



**Southwest Missouri Council of Governments
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 22, 2024
9:00 a.m.**

Library Center, 4653 S. Campbell Ave., Springfield, MO

Attendance:

Zoom Attendees:

Mac Manning – Reeds Spring
Megan Bischof – Ozark
Ken Gaspar – Monett
Lisa Robinson – MU Extension
Darren Indovina - Monett
Thomas Relford – Bolivar
Sherri Rhuems – Workforce Investment Board

Sheila Wyatt – Taney County
J. Howard Fisk – Fisk Limousine
Jessica Tate – Mo Job Center
Mark Wallace – Codefi
Nathan Piche – Indian Point
Randy Burke – Monett
Sheila Thomas – Table Rock Lake Chamber

Members:

Joe Kelley – Mt Vernon
Wes Young – Willard
Stan Whitehurst – Webster County
Andrew Romano – Springfield COC
Callie Linville – CU
Cheri Hagler - Springfield
Andy Novinger – Own, Inc
Dick Scott – Olsson
Sam Rost – Marshfield
Cameron Smith – Ozark
Dean Thompson – Springfield COC
Hollie Elliott – Dallas County
Mark Hecquet – Springfield CVB
Mark Colussy – Branson
Debi Mace – Forsyth
Chris Berndt – Taney County
Bradley Jackson – Christian County

Todd Wiesehan – Christian County
Chris Daugherty – Hurley
John Forrester – Allgeier, Martin, & Associates
Mark Crabtree – Battlefield
Nancy Edson – Esterly, Schneider & Associates
Cindy Robbins – Nixa
Cindy Stephens – OTC
Randy Owens – Webster County
John Crawford – Dallas County
Anna Evans – SMCC
Neil Brady – Bartlett West
Dennis Wiggins – TCP
Stan Whitehurst – Webster County
Dawen Gardner – Kimberling City
Kathy Smith – N Form Architecture
Yolanda Lorge – Grupo Latinoamericana

Partners and Guests:

Payton Ruddy – Congressman Alford’s Office
Mike Ussery – Senator Schmitt’s Office
Brian Schwarz – MoDED
David Knaut – OTO
Tanner Wallace – Senator Hawley’s Office

Brad Kelley – MoDOT
Tanya Turner - MoDNR
Andrea Sitzes – Arvest Bank
Beth Schaller – MoDOT
Tracy Slagle – Liberty Utilities

Cynthia Collins – Workforce Development
John Farmer de la Torre – Ozarks Film Foundry
Ronda Burnett – MDC
Robert Mace

Theresa Sampaio – MoDED
David Carr – Ozarks Film Foundry
Brittini Bates – Mt. Vernon Chamber
Christy Beshore – Mt. Vernon ED

Staff:

Jason Ray
Jane Hood
Aishwarya Shrestha
Michael Kohler
Kelsi Burton

Evan Cook
Jake Phillips
Courtney Pinkham
Krissy Dickens
Garrett Colony

Open Meeting

1. Call to Order – Cindy Stephens

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Introductions and Announcements

4. Approval of May 22, 2024, Meeting Agenda – Cindy Stephens

Sam Rost motioned, Nancy Edson seconded to approve the May 22, 2024 Agenda. Motion carried.

5. Approval of March 27, 2024, Meeting Minutes— Cindy Stephens

Mark Colussy motioned, Randy Owens seconded to approve the March 27, 2024 Minutes. Motion carried.

Legislative Reports

-Tanner Wallace – Senator Hawley’s Office

Senator Hawley feels we must reinforce our commitment to law enforcement, he has entered the STOIC Act, which provides grant funding for law enforcement family-support services and establishes suicide-prevention programs and mental health services for enforcement officers. This legislation is being presented to the Senate. He has also introduced the Protecting Our Farmers from the Green New Deal Act. This is to repeal the provisions permanently and give rights back to Missouri landowners.

-Mike Ussery – Senator Schmitt’s Office

Senator Schmitt supported the FAA which has passed and was signed by the president. This will refund airport and airport safety. He also helped introduce the Bipartisan Think Differently Database Act. This will help to create a comprehensive website to provide much-needed resources to assist individuals with intellectual disabilities.

-Payton Ruddy – Congressman Alford’s Office

Congressman Alford has started and co-chaired 2 new caucuses in the house. The first is the Bi-partisan Real Estate Caucus and the second is the Bi-partisan Long Range Strike Caucus. Their office is receiving calls regarding the illegal migrant flights back in 2023, he did take the lead in writing a letter to Congress on behalf of most of the Missouri delegation to the White House regarding this. They are questioning the illegal flights into St. Louis and Kansas City and asking for details. They are still waiting for a response. During the last week of May, their Lebanon, and Columbia offices will be closed due to a staff retreat at their Raymore office. The first week of June, the Columbia office will be closed as Payton is

attending a conference. They will still be available via email during those times. The second week of June, Payton will be on vacation, but will still respond to email as she is available.

