

Minutes of the Twenty First Meeting of the
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

DATE: September 22, 2011
TIME: 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: IndependenceFirst
540 South 1st Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Members Present

Adelene Greene..... Director, Division of Workforce Development,
Chair Kenosha County
Nancy Holmlund..... President, WISDOM Interfaith Coalition
Vice Chair
Lynnette McNeely Attorney, Law Offices of Thomas J. Awen; NAACP
Brian Peters Housing Policy Advocate, IndependenceFirst
Yolanda Santos Adams Director, League of United Latin American Citizens

Guests and Staff Present

Stephen P. Adams Public Involvement and Outreach Manager, SEWRPC
Nancy M. Anderson Chief Community Assistance Planner, SEWRPC
Gary K. Korb Regional Planning Educator, UW-Extension/SEWRPC
Benjamin R. McKay Principal Planner, SEWRPC
Catherine Madison Policy Analyst, UWM Center for Economic Development
Karyn Rotker Attorney, ACLU of Wisconsin
Jim Rowen Citizen

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Greene called the meeting of the Environmental Justice Task Force to order at 4:05 p.m., welcoming those in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 6, 2011, MARCH 3, 2011, AND MAY 12, 2011

Ms. Greene noted that not enough Task Force members were present at this time to constitute a quorum, although additional Task Force members may be expected to attend. She suggested that this agenda item be moved to later in the meeting in the event that enough Task Force members would be present to constitute a quorum.

Mr. Peters stated that it may be appropriate to consider replacing members who have not attended a Task Force meeting for a considerable amount of time. Ms. Greene responded that she would like to discuss the matter of attendance, and possibly meeting format, later during the meeting when there would possibly be additional members present.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Greene asked if there were any public comments on the agenda or other Task Force business. The following public comment was made:

1. Ms. Rotker stated that conducting interviews with past and current members of the Task Force may be a means of obtaining feedback relevant to meeting attendance, whether that involves meeting format, location, frequency, or other matters. Ms. Rotker stated that periodic evaluations regarding the Task Force were required by the EJTF organization document, and a series of interviews could provide a formal and organized approach for that process.

UPDATE ON THE REGIONAL HOUSING PLAN – CHAPTER X, SUBSIDIZED AND TAX CREDIT HOUSING, AND CHAPTER VIII, JOB/HOUSING BALANCE

Ms. Greene asked Ben McKay of the Commission staff to provide the Task Force with an update on Chapter X, *Subsidized and Tax Credit Housing*, of the regional housing plan, which was distributed to Task Force members at the meeting. Mr. McKay noted that he would begin with a review of Chapter X, and transition to the second part of the agenda item pertaining to the regional housing plan, which was a discussion of Chapter VIII, *Job/Housing Balance* (also distributed). Both draft chapters were covered by the handout he would be using to help guide the discussion. Mr. McKay asked the Task Force to turn their attention to the PowerPoint presentation entitled *Update on the Regional Housing Plan* (see Attachment 1). The following discussion points and comments were made regarding the update:

1. Mr. Peters stated, with reference to Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers and applications to the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee, that subsidized housing demand far exceeds supply. He noted that there is a waiting list of over 3,500 applications which was determined by lottery in 2006 from among 17,000 households which applied. Mr. McKay added that the 17,000 applicants included everyone who registered, including some who were not qualified.
2. Ms. Holmlund noted from the PowerPoint handout that four counties in the Region were listed as having no family public housing units, Kenosha, Ozaukee, Racine, and Walworth, asking whether that was correct. Mr. McKay responded that it was indeed correct, stemming from whether or not there were public housing authorities in those counties, and their respective roles. Ms. Anderson stated that Racine County had only elderly/special needs units managed by a public housing authority. Ms. Rotker stated from the audience that local governments must agree to create public housing authorities, and some have chosen not to do so.
3. Mr. Peters suggested that the maps from Chapter X depicting HUD assisted privately owned housing units have larger insets for Milwaukee County because of the concentration depicted. Ms. Anderson stated that such larger insets would be prepared, and noted that detailed spreadsheets showing this information by discrete address could be accessed from the housing page of the SEWRPC website.
4. Mr. Peters inquired as to the source of data used for mapping HUD assisted privately owned housing units for elderly/persons with disabilities in the Region by county. He stated that he believed there was a problem with the HUD website relative to the refinancing of several housing projects through one loan. Mr. McKay stated that the information in question was provided by HUD, from 2008, and would not include the loan Mr. Peters had referenced.

