



The City of Morgantown

Linda L. Tucker, CMC
389 Spruce Street, Room 10
Morgantown, West Virginia 26505
(304) 284-7439 Fax: (304) 284-7525
llittle@cityofmorgantown.org

Office of the City Clerk

AGENDA
MORGANTOWN CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
November 25, 2014
7:00 p.m.

NOTE: Committee of the Whole Meetings of the Morgantown City Council are intended to provide an opportunity for the Council to receive information, ask questions, and identify policy options in an informal setting. No official action is taken at these meetings. At this Committee of the Whole Meeting the following matters are scheduled:

PRESENTATIONS:

1. Coordinating Council on Homelessness
2. Chamber of Commerce
3. Walnut Streetscape Presentation
4. Ward and Boundary Report
5. Million Hour Match
6. Upper Monongahela River Association Request

PUBLIC PORTION:

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. EPA Bike Sharing Technical Assistance Grant Application



Upper Monongahela River Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 519
Granville, WV 26534-0519

Donald C. Strimbeck, Secretary
109 Broad Street, P.O. Box 519
Granville, WV 26534-0519
304-599-7585 (Fax:4131)
Email: dcsinks@comcast.net

UMRA-Morgantown-18NovY2K14

Tuesday 18 November 2014

Jeff Mikorski, Morgantown City Manager
City of Morgantown
389 Spruce Street
Morgantown WV 26505
304-284-7430
jmikorski@cityofmorgantown.org

Dear Mr. Mikorski:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Monongalia County Commission and its partner the Upper Monongahela River Association (UMRA) request five thousand dollars from the City of Morgantown, to be used as partial payment to the US Army Corps of Engineers, to reopen and staff the locks on the Upper Monongahela River at Opekiska and Hildebrand, and as necessary at Morgantown. The locks would be opened for approximately 34 days during the 2015 summer season. This would foster increased commerce, recreation and economic development on the Upper Monongahela River including allowing fishing tournaments and other events to take place that would not be able to do so were the locks continued to be closed.

Further, it is requested the City of Morgantown provide \$500 of funding to UMRA to support our efforts to keep the locks open for boating, fishing, recreation and commerce. This support would help defray operating expenses including insurance, accounting and membership in national waterways organizations vital to maintaining our non-profit 501 C 6 operations and partnerships nationally.

www.UpperMon.org

BACKGROUND

The locks on the Upper Monongahela River (Mon) in West Virginia have been closed ¹ by the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to recreational passages beginning in calendar year 2013. For many years before that the hours had been gradually reduced. The result of these reductions and closures has been the winding down of recreational use, including fishing and boating on the Upper Monongahela River. Although this stretch of the river offers some of the best fishing in the state, and there are as many as 700 fishing tournaments in WV each year with more than 300,000 holding fishing licenses, less than 10 tournaments (only 5 larger scale) are now held on the Upper Mon each year. In fact with the locks closed, unless the Corps grants an extraordinary exception, no major or significant tournaments can be held because individual pools created by the locks and dams are not large enough to host the number of boats involved, not to mention the elimination of recreational boat passages. ² The impact of one BASS Mid-Atlantic Tournament alone, scheduled for June 2014 on the Upper Mon, assuming the locks will be reopened, will be to add between \$70,000 to \$80,000 to the Marion/Mon County region.

River commerce has also declined with passages (including from Fairmont) through the Opekiska and Hildebrand locks down to almost zero. Commercial passages through the Morgantown lock have also declined significantly and continue to wind down due in part to reduced lock hours during the weekdays and closures on weekends. By comparison, during WWII there was more commerce on the Monongahela River than on the Rhine in Europe and in the 1970's through the early 1980's there was still very significant commercial tonnage and passages. ³

EFFORTS UNDERWAY

The Monongalia County Commission, the Upper Monongahela River Association (UMRA) and the Marion County Commission have undertaken efforts to re-grow commerce, recreation and economic development on the Upper Mon. To that end UMRA has worked with the Corps for the last 18 months, on behalf of and with the Monongalia County Commission, to reopen the locks at Opekiska and Hildebrand and increase the operating hours at Morgantown. To date, UMRA has conducted two negotiating sessions with the Corps to develop a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). In order to move forward and enter these negotiations, signoffs by the US Senate Finance committee, the US House Finance committee, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, a Senate subcommittee, the Assistant Secretary of the Army, the Pittsburgh District of the Corps, the Great Lakes Division of the Corps and the Washington Headquarters of the Corps had to be obtained. We will use non-federal "contributed funds" to pay the Corps to reopen the locks every other weekend and during the week to support major tournaments or holidays for the 2015 summer season. To date, Partners that have expressed willingness to participate include the Monongalia County Commission, the Marion County

Commission, the Monongalia County Development Authority, the Greater Morgantown Convention and Visitors Bureau, the City of Morgantown, the City of Granville, the State Senate, the State House, the Greater Morgantown Chamber of Commerce and the Coal Association.