State Legislative Reports

N/A

6. Guest Speakers –

-Leaders for Ozarks Region Evolvement (LORE) – Dean Thompson

Dean stated that this started back in 2022 when the Springfield Chamber of Commerce Leadership visited Northwest Arkansas (NWA) to discuss how they incorporated regionalism. They are hoping to bring CEOs together and connect public and private sectors to work as a 10-county region.

Recommendations from their meetings so far are as follows.

- Make LORE into a 501c3.
- SMCOG has done a good job of bringing together government organizations.
- Initially focus on workforce attraction.
- Connecting community, workforce development, and economic development.

They plan to announce their board members and what their next steps are in June 2024.

-Jane Hood asked if they still planned to have an 8-member board.

-Dean stated that they have 10, but still are working through those specific details. They are considering having a larger board, and a smaller executive committee.

-John Crawford asked if the region included all of the SMCOG 10-county region.

-Dean stated yes, all ten SMCOG counties will be included in this region.

-Ozarks Film Foundry – John Farmer de la Torre, Executive Director

Jason Ray started by explaining that he was approached by the Greene County Commissioners after John Farmer de la Torre had met with them regarding starting an Ozarks Film Commission. The Greene County Commissioners felt like something of this nature should be for a larger region and recommended SMCOG as the organization to endorse the Film Commission in order to be a member of the Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI). It requires indorsement from a government or regional government agency. This is why John is here to give a brief presentation on the Ozarks Film Foundry and the proposal of them starting the Ozarks Film Foundry. Afterward, he would like the SMCOG board to discuss if they feel like this is something we should endorse.

John stated that his organization offers free and low-cost classes on all things related to the film industry. Last year Missouri passed a Film Tax Credit, this is a way to attract the film industry to come to our state. Historically we have lost out on many opportunities in the film industry, including the show "Ozarks," which was filmed in Georgia.

-Jane Hood asked if they will work with the CVBs in the region.

-John responded that they have not, but it is in their plan.

-Cindy Stephens asked that in the proposal it mentions that they want to follow the Ft. Worth commission model, why is that?

-John stated that he liked how they handled leadership and that they have associate film commissioners. The title of film commissioners can change to different individuals as needed.

-Tracy Slagle asked if the commission would handle issues that might arise from the film production side.

-John responded that yes, they would assist with attempting to make sure things run smoothly.

-Mark Hecquet stated that the State has a film office that works with a commission.
-John replied that they have worked with the State and the commissions in St. Louis and Kansas City.
-Mark asked what the difference would be between the Film Foundry to a Film Commission.
-John stated that the commission part is the difference.
-Mark asked will this help the region to attract more movies, TV...
-John commented that this would help to make the region more visible on a national level.
-Jane Hood asked if we pass this endorsement would this guarantee the certification of the Film Commission.
-John stated that after the endorsement, the next steps would be to get certified as a film commissioner. After that is completed then the Film Commission would be certified.

-Cindy asked if SMCOG decided to rescind their endorsement what would happen.
-John responded that it is up to SMCOG to make a policy/procedure and put in place to remove the commission if needed.

-Mark Colussy stated his support for the Film Commission.

-Sam Rost asked if it is typical for a Council of Governments (COG/Regional Planning Commission (RPC) to be the endorser.

-Jason Ray replied the AFCI Guidelines requirements state to take the first step in getting certification they must be endorsed by a unit of local government, a regional government, or regional government association such as SMCOG.

-Courtney Pinkham asked if they are working with other film organizations.

-John stated that it would be his organization. He feels like his organization is the only one working on the film industry.

-Wesley Young asked what risks SMCOG would take on.

-John stated that the only risk is publicity, and more people might move into this region.

-Jane Hood asked if there are currently only 300 certifications in the world, how difficult is the process?

-John replied he would have to take a lot of courses and exams to be certified.

-John Crawford asked how long the certification process would take.

-John responded if SMCOG passed today he could be certified by August, He will be hosting a summit on 06/20/2024 to discuss regionalism and what efforts we have made in our region.

Business

1. Resolution to Endorse the Ozarks Film Commission – Included in meeting packet. Jason Ray Jason drafted a resolution in case the Board voted to make the endorsement. He included in the recommendation that regional CVBs should be included in the commission. SMCOG does not have a recommendation of how the Board should vote on this resolution. Jason would like the Board to discuss and decide. Jason also stated that it would help if we move forward now so that the certification can happen by the August cutoff.

-Cindy Stephens asked if it was a good idea to have a film commission and if SMCOG should host it? She then asked for discussion on why it may not be a good idea.

-Mark Hecquet, Executive Director of the Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) asked to make a few general comments.

The film industry has a big impact on economic development. Springfield CVB has had a good long-standing relationship with the Missouri Film Office, working on encouraging films in the area. This is the first time he has seen this presentation, and he has many questions. Mark feels that we do not have the support system set up in our region for the film industry. Mark looks forward to the opportunity to discuss this subject further with John.

