

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

DATE: October 9, 2012
TIME: 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: HeartLove Place
3229 N. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Members Present

Adelene Greene..... Director of Workforce Development, Kenosha County
Chair
Nancy Holmlund..... President, WISDOM Interfaith Coalition
Vice-Chair
Ella Dunbar Program Services Manager, Social Development Commission, Milwaukee
Lynnette McNeely Legal Redress Chair, Waukesha County NAACP
Brian Peters Housing Policy Advocate, IndependenceFirst
Jacqueline Schellinger Indian Community School
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
Gary K. Korb Regional Planning Educator, UW-Extension/SEWRPC
Catherine Madison UW-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development
Benjamin R. McKay Principal Planner, SEWRPC
Joel Rast..... UW-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development

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 AUGUST 30, 2012

Ms. Greene noted that not enough Task Force members were present at this time to constitute a quorum, although additional Task Force members were expected to attend. She suggested that this agenda item be moved to later in the meeting, because a quorum of Task Force members was anticipated to be present for approval of the minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

REVIEW OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS OF THE REGIONAL HOUSING PLAN

Ms. Greene asked Ms. Madison of the UW-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development (UWM-CED) to provide an overview and lead the discussion related to the Socio-Economic Impact Analysis (SEI) of the Regional Housing Plan. Ms. Madison referred the Task Force to a handout titled, "Summary of the Socio-Economic Impact Analysis of the Regional Housing Plan" (see Attachment 1). She stated that the UWM-CED considered the central tenet of the regional housing plan to be the provision of affordable housing throughout the Southeastern Wisconsin Region. The SEI analyzed the preliminary plan recommendations in six categories: affordable housing, fair housing/opportunity, job/housing balance, accessible housing, subsidized/tax credit housing, and housing development practices.

Ms. Madison stated that each recommendation was analyzed in light of its impact on environmental justice communities, to determine whether it had a positive or negative impact, or no impact at all. Ms. Madison indicated that the environmental justice communities referenced include minority and low-income populations, and persons with disabilities. She noted that most recommendations had either a positive or significantly positive impact on these populations. A positive impact, she explained, means that environmental justice populations are likely to receive benefits in proportion to the regional population as a whole; and a significantly positive impact means that the environmental justice populations are likely to receive a greater proportion of the benefits compared to the regional population as a whole. Ms. Madison stated that none of the preliminary recommendations of the regional housing plan, if implemented, would have a negative impact on environmental justice populations.

Ms. Madison indicated that this assessment, along with key findings and UWM-CED identified action items, was also summarized in a recent newsletter provided to the Task Force via email: *October 2012, Socio-Economic Impact Analysis of SEWRPC's Regional Housing Plan*. She stated that the SEI Analysis process was anticipated to be completed by the end of January 2013. The following discussion points and comments were made:

1. Ms. Schellinger asked why the significantly positive distinction would be true for some housing plan recommendations with respect to environmental justice populations. Ms. Madison responded that the planning process had identified minority and low-income populations, and persons with disabilities, as being particularly vulnerable in terms of housing needs and job/housing balance. She stated that any recommendations which incentivize the provision of accessible housing, subsidized and tax credit housing, and housing for low- and moderate-income households were regarded as significantly positive for such environmental justice populations.
2. Ms. Holmlund stated that she liked the way the summary information is organized, because it is easy to understand. She noted that it may be worthwhile to encourage public open house dialog to help attendees catch up, and suggested a brief PowerPoint presentation on the SEI and the regional housing plan, with notification of that opportunity in the meeting flyer and/or announcements. Ms. Holmlund stated that such presentation would complement the display boards which may seem overwhelming to some attendees. Ms. Anderson stated the option for PowerPoint presentation(s) would be offered; however, anticipated attendees may be expected to already have some background, such as county and community planners, housing service providers, small rental property owners, and real estate entities, perhaps along with some people needing housing assistance or services.