We estimate approximately \$40,000 of contributed funds will be required. The Monongalia County Commission will be the formal governmental entity legally contracting with the Corps. The Commission has established a line item to collect and pass through money to the Corps. UMRA, a 501 C6 Corporation, is negotiating the Memorandum of Agreement with the Corps on the Commission's behalf. UMRA was incorporated in 2002 and has been the point of contact in WV regarding most activities of the Corps on the Upper Mon River and has had a minimum of 3 and in some cases 10 meetings each year, most of them public. UMRA's charter and activities are outlined on the website: www.uppermon.org.

SPECIFIC FUNDING REQUEST

The Monongalia County Commission and UMRA are seeking \$5000 as the City of Morgantown's contribution towards our efforts to reopen the locks on the Upper Monongahela River and re-grow commerce, recreation and economic development on the Mon. The funds will be put in a separate County Commission account used to pay the Corps every other weekend during the summer season for a total of approximately 34 days at an estimated cost of \$40,000.

Further, it is requested the City of Morgantown provide \$500 of funding to UMRA to support our continuing efforts and negotiations with the Corps to reopen the locks for boating, fishing, recreation and commerce. This support would help defray operating expenses including insurance, accounting and memberships in national waterways organizations vital to maintaining our non-profit 501 C 6 operations and partnerships nationally.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Since the Corps has now been tasked with undertaking a study (216) to determine whether the locks on the Upper Mon should remain in Federal Service, City of Morgantown support along with those of the partners listed above will demonstrate to the Corps that West Virginia considers these locks critical and vital infrastructure for the current and future well being of the State. To further demonstrate that support, the UMRA website contains resolutions dated as early as 2003 and continuing to the present, in support of keeping the locks open, that have been passed by more than 20 public and private entities representing well over 100,000 West Virginians and more than 400 companies. Further examples include the "Resolution In Support of Efforts To Open the Locks on the Upper Monongahela River" recently passed by the Morgantown Area Chamber of Commerce (attachment) and another passed by the Region VI Planning and Development Council. In closing, it is important to the economy and well being of West Virginia to keep the locks on the Upper Monongahela River open in order to foster commerce, recreation and economic development.

www.UpperMon.org

Please feel free to contact me at 304-276-3792 or bpallay@comcast.net or Monongalia County Commissioner Eldon Callen if you need further information regarding this request. The Corps will require funds upfront before they will commit to firm scheduling regards re-opening the Opekiska and Hildebrand locks. Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Barry Pallay, President Upper Monongahela River Association

cc: jselin@hotmail.com

ckelly@cityofmorgantown.org

callen@cityofmorgantown.org

- ¹ except for 1 shift/day weekdays during the summer season at the Morgantown lock
- ² Since there is essentially no public access to the Hildebrand Pool, there is little if any boating even within the pool itself
- ³ Note - The pools created by the Lock and Dams on the Upper Mon also provide drinking water for upwards of 100,000 people, companies and organizations including public schools and WVU. They also provide the navigable waterway to barge coal and limestone to fuel the power plants to provide our electricity; and to barge gasoline and diesel to fuel our cars and trucks.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF EFFORTS TO OPEN THE LOCKS ON THE
UPPER MONONGAHELA RIVER

WHEREAS, the US Army Corps of Engineers has closed the Upper Monongahela River locks at Hildebrand and Opekiska to recreational boating and has severely curtailed service at the Morgantown locks. This has adversely affected recreational boating, river commerce, and economic development in our region, and;

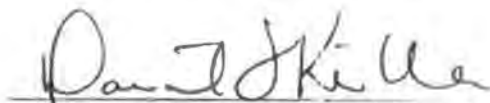
WHEREAS, the Morgantown Area Chamber of Commerce believes it is important to the regional economy to keep the locks on the Upper Monongahela open in order to foster recreational and commercial use of the River, and;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Morgantown Area Chamber of Commerce supports the efforts of the Monongalia County Commission and the Upper Monongahela River Association to reopen the locks operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the Upper Monongahela River using contributed funds in order to enhance river recreation, commerce, and economic development in the region.

Adopted this 20th day of August, 2014 by the Morgantown Area Chamber of Commerce.



