

Minutes of the Nineteenth Meeting of the
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

DATE: March 3, 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
Jedd Lapid..... Development Officer, Greater Milwaukee Foundation
Brian Peters..... Housing Policy Advocate, IndependenceFirst
Yolanda Santos Adams Director, League of United Latin American Citizens
Theresa Schuerman..... Walworth County Bilingual Migrant Worker Outreach

Guests and Staff Present

Stephen P. Adams Public Involvement and Outreach Manager, SEWRPC
Nancy M. Anderson..... Chief Community Assistance Planner, SEWRPC
Emily Grant..... Citizen
Gary K. Korb Regional Planning Educator, UW-Extension/SEWRPC
Catherine Madison..... Policy Analyst, UWM Center for Economic Development
Benjamin R. McKay Principal Planner, SEWRPC
Kenneth R. Yunker Executive Director, SEWRPC
Martin J. Wall 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. Attendees introduced themselves, both at the meeting outset and thereafter when addressing the group, for the benefit of Ms. Schuerman who was participating via teleconference.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 6, 2011

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Greene asked if there were any public comments on the agenda or other Task Force business. There were none.

UPDATE ON THE REGIONAL HOUSING PLAN – CHAPTER IV, PART 3, HOUSING FORECLOSURE ACTIVITY IN THE REGION

Ms. Greene asked Ben McKay of the Commission staff to provide the Task Force with an update on Chapter IV, Part 3, *Housing Foreclosure Activity in the Region*, of the regional housing plan, which was distributed to Task Force members at the meeting. Mr. McKay asked the Task Force members to turn their attention to the PowerPoint presentation entitled *Overview of Chapter IV, Part 3, "Housing Foreclosure Activity in the Region" of the Regional Housing Plan* (see Attachment 1). The following discussion points and comments were made regarding the update on the regional housing plan:

1. Mr. Peters stated that multiple mortgage foreclosures in a particular neighborhood or community greatly multiplies the negative effect of each individual foreclosure. Mr. McKay agreed, noting that this is discussed in Chapter IV of the regional housing plan. Mr. Peters stated that Federal Law concerning foreclosures would expire in November or December 2012 unless Congress acts.
2. Ms. Greene asked whether there was a reason for the high rates of foreclosure exhibited within Kenosha County. Mr. McKay stated that the central portion of the City of Kenosha represented a concentration of subprime loans, while in outlying areas of the County the problem appeared to be with mortgages taken on newly constructed homes. Mr. Yunker stated that the mortgage crisis in the Region appears to be more acute than elsewhere in Wisconsin, as the Region contains approximately 35 percent of the State's population, but approximately 40 percent of the foreclosures recently occurring statewide.
3. Mr. Peters asked why figures IV-6 and IV-7 in the presentation, respectively referring to Foreclosure Activity in the State of Wisconsin: 2000-2009 and Foreclosure Activity in the Southeastern Wisconsin Region: 2000-2009, were presented separately rather than in overlay fashion, because the latter may provide a better comparison of foreclosure changes. Mr. Yunker stated that an attempt will be made to use staggered histogram bars to depict State and regional foreclosure trends in a combined figure. Mr. Yunker thanked Mr. Peters for his suggestion and for his active participation in developing the regional housing plan both as a member of the Task Force and on the Regional Housing Plan Advisory Committee.
4. Mr. Lapid asked if Chapter IV includes, or should include, any discussion regarding nonprofit organization housing activities and associated targeting of community improvements. Mr. Yunker stated that this discussion would be appropriate for the recommended plan chapter.
5. Ms. Holmlund stated a belief that at one point no one would have predicted the recent epidemic of foreclosures. She suggested that the Task Force could suggest specific cautions related to the egregious things which have happened, contributing to the mortgage crisis.
6. Ms. Adams asked what the principal reasons might be for mortgage foreclosures, with reference to the increased foreclosures seen in Kenosha and Racine Counties. She wondered whether there were statistics on ethnicities which would be pertinent. Mr. McKay referenced a spreadsheet prepared by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Center for Community and Economic Development and posted on the SEWRPC website which includes income and ethnicity data as related to foreclosures. Ms. Anderson noted that high cost loans and job loss seem to be prominent factors linked to foreclosures. Mr. Yunker stated that the Commission staff will analyze the information for further incorporation in the study.

7. Mr. Lapid stated that the Greater Milwaukee Foundation working with UW-Milwaukee had examined mortgage foreclosures and identified eight key economic indicators, one of which was related to foreclosures. He suggested that Commission staff review the report for any data that may be helpful.

CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

Ms. Greene asked Steve Adams of the Commission staff to provide an update and continue the discussion begun during the January 6, 2011 EJTF meeting regarding the Commission's public involvement and outreach efforts. Mr. Adams asked the Task Force to turn their attention to the handouts titled, "*Listing of Organizational Entities Meetings/Events Conducted by SEWRPC Public Involvement and Outreach Staff*," and "*SEWRPC Public Involvement and Outreach Division Update on Primary Organizational Contacts*" (see Attachments 2 and 3, respectively). The listing of meetings and events with organizational entities was prepared to show the range and extent of contacts by SEWRPC staff with particularly central city, minority, and low-income groups and organizations during 2009 and 2010. The update on primary organizational contacts was an expanded list containing Task Force suggestions from the January 6th EJTF meeting discussion (six additional organizations). Mr. Adams asked whether there were any questions or comments on the two handouts. There were none.

