

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Economic Development Committee
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
ECWRPC Offices
October 18, 2007

Committee Members Present:

Brian Kowalkowski, Chair Menominee County
M. Eugene Zeuske Shawano County
John P. Fink (for Mark Harris)..... Winnebago County

Members Absent:

Duane Brown, Vice-Chair Waupaca County
Merlin Gentz, Commission Chair Calumet County

Members Excused:

Helen Nagler Outagamie County

Staff Present:

Eric Fowle Executive Director
Ed Kleckner Principal Planner
Kara Homan Associate Planner

Others Present:

Kelly Hoxtell Economic Development Specialist, Calumet County

1. Welcome and Introductions, Brian Kowalkowski, Chairman; Brian Kowalkowski called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.
2. It was determined that the meeting was in compliance with Wisconsin § Chapter 19, Subchapter V, Section 19.84 regarding Open Meetings' Requirements.
3. Public Comment was requested. No comments were received from the public. Eric Fowle mentioned that at future meetings, minutes will be approved at this point on the agenda (after public comment) before they are submitted to full commission.
4. East Central/EDA staffing changes.

Eric Fowle made known that Christine Kaup has recently left her position as Associate Economic Development Planner to take a research and marketing position with New North, Inc. Eric announced that Kara Homan, Associate Planner, will be taking over many of the economic development tasks formerly performed by Ms. Kaup, including EDA grant administration and planning efforts. It was also noted that Kara, with approval from EDA, will continue working on Housing, Demographic Data, and additional contract work. There is no intention to hire any staff for the rest of 2007 in an effort to save costs, although Mr. Fowle mentioned that he is looking to hire an entry-level, jack-of-all trades planner who has experience in zoning and subdivision regulations. He foresees a need for this as communities in the region will be shifting from adopting "smart growth" plans to having to implement them in 2010.

Brian Kowalkowski asked who would be working on the Timber Utilization grant, of which Eric Fowle responded that for now, he will be the primary contact. In the future, Kara may take on this responsibility once she becomes more settled in her additional responsibilities.

5. Proposed Resolution 21-07: **Review and adoption of *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy: Annual Report 2007* (CEDS).**

Kara Homan informed the committee that the 2007 CEDS update is a requirement of the EDA planning assistance grant awarded to the commission for FY2007. It was noted that, besides demographic and economic data updates, the greatest change to this year's CEDS is the tier-based system developed to help staff prioritize where commission time and resources should be allocated in order to provide the greatest benefit. Kara asked to committee to submit any comments or changes that needed to be made to the CEDS before submission to EDA. She also noted that next year's CEDS will be the 5-year update.

Eric Fowle further elaborated the tiered system by stating that he hoped that each county would have at least one tier-one project, although things tend to shake out on their own. Should the committee have any concerns with the ranking, Eric asked that they please raise their concerns in the next few weeks.

Brian Kowalkowski asked whether the survey states the importance of responding to the CEDS survey. The hope is that next year's project survey will be more clear in terms of what is necessary to help a project be viewed highly by EDA. Eric went on to state that the hope is to reinvigorate the economic development program to help make the CEDS document a more useful document.

Eric Fowle stated that new to this year is the inclusion of regional projects as part of the CEDS project list. He mentioned that one project would involve creating a regional revolving loan fund. This potential project was recently the subject of discussion with Jerry Murphy at New North. Kelly Hoxtell stated that NEWREP has been discussing regional revolving loan funds (RLFs), and she believes that given the number of RLFs at villages, cities, and towns, it is very difficult to achieve something of this magnitude, especially with the uncertainties regarding Department of Commerce regulations. She foresees smaller county or multi-county RLFs as more feasible than to move directly to a regional one. She has seen this firsthand with her experiences with Calumet County, where she is beginning to consolidate several municipal RLFs with the County's.

A motion to approve Resolution 21-07 was made by Eugene Zeuske and seconded by John Fink, passing on a vote of 3-0. The resolution was sent on to the full Commission for their further consideration and action.

6. Proposed Resolution 23-07: **Authorizing the Commission as an Economic Development District to Make Application to the Economic Development Administration for a 2008 Planning Assistance Grant and to Execute the Necessary Agreements.**

Kara Homan mentioned that this resolution is required as part of the FY2008 EDA grant, and the resolution reaffirms that this is an activity that the commission would like to continue pursuing. Eric Fowle stated that at the July commission meeting, the preliminary budget included the matching funds required to meet the 50 percent matching rate required by EDA.