5. Mr. Peters asked about the nature of red circles designated “other complexes” on Map X-3, showing low-income housing tax credit multi-family housing in the Region. Mr. McKay stated that such units were generally transitional housing for the homeless.
6. Mr. Peters distributed to Task Force members the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee’s Annual Report for 2008-2010, *Navigating Through Change*, noting that the report provided a good history within the context of what has happened to both Milwaukee and public housing within the City over time.
7. Ms. Holmlund stated that she found it interesting that Habitat for Humanity would have difficulty finding people qualified to occupy the homes constructed by that organization.
8. Ms. Rotker stated, in regard to low income housing tax credit multi-family complexes in the Region, that it would be helpful to have a breakout regarding elderly and family units by race. Ms. Rotker also stated a concern with point systems used to rank applications to construct tax credit housing, noting that a lack of local support can cause a proposed project to score fewer points. The result, she stated, is low income housing complexes in low income areas instead of in areas of job concentration. Mr. McKay noted that the Regional Housing Plan Advisory Committee discussed the issue raised by Ms. Rotker during its review of Chapter VI.
9. Ms. Holmlund stated that there was a need to get the valuable information being generated by the Regional Housing Study out to elected officials and the public, to generate awareness of core issues that could otherwise be overlooked, and to facilitate public access. She also stated a hope that the biggest discrepancies in job vs. housing locations would be highlighted, and that the Regional Planning Commission’s recommendations would be clearly spelled out. Ms. Anderson stated that there is widespread representation of governmental and other interests on the Regional Housing Plan Advisory Committee, and ultimately the seven counties in the Region will be asked to endorse the recommended plan. Ms. Anderson then briefly described a series of public meetings related to regional housing plan findings, being planned for locations throughout Region to be held during November-December 2011. Ms. Anderson also noted that all county and local governments in the Region will receive notice regarding the upcoming public meetings, as well as summary information via newsletter, as has been the case throughout the study. A wide-ranging list of interested citizens and organizations also receives such notices and informational materials. Mr. Korb stated that the intensive rounds of public involvement and outreach, as described by Ms. Anderson, are complemented by hundreds of ongoing meeting updates and presentations which have been given over the course of the regional housing study, many to central city, minority, and low income groups and organizations. Mr. Korb added that during the next agenda item Mr. Adams would describe additional outreach efforts that are being attempted and monitored as part of the study.
10. Mr. Peters stated that using media contacts would be an additional means of disseminating information related to the regional housing study. Mr. Rowen stated that SEWRPC could ask for meetings with the editorial boards of major newspapers in Milwaukee, Kenosha, Racine, and Waukesha to present information regarding the regional housing plan, as a step which usually helps generate news coverage.
11. Ms. McNeely stated that even multi-family housing in areas outlying from the City of Milwaukee can be expensive. She asked, in light of this cost situation, whether additional multi-family housing units would help. Mr. McKay stated that such findings of the regional housing plan may

help generate more affordable housing, but that draft Chapter VIII recognizes that subsidized housing may also be needed.

