms. Kramp called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Teichman moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Bittner seconded the motion, which passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Robinson
Office Manager/Executive Assistant