A motion to approve Resolution 23-07 was made by Eugene Zeuske and seconded by John Fink, passing on a vote of 3-0. The resolution was sent on to the full Commission for their further consideration and action.

7. Economic Development Updates:

a. NE WI Telecommunication Infrastructure Assessment Status – E. Fowle

Eric Fowle stated that the telecommunications study has been in discussion for several years, and that East Central has been hard pressed to put the funding together due to changing funding

opportunities from the Department of Commerce and EDA.

Recently, INFOCIS may be willing to fund part of this project, although their mission is to focus telecommunications/wireless infrastructure centered on the College Avenue Corridor. Eric stated another difficulty is that the technology is changing so fast, and that waiting to see how things flush out will allow a better strategy to be developed in the future.

Eugene Zeuske questioned whether fiber optics were on the way out, based on what he had heard about the technology in relation to a project in Shawano. Eric stated that he feels that fiber optic is more reliable than wireless. Ed Kleckner concurred, stating that it is not affected by weather conditions like wireless can be.

Kelly Hoxtell mentioned that Hilbert Communications is working to provide telecommunication services to rural communities. This effort was locally grown, based on frustration with existing companies and their lack of service to rural areas. The company plans to expand services throughout the Midwest.

b. Update on the FCED Partnership's Foreign Trade Zone creation/expansion – E. Kleckner

Ed Kleckner stated that the Fox Cities Economic Development Partnership (FCEDP) has been looking to create or become a part of a Foreign Trade Zone. The Partnership has recently decided that becoming a sub-zone of an existing FTZ (for example, the Green Bay FTZ) would be less time consuming and costly, and there are very few downsides to not having their own FTZ. He stated that Fond du Lac and Manitowoc would be interested in being part of this sub-zone. The Partnership is beginning to inventory companies that would be interested to ensure that legal descriptions are collected for their sites. These legal descriptions are a necessary part of the application and legal documents needed to become part of an FTZ.

Ed mentioned that the Partnership has begun planning for the 2008 global trade conference, and that many topics were considered and eight chosen. Commitments are being sought from the US Department of Commerce who may provide the keynote speaker, and East Central RPC has committed as a bronze level sponsor.

c. 2007 – 2008 Timber Utilization Program Grant update – E. Fowle

Eric stated that the Timber Utilization Program grant was awarded from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and that East Central had subcontracted with Glacierland RC&D to perform some of the work. Recently, Glacierland has been developing and implementing the Woodlinks program. Due to the uncertainties with the state budget, East Central is allowing Glacierland to do all of their work this year to ensure that their work is fully funded should the new state budget not fund the Timber Utilization Grant.

Eric foresees that next year, when East Central keeps more of the grant money in house, staff will analyze wood products industries and their relation to transportation.

d. FCED Partnership business attraction prospects – status report – E. Kleckner

Ed Kleckner emphasized that a Fortune 100 firm is looking to diversify and expand to locations away from their New York base. The firm is primarily involved in the international banking industry. Initially, around 70-80 IT and high skilled jobs are anticipated, with salaries around \$70,000 per year. He added that, due to the quality of output from the technical colleges and the availability of a trained workforce due to recent layoffs from KC, the company feels the Fox Cities region is prime location for their business expansion.

e. Report on the FCEDP Industrial Park Mapping Project – E. Fowle/E. Kleckner

Ed Kleckner stated that the Industrial Park Mapping project is very important given the nature of how business and industrial site selectors choose prospective locations. He went on to elaborate how most start their search online, and once a short list is created, they then go and visit these sites. This project will update general information of industrial parks (open lots, price, contact information, etc.), and digital maps that show industrial park parcels overlaid with color orthophotography. East Central staff has contracted with the FCEDP to complete this project and the work is nearly completed.

f. FCCVB Wayfinding Signage Project progressing – E. Kleckner

Ed Kleckner noted that the Wayfinding Signage project is primarily an effort of the Fox Cities Convention and Visitor Bureau (FCCVB). The FCCVB is working with consultants to identify where signs should be located, and what information they should contain. Pilot signage has been installed in Greenville. The purpose of the project is to make it easy for people to get around, making them more likely to frequent the Fox Cities on a repeat basis.

g. Update on the Fox River Heritage Corridor project and Fox Locks System – E. Kleckner

Ed Kleckner reported that three community foundations have committed to the Fox River Heritage Corridor Plan, and private contributions have been funneled through the community foundations of Fond du Lac and Green Lake. The Friends of the Fox and the Fox River Navigation System Authority have also provided funds. The next step in the project is to gain additional partners along the corridor. Ed stated that he and Kara presented to the Tri-County Economic Development Corporation to engage partners in Waushara, Marquette, and Green Lake Counties. Funding will also be pursued from the State Department of Tourism later in the process to aid with promotional marketing. He noted that Bay Lake and SWWRPC are additional partners in this project.