3. Ms. Dunbar asked how notification was occurring relative to the upcoming public meetings. Mr. McKay stated that advertisements were being purchased in the newspapers of record for the seven counties in the Region to be published 10 days in advance, and that a more broadly circulated news release would hopefully generate some additional media coverage. Also, newsletters listing the nine meetings would be sent directly to some 2,000 interested parties on the Commission's mailing list. Mr. Korb stated that personal letters would be sent at the end of October, with the SEI newsletter and most recent regional housing plan brochure enclosed, to each of the contacts on the Commission's list of central city, minority, and low-income groups and organizations. The letters would be intended to help encourage attendance at the public meetings, while also encouraging individual group meetings with Commission staff to get updated, ask questions, and offer comments. Mr. Korb added that the SEWRPC website was a growing means of notification; and summary publications on the housing plan, including notice of the public meetings, were being used frequently in contacts with groups and organizations as well as for literature distribution in selected public locations where the materials may be picked up.
4. Ms. Schuerman noted a documentary film, "Urbanized," in reference to a technique used to share information related to particular buildings, much like the Quick Response (QR) Codes readable by smart phones. She stated that similar coding could be considered on simple outreach materials to provide more detailed information. Mr. Rast stated that UWM-CED could investigate a Twitter-feed as a means of sharing SEI and regional housing plan information.
5. Ms. Dunbar stated that she would be willing to post simple information related to the regional housing plan public meetings on the Social Development Commission's website. Nevertheless, she had a concern regarding some clients who have no access to technology in terms of obtaining the information, and offered to make flyers available. Ms. Greene stated that it may be best to simply list the public meetings in such a flyer, with minimal background on the housing plan, in an effort to keep the meeting announcement short.
6. Ms. Schellinger stated that a variety of publications may be necessary, and the level of detail would depend upon the intended audience. She noted that narrative is often needed to explain why something such as the housing plan is useful, it must be understandable to the reader, and assumptions cannot be made about the average citizen's interest or background knowledge. Ms. Holmlund said she favored an easy-to-follow publication version addressing what definitely affects people in poverty; and Ms. Schuerman stated support for that concept, addressing the key recommendations only. Ms. Madison stated that such views are appreciated, and highlight the difficulties of trying to trim information from a publication vs. adequately explaining concepts.
7. Ms. Schellinger asked about the socio-economic impacts of the plan recommendations, in the context of the advisory nature of SEWRPC planning. She stated a hope that there will be implementation, and that communities will rely on SEWRPC for research and recommendations in preparing their own plans and regulations, but wondered about whether there would be a need for advocates. Ms. Madison responded that some of the housing plan preliminary recommendations are directed to local governments, and some to Federal and State agencies concerned with housing, and plan advocates may help affirm the needs. Ms. Dunbar stated that Tax Increment Financing (TIF) recommendations benefitting affordable housing could be useable by providers, like the Harambee organization in Milwaukee. Mr. Adams noted that the TIF recommendations would also benefit the work of complementary organizations like the Martin Luther King Economic Development Corporation, of which the Executive Director, Welford

Sanders, serves on the Regional Housing Plan Advisory Committee. Ms. Schellinger stated that if key recommendations involve likely plan advocates, then the socio-economic impacts are dependent upon whether the advocates adequately represent and will in fact act on behalf of disenfranchised populations. Ms. Schellinger added that, regarding subsidized and tax credit housing, development interests should also have an incentive for plan implementation.

8. Mr. Peters stated that a problem exists in that many housing-related programs are funded by the Federal Government, but it is difficult to know the full funding picture in looking ahead to plan implementation. Ms. Anderson noted that the City of Milwaukee Housing Trust Fund provides gap financing to affordable housing projects and has proposed expanding to other communities in the Region. She stated that this proposal is included in the housing plan preliminary recommendations.
9. Mr. Rast stated that all of the findings of the SEI related to environmental justice impacts of the regional housing plan preliminary recommendations are either positive or significantly positive. There are no findings of adverse or significantly adverse environmental justice impacts. He noted that how to carry the plan forward through implementation is therefore key. Ms. Madison stated that changes to TIF law and how Community Development Block Grants are allocated would be important in this regard. Mr. Peters stated that the TIF legislation had recently been changed, which could benefit affordable housing. He also expressed concern regarding very good housing plan ideas which face remaining questions on how they get implemented.
10. Ms. Holmlund stated that the broad nature of implementation responsibility may be why past housing recommendations have not been implemented. Ms. Anderson stated that planning and implementation are an ongoing process, with buy-in and refinement needed, and implementation of some recommendations may take many years to occur, or may not occur. Other recommendations are already being at least partially implemented, though the plan is not yet completed. Ms. Anderson stated that the SEWRPC staff intends to meet with concerned State agencies regarding the regional housing plan findings and recommendations, in an effort to promote implementation. She added that a meeting would be scheduled after the public meetings to invite local and county planners in the Region to hear more detailed explanation of the regional housing plan recommendations, focusing on job/housing balance.
11. Ms. Holmlund stated that it would be beneficial for the Task Force to support specific housing plan recommendations, including those related to TIF. Mr. Korb stated that, as with many successful efforts, champions would likely be needed to ensure that networking continues and that housing plan recommendations are kept in front of those responsible for implementation. He indicated that since EJTF members are associated with other groups and organizations, the linkages for carrying out the plan could be extensive and effective—and the Commission could be called upon as a resource for assistance. Mr. Adams stated that a parallel may exist with the Coalition for Advancing Transit, which has worked well in education regarding the need for and benefits of improved public transit, often utilizing resource materials and expertise provided by SEWRPC.
12. Ms. McNeely stated that the SEI seems lacking in regard to analysis of the preliminary housing plan recommendations and associated impacts on minorities; and it seems heavy in regard to analysis of the recommendations and their impact on low-income populations. She stated that there are subtly-couched but problematic methods of discrimination faced by minorities of all income levels, such as certain homes not being shown to minorities or only corner locations