12. Ms. Holmlund stated that public transit connections may also be important to meeting low-income household needs. Mr. Peters asked how the State budget cuts regarding transit would affect local transit service and thus the connection between low-income neighborhoods with affordable housing and different locations having available jobs. Mr. McKay noted that several pages within the PowerPoint handout address employment-housing-transit connections, and that cuts to the sources funding public transit could further reduce the percent of employers accessible by local or rapid transit.
13. Ms. Rotker stated that the Year 2035 Regional Transportation System Plan is a great plan with respect to its recommendations for expansion of public transit; however, past transit cuts and recently announced State budget reductions in this regard will make the Plan's 2035 transit recommendations unachievable. She stated that due the disparate effect of this situation on minority and low-income populations, intermediate maps or other analyses should be prepared to indicate the changes in prospective transit implementation—perhaps showing reverse commute service in a different color. Ms. Santos Adams stated that the present economic situation and perspective on transit implementation could change, and thus intermediate products to reflect the current outlook may be premature. Ms. Santos Adams also observed that perhaps the plan design year should not be so far into the future. Mr. Korb stated that the Commission will try to provide additional information regarding transit cuts in the future, but being definitive is difficult because multiple means are being investigated by transit operators to plug budget holes and thus sustain transit service.
14. Ms. Rotker stated that the Job/Housing Balance Chapter should indicate that if the current budget situation with respect to transit funding continues, then greater imbalances will materialize. She added that the conditions should be displayed graphically. Mr. McKay stated that the text of Chapter VIII includes general discussion of transit reductions due to budget cuts. Ms. McNeely stated that providing information on the issue would offer due diligence regarding a significant concern. Mr. Peters suggested addressing the demographics of areas in which transit routes are to be cut in various communities. Mr. McKay stated that demographics could possibly be examined for communities, and the information provided when and if transit cuts are finalized.
15. Ms. Holmlund asked whether information would become available regarding ways in which conditions could change for the positive regarding job/housing balance. Mr. McKay responded that general indicators have been included in Chapter VIII, showing that local comprehensive plan amendments would need to occur, given that local zoning ordinance and map amendments must be consistent with the land uses designated on local land use plan maps.
16. Ms. Anderson referred the Task Force to a document that had been distributed to attendees at the request of Task Force member, Alderman Wade, of the City of Milwaukee: *Sustaining and Expanding Affordable Housing in Southeastern Wisconsin: Proposal for a Housing Trust Fund of Southeastern Wisconsin*, by the City of Milwaukee Housing Trust Fund, March 2011. Ms. Anderson called attention to the projects funded by the City of Milwaukee Housing Trust Fund over the past several years, as well as the projects funded by the Milwaukee County Special Needs Housing Trust Fund.

17. Ms. Holmlund asked whether representatives from other counties were being invited to join the effort to form a regional housing trust fund, and whether the money for such an undertaking was secure. Ms. Anderson responded that all county and local governments in the Region were being sought as potential partners. No specific source of funding has been identified.
18. Mr. Peters stated that he served on the City of Milwaukee Housing Trust Fund Committee. He indicated that initially in 2007, \$2.5 million was available in bonding. Subsequent years have been funded through general purpose revenues.
19. Ms. McNeely inquired as to whether nonprofit funding sources were involved in the proposal for a regional housing trust fund. Ms. Anderson responded that the present configuration of city and county funds is public in nature.

UPDATE ON PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

Ms. Greene asked Steve Adams of the Commission staff to update the Task Force on the Commission's public outreach efforts. Mr. Adams asked the Task Force to turn their attention to the handout titled *Status Report on Outreach Distribution of Regional Housing Plan Study Brochures* (see Attachment 2). He indicated that this report summarized the experience to date with use of brochures and one-page bulletins which the Task Force had recommended regarding public outreach for the regional housing plan. Specifically, the summary publications had been distributed in numerous non-traditional locations. Reactions thus far had been largely positive, and a more structured look at receptivity to the distribution and the handouts themselves via survey was being considered. Mr. Adams also referred the Task Force to three draft documents pertaining to the Commission's public participation in planning: *Public Participation Plan for Regional Planning in Southeastern Wisconsin* (see Attachment 3); *Public Participation Plan for Transportation Planning Conducted by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission* (detailed appendix, see Attachment 4); and *Public Participation in Regional Planning for Southeastern Wisconsin* (summary brochure, see Attachment 5). The following discussion points and comments were made regarding the Commission's public involvement and outreach efforts:

1. Ms. McNeely stated that she liked the colorful approach of recent summary publications, and inquired as to whether distribution of the housing plan brochures entailed a significant expense due to the cost of printing. She also stated that publication of the materials in community newspapers may be more cost-effective and enjoy a wider circulation. Mr. Adams stated that publication of such materials occurs in-house at SEWRPC at nominal cost, and the ability to have copies available at the drop-off locations for people to take during an extended period of time was valuable. Mr. Adams also stated that while the brochures and one-page bulletins could hopefully help generate some newspaper stories, additional community newspaper coverage of regional housing planning would be investigated. Ms. Anderson noted that paid advertisements and news releases regarding the regional housing plan are distributed to newspapers throughout the Region, including newspapers targeted to minority populations.
2. Ms. Holmlund suggested providing information on the regional housing plan to colleges and universities, and noted that the SEWRPC website was important for getting material to those interested as well as physical distribution of the handouts. Ms. McNeely stated that a regional housing plan brochure had been made available near her mother's house, which was impressive to see carried out. Mr. McKay relayed another example, of a telephone call received from a

person in Walworth County who had seen a regional housing plan brochure, and who was provided with multiple copies at her request for distribution at a local church.

3. Mr. Adams asked Mr. Korb to provide a brief background on the development of the proposed new public participation documents which had been distributed. Mr. Korb thanked members of the Task Force for their past comments regarding the incorporation of graphics and user-friendliness in summary publications by the Commission. It was with that guidance in mind that the proposed new *Public Participation Plan for Regional Planning in Southeastern Wisconsin* was created, as well as the proposed summary brochure, to accompany the proposed update of the detailed appendix governing transportation planning which the Task Force had reviewed on a number of prior occasions. Mr. Korb noted that all of these documents had been reviewed by the Regional Transportation Plan Advisory Committee and, pending Task Force comments, the documents would be made available for public comment and finalization. Ms. Santos Adams stated that she especially liked the summary brochure, and asked whether the brochure would be made available in Spanish. Mr. Korb responded that the brochure would indeed be translated for a Spanish language version.

NEXT MEETING DATE AND FUTURE MEETINGS

Ms. Greene stated that the next meeting of the Task Force was scheduled for Thursday, November 10, 2011, at Independence^{First}. She noted that seven Task Force members were needed at a meeting to constitute a quorum, which had not occurred since January 2011. Ms. Greene suggested that the Task Force proceed with the November meeting as scheduled, but evaluate alternatives in looking ahead to 2012. To initiate the discussion, Ms. Greene suggested that it was possible the Task Force was attempting to meet too frequently, and that perhaps returning to a quarterly sequence of meetings would result in stronger attendance, such as February, May, August, and November. Alternatively, a webinar or teleconference could be considered, members could be surveyed, and non-attendees could be contacted. The following discussion points and comments were made regarding future meetings of the Task Force:

1. Ms. Santos Adams stated that starting the meetings 30 minutes to one hour later would allow her to attend more Task Force meetings and arrive in a more timely manner.
2. Ms. McNeely stated that quarterly meetings would make more sense, and that Skype technology could be used to connect members unable to attend in person, though she would prefer not to rely upon Skype.
3. Mr. Peters stated that he was not sure moving to a quarterly schedule would help, given the amount of subject matter that can accumulate within two months. If helpful, it would be possible to project video teleconference images at Independence^{First}. Ms. McNeely stated that perhaps there would be greater overall participation if Skype were an option, but it may also be better to arrange for two webinar or Skype meetings during the year, to complement a few other meetings which would be in-person. Mr. Korb indicated that he had participated in many video-conferencing meetings, and two-location communications involving Skype, and that problems tied to complexity seemed to commonly interfere with fluid video streaming and interactions where multiple source locations were involved. Mr. Peters stated that, if it could be made to work, he liked the “hub and spoke” idea.
4. Ms. Holmlund stated that commuting time is a deterrent to attendance at Task Force meetings, particularly with highway construction as a factor. She added that a survey would be helpful of

current members who have not often been attending to determine if there is still interest on their part regarding the Task Force.

FURTHER PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Greene thanked the Task Force and audience members for their active participation. She then asked whether those in attendance had any additional comments. The following comment was made:

1. Ms. Rotker suggested that a brainstorming session be conducted with the Task Force on how to implement plans or make them enforceable. She stated as an example that road projects must be approved by SEWRPC to move forward; and these could be tied to transit for approval, whereby the plans would not be approved if transit were not included.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Greene declared the meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary K. Korb
Recording Secretary

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