Mr. Adams continued the public involvement and outreach update by distributing the draft brochure titled, "*Planning for Housing in Southeastern Wisconsin*." Mr. Adams noted that the Commission staff had reviewed prior Task Force suggestions which encouraged a shorter, more visually appealing summary product for the regional housing plan and assembled the draft brochure for consideration (see Attachment 4). Pending how the brochure was received, the plan for publication included translation into Spanish. Mr. Adams asked for reactions to the proposed housing brochure. The following discussion points and comments were made:

1. Mr. Peters stated that he thought the draft brochure looked good and would be helpful.
2. Ms. Holmlund stated that she liked the "Check This Out" section, and found the draft brochure quite readable overall. Ms. Anderson credited Mr. Peterson with the idea behind "Check This Out," referencing regional housing plan material that he had posted to the Creating Communities Blog website.
3. Mr. Peters asked whether the map associated with "Check This Out" had been updated since presentation of data on median monthly rents to the Regional Housing Plan Advisory Committee. Ms. Anderson responded that the data had indeed been updated to reflect median monthly rents in southeastern Wisconsin as of 2009, which had recently become available. Those updates resulted in higher rents across all areas of the Region compared to Year 2000 rent data shown on an earlier map. More sub-regional housing analysis areas for Southeastern Wisconsin are now displayed in the highest median monthly rent category of more than \$900 per month.
4. Ms. Schuerman expressed interest in reviewing a draft copy of the translation of the brochure into Spanish. Ms. Anderson thanked Ms. Schuerman for the offer and indicated that a draft copy in Spanish would be forwarded to her for review when available.
5. Mr. Yunker thanked Task Force members for their comments and indicated that, based upon this response, the Commission would use this approach to brochures as a template for future such

efforts. He further indicated that Task Force members not in attendance would be provided with a copy of the draft brochure.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE YEAR 2045 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PLANNING PROCESS

Ms. Greene asked Ken Yunker of the Commission staff to provide the Task Force with an update on regional transportation system planning particularly with regard to potential impacts on minority and low-income populations. Mr. Yunker asked the Task Force to turn their attention to Appendix H of the Year 2035 regional transportation system plan titled, "*Evaluation of the Impacts of the Recommended Year 2035 Regional Transportation System Plan on Minority and Low-Income Populations in Southeastern Wisconsin*," which was distributed at the meeting. Mr. Yunker indicated that a website link to this evaluation had been provided to Task Force members and interested parties before the meeting, because the document file size was too large to permit emailing. Task Force members unable to attend the meeting would therefore be provided with a copy of the Appendix via U.S. Mail.

Mr. Yunker stated that, with new U.S. Census data becoming available, the Commission is beginning its work on population and employment forecasts for the Region. These steps, as well as monitoring recent land development and conducting household surveys and other travel inventories, will help initiate a new round of regional land use and transportation system planning which should be concluded around 2015. Regional population patterns, land use changes, and transportation system use, among other items, are to be examined in looking ahead to plans that will extend to the year 2045. Before this process begins in earnest, the Commission would like to initiate discussion regarding the evaluation of impacts of the regional transportation plan on minority and low-income populations, as seen in Appendix H of the Year 2035 transportation plan. This evaluation of impacts shows what was looked at last time, as a starting point for the Task Force in letting the Commission know what would be important factors to consider. The following comments and discussion points were made:

1. Mr. Adams commented on the comprehensive nature of the travel surveys about to be undertaken by the Commission, including a random sample of over 16,000 households, representing 2 percent of all households in the Region. Mr. Yunker added that weekday travel, and in particular during the spring and fall seasons, would be monitored as representative of regional transportation system use and potential future needs. Additional surveys will be conducted regarding public transit users, commercial trucks, and inter-regional automobile, truck, passenger rail, and airplane travel. Ms. Greene asked whether any sampling regarding weekend travel would occur. Mr. Yunker stated that only Monday through Friday travel would be included.
2. Mr. Peters asked about the impact of recently announced State budget cuts. Mr. Yunker stated that the proposed 10 percent cut in State transit assistance would be significant. He noted that the Milwaukee County Transit System, for example, is presently funded some 60 percent by the State. He also noted that Commission staff had prepared at the request of Milwaukee County an estimate of the potential service reduction or fare increase attendant to the State assistance reduction for each southeastern Wisconsin transit system.
3. Ms. Holmlund asked whether it was true that legislation may be considered which would do away with existing Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) in Wisconsin. Mr. Yunker stated that a bill had been introduced which could eliminate existing RTAs in Dane County, the City of Bayfield, and Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee Counties for the purpose of commuter rail.

FURTHER PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Greene thanked the Task Force members for their active participation. She then asked whether attendees in the audience had any comments. There were none.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Ms. Greene noted that the next meeting of the Task Force is scheduled for Thursday, May 5, 2011, at Independence *First*. However, a conflict has been noted with regard to Cinco de Mayo on that date, as well as with other scheduling difficulties surrounding the earlier selected first Thursdays of odd numbered months for the balance of 2011. Therefore, Commission staff will poll Task Force members regarding their availability for alternate sets of meeting dates.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Greene declared the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary K. Korb
Recording Secretary

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