appearing to be available. Ms. Schellinger added that her personal issues regarding housing are not the same as low-income minorities, but include the matter of other people in some areas who do not want minorities living nearby.

13. Mr. Peters stated that he thought there were many housing plan recommendations that are broad in nature, which may benefit minorities along with others in society. He noted the recommended increase in housing density, housing that is more affordable, and housing closer to jobs. Ms. McNeely asked rhetorically if these measures would or could help achieve integration. Ms. Schellinger stated that implementing such recommendations would not benefit minorities who are not poor, when the broader issue is some people who do not want minorities living near them. Mr. Peters noted that implementation of recommendation #3 under Fair Housing/Opportunity should increase the efforts of all communities in the Region to take actions to affirmatively further fair housing.
14. Mr. Peters stated that affordable housing and other needs are related. He felt that discrimination problems can span income levels and alter affordability as minorities may be charged more for comparable homes than non-minorities, or have to live on a corner lot in some locations. Mr. Peters noted that plan recommendation #5 under Fair Housing/Opportunity may help cover the problem as it pertains to establishment of Assisted Housing Mobility Programs to help reduce the concentration of minorities in high poverty central city neighborhoods by providing assistance to low-income families in making the transition to less impoverished areas. Ms. Madison stated that she agreed, but also wished to indicate that plan recommendations can't always cover issues adequately when some problems are deep-rooted. Ms. Dunbar stated some of the discrimination issues being raised would be a good fit for the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council. Ms. McNeely stated that lumping all minorities together for the purposes of analysis really was not appropriate, whether with respect to low-income status or not.
15. Ms. Schellinger stated that, as a Task Force member, she would defer to the knowledge of the Regional Housing Plan Advisory Committee on the need for the various plan recommendations. Regarding the distributed summary of the SEI, she indicated agreement with the presentation of environmental justice impacts of the preliminary housing plan recommendations, noting that it was designed for disenfranchised populations. Ms. Schellinger stated that she was unsure of the appropriate action, but would like to relay to the Advisory Committee that the SEI work appeared very comprehensive and very complete.
16. Mr. Peters stated that he would like further information regarding language changes in the housing plan recommendation pertaining to TIF districts. Ms. Anderson stated that Mr. Soika of the Regional Housing Plan Advisory Committee had suggested that TIFs only be formed in communities having a job/housing balance. She stated that other Advisory Committee members were concerned with such a recommendation because TIF is a valuable economic development tool; and other regions of the State without a job/housing balance analysis could then have an economic development advantage over southeastern Wisconsin. A statewide job/housing balance component was added to the recommendation to address this concern.
17. Ms. Madison noted that one of the main SEI action items related to affordable housing pertains to the preliminary Affordable Housing recommendation #2. She stated that under this recommendation the State should shift funding for schools and other local government services away from the property tax to reduce housing costs and to help address concerns by local officials that lower-cost housing is not as beneficial to the community as higher-cost housing. She stated

that the UWM-CED is studying this recommendation further because there is concern that alternative funding sources could have a disproportionately negative effect on environmental justice populations, particularly if a sales tax is used as an alternative to property taxes.