-Bradley Jackson stated he thinks it has a lot of potential but does not like the idea of rushing into a decision. He would like to have more time to make the decision.

-Cindy Stephens asked if the Board thought the Executive Committee should make this decision or if the full board wanted to vote.

-Bradley Jackson stated he felt the full Board should vote since it would affect all of us.

-Dawne Gardner asked if we do not vote on this now, how would that effect the commission.

-John stated that it would delay the commission by a year.

-Dawne asked if we are just voting to show support.

-Cindy stated, no we would be endorsing the Ozarks Film Foundry as the commission.

-Dawne said this sounds like a no brainer and is in support.

-Mark Colussy stated that not having a MOU in place makes it difficult to make a decision. He further stated we should be working with the commission and CVB. He then asked if we should do a trial run as a probationary period.

-Stan Whitehurst stated he did feel like the decision time was too short.

-Wesley Young agreed to a probationary period.

-Howard Fisk commented that we should not be pressured into making a decision. He also feels that film commissions might not be as important as they used to be. He feels like we should table for a month. He has seen 3 previous commissions come and go.

Howard Fisk made the motion to table for one month. Nancy Edson seconded the motion.

-Cindy Stephens called for any discussion on the motion.

-Tracy Slagle asked if the probation period would hinder their decision and can John do the commission training without the endorsement from SMCOC.

-John stated he cannot start the training until the endorsement, and that a trial run would still need an endorsement.

-Chris Berndt stated that he felt pressured to make a decision today. He understands that waiting a month is not going to help John with his timeline, but we should not rush into this decision.

-Brittini Bates, Mt Vernon Chamber of Commerce thinks this is a good opportunity. She clarified that she is not suggesting that we vote today, but she does support the idea of the film commission.

-John commented that he worked 2 years at Miramax and does have experience in the industry. He further stated that in the film industry, they do not use the internet to find individuals who

do work, rather they go to other individuals in the film industry for recommendations. For us to build a film industry in our region we need a commission.

-Randy Owens asked why they picked SMCOG, and if they have asked other entities for an endorsement.

-John stated that they spoke to Greene County Commissioners, and they recommend working on the regional level with SMCOG.

-Callie Linville stated that as a board member of the Springfield CVB, this is the first time she has heard of the film commission, and she supports tabling.

Howard Fisk motioned, and Nancy Edson seconded the motion to table for one month. Motion carried. Cindy asked if anyone wanted a hand count. No one responded.

2. 2024-2025 Nominating Committee Discussion – Cindy Stephens

Cindy called for volunteers for the Nominating Committee. If you are interested in joining the Nominating Committee or a subgroup, please reach out to Jason or Jane.

-Callie Linville asked how much time was required for the Nominating Committee.

-Jason Ray responded that it is a few emails and a 30-minute Zoom meeting.

-Andrea Sitzes, Sam Rost and Wesley Young volunteered to be on the Nominating Committee.

-Cindy commented that the Executive Committee is a smaller committee, and they are discussing expanding this to add a small community representative and a regional representative.

3. Program Updates – Included in meeting packet. Jason Ray

Other Business – Cindy Stephens

None

Partner Updates

-MoDOT – Beth Schaller/Brad Kelly

Brad mentioned that the STIP is open for public comment until 5/30/24. You can go to MoDOT.org for more information.

Beth commented MoDOT has a lot of construction, maintenance, and mowing projects currently happening. Please remember to drive slowly when you come up on one of these projects.

-Ozarks Transportation Organization (OTO) – David Knaut

David commented that OTO has applied for a RAISE grant and a few other grants. Funding for the I44 project is going well.

-MoDNR – Tanya Turner

Tanya shared that they had a ribbon cutting for two playgrounds in Meramec State Park on May 18th. Drought conditions have significantly improved in most of the state.

-MDC – Ronda Burnett

Ronda announced that the Johnny Morris Institute of Fisheries, Wetlands, and Aquatic Systems is now starting to staff up. MDC was involved in working with Ozark to get a 10-acre community forest and the ribbon cutting will be announced soon. The APA Quad State conference will be held in Fayetteville. This is the 10th anniversary of the Great Places Program, and they will be accepting nominations soon.

-MoDED – Theresa Sampaio

Theresa stated that MoDED has a lot going on with their Broadband efforts ,and you can check out their website for more details. They have monthly webinars updating on the broadband efforts, the next webinar is May 31st.

Member Updates

Dawne Gardner thanked SMCOG for sharing their public event. Due to the weather, the event date has changed to 6/5/24.

Cindy Stephens stated if you want to help with the film commission talks, please reach out.

Adjourn

Next SMCOG Board Meeting will be held on June 26th, 2024, at the Library Center, 4653 S. Campbell, Springfield, MO

Steve Childers, Secretary

Date Approve