Frank Vitale, Chair



Daniel Kimble, President/CEO

11/20/14

Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities
Letter of Interest

Dear Sir or Ma'am:

Monongalia County, WV is nestled in the northeast portion of WV. The Mason Dixon Line is its northern border, separating West Virginia from Pennsylvania. Monongalia County or "Mon County", as referred by the locals, is also home to the Monongahela River, Cooper's Rock State Forest and West Virginia University. With relatively low out-of-state tuition, a level one trauma center and various employment opportunities, the population of Monongalia County has seen extensive growth of over 35,000 people in the last forty years. While this boom is good for economic growth, it has an impact on the local infrastructure. Streets are over-crowded and traffic can be at a stand-still during peak hours of the day. In an effort to reduce some traffic congestion, alternative modes of transportation are being explored, tried and tested. Bike-sharing is a program that would benefit the community offering an alternative transportation option.

At this time, a Bike Sharing Feasibility Study has not yet been performed; however, the Morgantown Bicycle Board has worked diligently to complete the area's Comprehensive Bike Plan. Morgantown is officially the first city in WV to be named a Bicycle Friendly Community (BCF), bronze level, as designated by the League of American Bicyclists. In the latest Rails to Trails Magazine, The Power of 32 is planning to connect trails in Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and West Virginia which will become the largest trail network in the United States. Whether ready or not, these efforts and designations are throwing Morgantown and Monongalia County into the bicycling limelight.

Although attempts have been made, Monongalia County has been slow to enact county-wide zoning ordinances and currently, has only one zoned district outside of the Morgantown city limits. As sprawl continues to infiltrate the more rural areas of Monongalia County, more and more residents find themselves isolated from social activities. If a bike-share program could be strategically placed close to transit stops, rails-to-trails, shopping centers etc, a more multi-modal community would be achieved. Individuals who previously had no transportation or had to adhere to transit routes and or friends and family's schedules may be given the liberty to determine their own itinerary.

Terrain in Mon County varies from the lowest point at 960 feet in Morgantown to 2100 feet in Cooper's Rock State Forest. The topography also adds to the difficulty in implementing a bike-sharing program. Through the technical assistance workshop, advocates and decision-makers can be guided on the strategic approach of creating a bike-share program that advances our community's overall goals.

Mon County has approximately 9% minority population and based on a 2012 survey, approximately 22% of residents live in poverty. Participation from these underrepresented populations would be strongly encouraged. Contact would be made through social media, news media, television and various social services groups such as the Try This WV, the United Way and local food pantries. With the assistance of

a Mobility Coordinator, transportation options for community members wishing to attend the workshops would be arranged.

Monongalia County and especially the city of Morgantown's capacity for implementation of a bike share program is at a prime juncture. With the revamping of the Green Space Coalition and the various pedestrian and bike board meetings that focus on the safety of the trails, the community is aware of the need to increase utilization of the current infrastructure. Several requests for bike sharing programs have been received by various organizations such as: Adventure WV (the West Virginia University student orientation program), Neighborhood Coordinating Council, the regional Convention and Visitor's Bureau, as well as trail-side wellness programs, restaurants and hotels. These businesses and organizations are aware of the benefits of a bike-share program and are advocating for its operation.

A Complete Streets Policy has been adopted by the City of Morgantown to specifically address pedestrian bike traffic on city streets. Current physical improvements include the authorization of a bike climbing lane on the major boulevard that connects the downtown WVU campus with the WVU Evansdale Campus. This campus is presently being reconditioned for biking and walking, a prime location for bike-sharing. Other evidence of this biking renaissance is the approval of funding for a bridge connecting the Greenmont Neighborhood to our downtown trail network.

Assistance from the EPA will complement the work of the Morgantown Monongalia Metropolitan Planning Organization (MMMPO). Within the last year, the MMMPO Policy Board adopted a bicycle plan for inclusion in the 2013-2040 Long Range Transportation Plan. The core vision of MMMPO Bicycle Plan encourages bicycle use as a practical transportation alternative to the personal auto. The Plan also notes that cyclists should be able to ride in a safe and supportive environment.

As a community, the City of Morgantown and its Mon County partners will market and attend the EPA's workshop, invite key stakeholders, complete a self-assessment and provide local logistics to further assist the program.

Primary contacts include:

Mayor Jenny Selin
City of Morgantown
389 Spruce Street
Morgantown, WV 26505
304-685-6569
citycouncilward4@cityofmorantown.org

Samantha Maki
Family Resource Network Manager
United Way of Monongalia and
Preston Counties
278C Spruce Street
Morgantown, WV 26505
frn@unitedwaympc.org

Kelli LaNeve
Mobility Coordinator
Mountain Line Transit Authority
420 DuPont Road
Morgantown, WV
laneve@busride.org