18. Mr. Peters stated that he would like to address two related points. First, access to State funds for housing accessibility improvements has improved, but there is no data tracking the units to which funds were applied. If a person who needed some funded improvements moves, the improvements are often removed and no one else can benefit from them. The result is a huge waste of money, and all would be better served if the improvements were preserved and a database was available to track housing units with accessibility improvements. Second, Mr. Peters indicated that the State was working on a housing referral system, so that if a list of people in need can be matched with accessible housing units, the result will be very efficient. He offered to send Ms. Madison an email containing a State of Wisconsin contact regarding this matter.
19. Mr. Peters asked for clarification of an example Ms. Madison had used from the State of Virginia concerning funding to enhance housing accessibility. Ms. Madison stated that landlords there were able to obtain funding assistance for accessibility improvements, as well as tenants being able to receive such assistance. Ms. Anderson added that the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority administers a similar program, but it is only available for units rented to low- and moderate-income households.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 30, 2012

Ms. Greene noted that a quorum of members was present and asked for a motion of approval regarding the past minutes. Mr. Peters moved and Ms. Holmlund seconded approval of the Environmental Justice Task Force meeting minutes of August 30, 2012, as distributed. The motion was approved unanimously.

REVIEW OF PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULE AND SUBSEQUENT STEPS IN THE REGIONAL HOUSING PLANNING PROCESS

Ms. Greene asked Ms. Anderson to briefly summarize for the Task Force the schedule of upcoming public meetings attendant to the preliminary regional housing plan recommendations and SEI findings, as well as subsequent steps in the planning process. Ms. Anderson stated that the preliminary recommendations of the regional housing plan and UW-Milwaukee SEI findings would be presented in a series of nine public meetings to be held throughout the Region. Meetings were scheduled in each of the Region's county seats; and in Milwaukee County, three public meetings were to take place. Two of the latter meetings were scheduled for central City of Milwaukee locations where the Task Force has met—HeartLove Place and Independence^{First}. Ms. Anderson noted that the public meeting schedule would run from November 13 through December 6, and was contained in the regional housing study's Brochure 4 previously sent to the Task Force: *Year 2035 Regional Housing Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin, October 2012* (see Attachment 2).

Ms. Anderson stated that the meetings would be conducted in open house format from 4:00-6:00 p.m. each day, with an optional presentation occurring at 5:00. A public hearing is also scheduled for the December 6 public meeting in the Tommy Thompson Youth Center at Wisconsin State Fair Park in Milwaukee. Comments on both the preliminary housing plan recommendations and SEI findings would be accepted at the public meetings, individual environmental justice group meetings mentioned previously by Mr. Korb, and by fax, email, U.S. Mail, or the SEWRPC website through December 14,

2012. Ms. Anderson indicated that comments received and the proposed response(s) relative to the regional housing plan and/or SEI would be brought back to the Task Force and the Advisory Committee in mid- to latter-January 2013, before being taken to the Regional Planning Commission's Planning and Research Committee, possibly in February 2013.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL DATES AND FORMAT FOR NEXT MEETING(S) OF THE EJ TASK FORCE

Ms. Greene asked the Task Force to help identify a potential January 2013 meeting date, given that any changes to the preliminary housing plan recommendations and SEI findings, if needed based upon public comments, should be discussed by the EJTF and Advisory Committee after public meetings are held in November and December. Task Force members identified Thursday, January 17, as a first preference, or Tuesday, January 29, 2013, as possible for the next EJTF meeting. Mr. Peters offered to check the availability of the conference room at IndependenceFirst for this purpose. Mr. Korb stated that the full Task Force would be polled regarding date preference and potential conflicts regarding the suggestions.

Mr. Peters asked whether an update on transportation could be included on the agenda, given that public comments had been sought on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Mr. Korb responded that a transportation update could possibly be given at the next meeting, but the 2013-2016 TIP discussed during the August 30 Task Force meeting had a public comment period which ended in mid-September. Mr. Korb stated that perhaps it would be timely to have an update on the next generation of Commission regional land use and transportation system planning, which is getting underway, and Mr. Peters concurred. Mr. Adams added that short-range transit development planning for Racine and Kenosha Counties could possibly also be subjects for the update. Ms. Holmlund stated that the matter of inadequate transit service by train in Wisconsin was a remaining concern, especially with regional transit authorities being impeded.

Ms. Greene concluded that the next Task Force meeting would be scheduled for January 2013, with the regional housing plan, associated SEI, and a transportation update tentatively on the agenda.

FURTHER PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Greene noted that the discussion had been very active and thanked the Task Force members for their participation. She then asked whether anyone in attendance had additional comments. There were none.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Greene thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary K. Korb

Recording Secretary

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KRY/NMA/BRK/GKK
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