

Minutes of the Seventeenth Meeting of the
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

DATE: November 4, 2010
TIME: 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: Independence *First*
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
Ella Dunbar Program Services Manager, Social Development Commission, Milwaukee
Brian Peters..... Housing Policy Advocate, Independence *First*
Theresa Schuerman..... Walworth County Bilingual Migrant Worker Outreach
Willie Wade Alderman, City of Milwaukee

Guests and Staff Present

Stephen P. Adams Public Involvement and Outreach Manager, SEWRPC
Nancy M. Anderson..... Chief Community Assistance Planner, SEWRPC
Dennis Grzezinski..... Midwest Environmental Advocates
Benjamin R. McKay Principal Planner, SEWRPC
Karyn Rotker..... Attorney, ACLU of Wisconsin
James Rowen Citizen
Kenneth R. Yunker Executive Director, SEWRPC

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 SEPTEMBER 2, 2010

Ms. Greene noted that not enough Task Force members were present to constitute a quorum. Therefore, the minutes of the September 2, 2010, meeting could not be approved or changed; however, she asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Greene asked if there were any public comments on the agenda or other Task Force business. Ms. Rotker stated that she has some concerns with the July 8, 2010, and September 2, 2010, minutes and has provided those concerns to SEWRPC staff. She noted that SEWRPC staff responded to her concerns shortly before the meeting, but she did not have enough time to review the response and would like the Task Force to defer approval of the September 2, 2010, minutes until a later meeting. Mr. Yunker stated

that staff will work with Ms. Rotker and Mr. Rast of the UWM Center for Economic Development to attempt to resolve any concerns with the minutes. Ms. Holmlund noted that accuracy is important and Mr. Peters agreed that the Task Force should defer approval of the minutes.

OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL HOUSING PLANNING STATUS

Mr. Yunker introduced Nancy Anderson of the Commission staff and asked her to provide the Task Force with an status update on the regional housing plan. Ms. Anderson asked the Task Force to turn their attention to the PowerPoint presentation entitled “*Overview of Regional Housing Plan Status*” (see Attachment 1). Ms. Anderson reviewed:

- Work completed to date on the plan
- Plan vision and objectives
- Sub-regional housing analysis areas
- Population and household distribution in the Region
- Existing housing stock
- Community policies and regulations affecting the provision of housing
- Housing discrimination and fair housing practices
- Report preparation outline and timeline

The following discussion points and comments were made regarding the status update on the regional housing plan:

1. Ms. Holmlund asked about the topic of the next series of public information meetings (PIM). Ms. Anderson responded that the first series was about the scope of work for the plan, the second series will present inventory data and data analysis findings, and the third series will present a preliminary draft of the regional housing plan. Ms. Holmlund asked if the public will have access to the meeting materials prior to the meetings. Ms. Anderson responded that a newsletter and news releases will be distributed prior to the meetings and both will include a link to the SEWRPC website. All plan materials are available on the website. Mr. Yunker noted that an example of the type of data that will be reviewed at the second series of PIMs is the job/housing balance analysis, which will be performed to determine if housing cost in sub-regional housing analysis areas is consistent with the incomes of jobs available in the sub-areas. He also noted that the first series of PIMs for regional plans in general is not as well attended as the later PIMs. He then noted that Steve Adams of the Commission staff will further discuss public involvement and outreach during the next agenda item. Ms. Schuerman asked if the outreach materials are available in Spanish. Ms. Anderson responded that the companion brochures to the newsletters are available in Spanish.
2. Mr. Peters asked if the median monthly cost for owner-occupied units included only the mortgage. Ms. Anderson responded that the monthly cost includes utilities, property tax, insurance, and homeowner association fees in addition to the mortgage.
3. Mr. Yunker stated that the Census is no longer using a long form survey questionnaire and that detailed Census information will be now be collected through the American Community Survey (ACS). Ms. Dunbar asked if ACS sample size will be taken into consideration. Mr. McKay responded that the margin of error is given for the data.