In terms of the Fox Locks project, the work has been completed on the Appleton Locks project, and the Cedars lock project is currently underway. Future projects from Little Chute to Green Bay are contingent upon whether the Federal government will provide the money that has been promised for several years, but has not yet been allocated.

John Fink asked what the status of Rapids Croche is in terms of the lift and barrier. Ed Kleckner stated that the barrier is required by state statute, while the lift is contingent upon getting the necessary funding. Ed Kleckner stated that the region's federal representatives hold key committee positions, and they are confident that their positions will help the COE to honor their 2004 transfer agreement to fund the Locks project.

h. Business focus groups being contracted by the FCED Partnership – E. Kleckner

Ed Kleckner described this effort to reach out to business in order to gain a better understanding of what makes assistance is needed to keep businesses happy, and will encourage them to stay in the region. A business consultant has been hired to facilitate private discussions with these businesses in an effort to protect their anonymity and encourage them to be candid and frank. Ed feels this is a good way to get a pulse of what is important to businesses. The cost of the project is between \$5,000 and \$6,000.

i. Report on FCEDP discussion for implementing the "Bridge to Tomorrow" plan - E. Kleckner

Ed Kleckner stated that the Partnership is recommending that a person be hired to work on

implementing the recommendations of the "Bridge to Tomorrow" plan. The FCED Partnership Board feels that the best opportunity to get the position funded is to work with the elected officials of local governments to help with funding. Ed mentioned that Tim Hannah, mayor of Appleton, has expressed interest in the project for some time now, but has not yet committed any resources.

8. Housing Updates:

a. Fox Cities Housing Coalition Update – K. Homan

Kara informed the committee of a workforce housing video consisting of interview with local officials, business officials, and municipal staff. The video was created as a joint partnership between the Fox Cities Housing Coalition (FCHC) and ESTHER. The intent of the video is for local business owners to understand the link between what they pay their workers, and where they can live.

Kara also mentioned that the FCHC is considering pursuit of non-profit status in 2008.

Kara talked about a new program to provide transportation service to lower income individuals. United Way has partnered with Valley Transit to provide extended transportation service outside of the Valley Transit service area. Kara noted that this program expands the job possibilities for residents who rely on public transportation.

b. Workforce Housing Event Update – K. Homan

Kara Homan began by stating the Workforce Housing event is co-sponsored by ESTHER and the FCHC, and funded by the Fox Cities Community Foundation. She noted that the event is bringing in David Rusk, a world-renowned scholar on the subject, to present his findings from the Fox Cities housing study. The goal is to take this information and work with local officials, school district staff, economic development, and business leaders to help them understand the needs of the community and what role they play in addressing barriers to affordable housing for the Fox Valley workforce.

c. Winnebago Housing Coalition Update – K. Homan

Kara mentioned that the biggest issue being discussed by the Coalition deals with the situation at Father Carr's. She noted that since his passing, the shelter has been taken over by Deacon Keith Holshbach who, due to his busy schedule, has been difficult to contact and coordinate with.

9. Scheduled Events (Conferences, Meetings, Local Events, etc.) – All

Kelly Hoxtell mentioned New North Summit to be held in Sheboygan in December, the State Fall Tourism Conference in LaCrosse, and a downtown event in Wausau.

Kara Homan noted that UW-Extension will be hosting "A Sustainable Fox Valley: Building a sustainable community through the natural step approach." Saturday, November 3, 9 AM – 3 PM at the Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 2600 E Philip Lane, Appleton.

10. Schedule next Economic Development Committee Meeting for **January 9, 2008 at 1:30 p.m.**

11. Adjourn - The motion to adjourn was by Eugene Zeuske, with a second by John Fink. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned by 2:35 p.m.