4. Mr. Wade asked if monthly cost data is available for renters. Ms. Anderson reviewed the median gross rent data for the Region in 2000. Mr. Wade asked if this data will be updated. Mr. McKay responded that the information will be updated with 2005-2009 ACS five year estimates when it becomes available in December 2010. He explained that the five year estimates include data for each of the cities, villages, and towns in the Region, which will be necessary to collect data at the sub-regional housing analysis level. Mr. Wade asked if the five year data will reflect the recent economic recession and housing crisis. Mr. McKay responded that the data will partially reflect the recession; however, some of the data was collected before the start of the recession. Mr. Wade asked if the ACS data is skewed because it was collected over a five year period. Mr. Yunker responded that it was necessary for the U.S. Census Bureau to collect the data over a five year period to get a large enough sample size for some of the smaller communities. Mr. Wade requested that maps be included in the report showing the proportion of owner- and renter-occupied housing units in each analysis area.
5. Ms. Greene asked if the housing development cost analysis for new multi-family housing includes two-family structures or just structures with three or more units. Ms. Anderson responded that it includes only structures with three or more units and noted that these units must be constructed to meet accessibility requirements. Mr. Peters noted that State law requires units in structures with three or more units to meet accessibility requirements and the Federal Fair Housing Act applies to units in structures with four or more units. Mr. Yunker noted that communities shown in white on Maps V-5 and V-13 meet lot size, density, and unit size thresholds that facilitate the development of affordable single-family and multi-family housing and that communities shaded in grey do not have sanitary sewer service. He also noted that an analysis of planned land uses set forth in local comprehensive plans has been undertaken to determine the location of developable land identified for medium and high density housing. Mr. Wade asked if the planning process is at the point of gathering data or if recommendations are under preparation. Mr. Yunker responded that data is being gathered and analyzed to develop findings that will relate to recommendations, but that recommendations have not yet been developed.
6. Ms. Dunbar asked for some examples of persons in protected classes under Federal and State fair housing laws. Ms. Anderson responded that there are several examples listed on page 20 of the PowerPoint handout including: race, sex, disability, and familial status. Mr. Wade asked for an example of a discriminatory act against familial status. Mr. Peters responded that a common example is restricting families with children to a specific building in an apartment complex.
7. Mr. Yunker noted that an upcoming portion of the housing plan will be devoted to a cost of community services analysis and noted that some Regional Housing Plan Advisory Committee members believe there is opposition in some communities to new multi-family housing because there is a perception that the multi-family property tax revenue/cost of community services ratio is less favorable than that of new single-family housing. Ms. Anderson noted that the cost to school districts seems to be of particular concern. Mr. Yunker asked if the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) has undertaken a study regarding cost of community services. Ms. Anderson responded that the WHEDA study was in regard to the impact of new multi-family housing on neighboring property values. Mr. Peters noted that a cost of community services study has recently been completed in Florida and he would provide it to staff.

8. Ms. Dunbar asked if a multi-family housing project recently proposed in the City of New Berlin was workforce housing. Ms. Anderson responded that it was workforce housing. Mr. Yunker noted that the Advisory Committee has discussed perceptions regarding multi-family housing and affordable single-family housing developments that may create barriers to their approval.
9. Mr. Yunker stated that staff will continue to update the Task Force and ask for Task Force input throughout the housing planning process. He noted that plan materials will be provided to the Task Force as they are prepared and are available on the SEWRPC website. He then noted that Regional Housing Plan Advisory Committee meetings are generally scheduled for the fourth Wednesday of odd numbered months from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. in Banquet Room 2 of the Tommy G. Thompson Youth Center at State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th Street, Milwaukee. The next meeting is December 1, 2010. Ms. Anderson noted that local government comprehensive plans and the demand for accessible, affordable, and subsidized housing will be topics of discussion at future Advisory Committee meetings. Mr. Peters asked if multi-family housing developments using Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) will be included in the Subsidized Housing Chapter. Ms. Anderson responded that LIHTC developments will be included. Mr. Peters suggested renaming the Chapter to specifically include housing developed with tax credits.

DISCUSSION OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

Ms. Greene asked Steve Adams of the Commission staff to review Commission public involvement and outreach efforts. Mr. Adams noted that the current focus of these efforts has been the Regional Housing Plan and public involvement and outreach staff has been working with the community assistance division to design the regional housing plan newsletter and brochure that were recently distributed. In addition, public involvement staff has been reaching out to minority and low-income organizations throughout the Region through a letter writing campaign and follow-up meetings. Mr. Adams noted that the regional housing plan has typically been a component of a larger agenda at most meetings; however, there have been some meetings dedicated to the housing plan. Mr. Adams then noted that SEWRPC is increasing its involvement with Ms. Dunbar's organization, the Social Development Commission (SDC). The following discussion points and comments were made regarding the public involvement and outreach update:

1. Ms. Dunbar noted that the SDC will be holding a Symposium on Poverty on November 10, 2010, at the Italian Community Center from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. She invited those in attendance at the Task Force meeting to the Symposium and noted that the morning will include sessions regarding several issues related to poverty in Milwaukee and the afternoon will include follow-up interactive sessions.
2. Mr. Yunker suggested that staff could provide a list of minority and low-income organizations SEWRPC has contacted to Task Force members and suggested that members could follow-up with Mr. Adams regarding any organizations that should be added to the list. Mr. Adams noted that more outreach connections are needed in Walworth County. Mr. Wade asked if the Hmong community is represented on the list of organizations. Mr. Adams responded that SEWRPC has been working with UW-Extension, which has a good relationship with the Hmong community, especially through the community gardens program.
3. Mr. Wade suggested that organizations that receive Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds could be contacted. Mr. Peters suggested that organizations that apply for (CDBG) funds could also be contacted.

4. Ms. Holmlund noted that the Task Force has continually discussed developing SEWRPC outreach materials for lower literacy populations. Mr. Adams responded that staff will continue to work on developing outreach materials for lower literacy populations.
5. Ms. Dunbar asked about areas where SEWRPC is trying to strengthen relationships. Mr. Adams noted the need to strengthen relationships with organizations in Walworth and Ozaukee Counties. He stated that staff is currently working with United Way in Ozaukee County to identify organizations that may be interested in working with SEWRPC.
6. Mr. Rowen asked from the audience if SEWRPC develops newsletters with a specific grade level reading comprehension. Mr. Yunker responded that newsletters are not prepared in that fashion. Ms. Rotker stated from the audience that there are programs available that can adjust the grammar level of a document. Mr. Yunker responded that staff will look into using a program to adjust the grammar level of the next newsletter and continue to send newsletters to Task Force members for comment prior to distribution. Mr. Yunker commented that the shorter companion brochures may still contain too much information. Ms. Rotker noted that it is good the brochures are translated into Spanish; however, the grammar level may still be too high for lower literacy populations. Ms. Schuerman suggested including questions that pique the reader's interest in the brochures. Mr. Yunker responded that the brochure format could be changed or an even shorter outreach piece using a bullet format could be developed and reviewed by the Task Force.
7. Ms. Schuerman asked if outreach staff have contacted churches. Mr. Adams responded that outreach staff has participated in faith based events in Milwaukee and Racine. Mr. Peters noted that a government list of faith based organizations may be available through a new Federal initiative. Mr. Adams noted that there is also a State liaison for faith based organizations.

DISCUSSION OF MEETING SCHEDULE AND DATES FOR 2011

Ms. Greene asked if the current meeting schedule of the first Thursday of odd numbered months at 4:00 p.m. works well for Task Force members. Mr. Wade responded it fits his schedule well. Ms. Holmlund stated that it also fits her schedule and she does not like quarterly meetings. Other members in attendance agreed. Mr. Yunker stated that staff will prepare a schedule for 2011 based on the Task Force comments and distribute it to members.

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 comments were made:

1. Ms. Rotker referenced Chapter VI, *Housing Discrimination and Fair Housing Practices*, of the regional housing plan and suggested including a figure showing the percentage of home loan applications and approvals for persons of White/Non Hispanic origin. She then stated that she would provide written comments regarding the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Concerns section of the Chapter regarding AFFH responsibilities of communities receiving Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. She stated that some communities receive funding but ignore their AFFH requirements. She also stated that she would include comments regarding a related case in Shorewood Hills, Wisconsin.

2. Mr. Wade asked if it is possible for a community to be penalized retroactively for failing to meet AFFH requirements. Ms. Rotker noted a lawsuit in Westchester County, New York in which the County failed to acknowledge racial barriers to fair housing in the County. The County must provide affordable housing based on racial composition within the County. Ms. Rotker also noted that multi-family developments are often opposed because of the perception that they cause an increase in police calls; however, a case study in Shorewood Hills found that police calls in an area decreased after the construction of new multi-family housing. Mr. Peters noted the recent opposition to workforce housing in the City of New Berlin and the failure of the City of Brookfield comprehensive plan to promote the availability of land for affordable housing.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Greene declared the meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Benjamin R. McKay

Recording Secretary

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KRY/SPA/NMA/BRM

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