

Summary of Proceedings

Open Space and Environmental Management Committee

East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

City of Menasha Council Chambers Room

January 9, 2007

The meeting was called to order by Vice-chairman David Albrecht at 1:06 P.M.

Committee Members Present:

David Albrecht, Chairman Winnebago County
Toby Paltzer Outagamie County
Ruth Winter..... Menominee County

Committee Members Excused Absence:

Robert Danielson Waupaca County
Yvonne Feavel Waushara County

Staff Present:

Eric Fowle Executive Director
Ed Kleckner Associate Planner
Jon Motquin Associate Planner

1. Progress Update on the *Fox River Heritage State Parkway Plan Activities – Grant Funding Initiative - Ed Kleckner*

Mr. Kleckner reported that in early December he met jointly with representatives of three Community Foundations, representing the Oshkosh, Green Bay and Fox Valley areas. A proposal prepared by ECWRPC to update the 10 year old 1997 Fox River State Heritage Corridor plan, and to implement that plan over a 3 year period was presented to the Community Foundations. ECWRPC is proposing a collaborative effort that would fund a work program and produce a report to jump start creation of a State Heritage Corridor that runs diagonally across the entire State from the Bay of Green Bay to the Mississippi River at Prairie du Chien. If funded, ECWRPC would be committing half of a position to make this happen. Staff would be working closely with Lake Winnebago and Fox-Wisconsin River communities to determine what their visions for the waterways are, and then to provide assistance in making those visions reality. This may involve providing maps and graphics, help with legal issues, real estate matters, and helping them find funding sources. The Fox River Heritage Corridor project provides increased public access and recreational opportunity on the banks of Wisconsin's lakes and rivers for local residents. The project also provides significant economic development benefits for the heritage tourism economy. The Heritage corridor will also contribute to improving the overall quality of life and make it easier for businesses to attract the best and the brightest talent. Staff reported that the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation has made a funding commitment contingent upon participation from other foundations.

Ed Kleckner reported that work on Phase I of the Fox River Navigation System Authority's Appleton Locks 1-4 project has been completed. Staff handed out a press release for a media event which demonstrated how the refurbished lock functions. The next phase of the FRNSA's planned work would focus on the three locks in the Little Chute and Combined Locks area

2. New Fox Cities Sourcewater Protection Committee. – Eric Fowle

Eric Fowle stated that a new cooperative effort has been initiated to address local and regional groundwater issues within the Fox Cities. As an implementation tool for the recently published Fox Cities Sourcewater Assessment document, the Fox Cities Groundwater Advisory Committee has been established with the assistance of the Wisconsin Rural Water Association. Led by Patrick Harrington as staff support/coordinator, the group consists of local officials, water utility staff, county staff, and the RPC. The first meeting was held to discuss the committee's role and future work efforts and future meetings will be publicized in order to attract more participants.

3. Picnic Point / Winnebago Mental Health Institute Property / ECWRPC Resolution 10-06 – Ed Kleckner

Ed Kleckner reported that the Picnic Point Property owned by the Wis. Mental Health Institute was in jeopardy of being sold off by the State against the stated wishes of many communities and organizations in the region. A motion was passed unanimously by the ECWRPC Commission at the October meeting (Resolution 10-06) recommending that the Picnic Point property be transferred to the DNR. Commissioner Mark Harris made the resolution. Mr. Kleckner prepared a 10 point explanation of why selling this property off was bad public policy when it would be needed to meet the growing future demand for waterfront recreational opportunities. Once developed it could never be replaced. It would only cost taxpayers more money to purchase other lands to meet the recreational needs of the region residents. In November, the letter and a packet of supporting information was sent to Governor Doyle's office, his assistant Rachel Allen, Robert Cramer/DOA, Scott Hassett/DNR, and our area legislators, Senator Carol Roessler in particular. In early December Governor Doyle's office announced in a press release that the Picnic Point property would be transferred to the Wisconsin DNR for recreational use, at no cost to the WDNR.

4. Discussion of the NE Wisconsin Stormwater Coalition (NEWSC) Funding Proposal – Eric Fowle

Eric reported on an opportunity for Commission involvement as an applicant for DNR stormwater planning funds which would assist the NE Wisconsin Stormwater Consortium with marketing efforts related to water quality. The Consortium is comprised of 30+ units of government from Brown, Winnebago, Outagamie, Calumet and Fond du Lac Counties and was formed to address the educational component requirements of EPA's and DNR's stormwater regulations. A meeting of NEWSC will occur in late January to review and discuss intricacies of the proposed project and how the RPCs would fit in. It is likely that the RPCs will have a minimal role and act mainly as a 'pass-through' organization. Eric stated that he will update the Committee as necessary on this item.

5. City of Brillion Stormwater Issues (Technical Assistance Project) – Eric Fowle / Jon Motquin

Eric reported that the City of Brillion has asked for assistance in dealing with flooding issues along Black Creek which impacts the Deer Run Golf Course. An unpermitted dam exists on the golf course property which would require significant dollars to bring into compliance with WDNR. These costs may force the golf course to close so staff will be assisting in examining options and potential funding sources for the City (or owner) to take advantage of. Staff will be meeting with the City again in February to discuss the matter more.

6. The Fox River Whitewater Kayaking Course and Consultant Study (Tech. Assist. Project) – Ed Kleckner

Staff reported that ECWRPC had assisted a Fox Cities area citizen group which has hired Recreation Engineering and Planning (REP), an experienced whitewater consultant from Colorado, to examine 9 sites in 5 communities to analyze them for their potential to accommodate a man-made whitewater course. East Central provided the consultant with aerial photo mapping, and provided a background history on what was happening at each of the sites when the consultant toured the properties. A public informational meeting was set up using display boards prepared by ECWRPC. The consultant, Mike Harvey, explained how a course could be designed to serve not just kayaking enthusiasts, but also those using the banks of the project area. Four sites were identified as having good potential in the feasibility study. Two are in Appleton, one in Neenah and one in Menasha. Two were in the main channel of the river and two were in the headrace channels of abandoned mill properties. The citizen committee will now have to decide which site they want to pursue first. It may be desirable to ultimately have 2 or more different kayaking experiences to offer as that would help to attract users from a greater distance and perhaps kayaking group events. A final report will be prepared by REP and released soon. The Gilbert Paper site in Menasha looked attractive to the consultant because it met the physical requirements and had a developer who was interested in exploring the prospect of incorporating the course into their project.

7. Brief Activity Updates on:

- Oakfield Conservation Subdivision Ordinance – Jon Motquin reported that this contract work is in progress and is projected to be completed tentatively about the end of March.
- Fritse Park Major Expansion Plans / Town of Menasha – Ed Kleckner met with Mike Kadding, Town of Menasha Parks Director, and his consultant to discuss how the future plans for the Fritse Park redevelopment project “Standing at the Crossroads – A Family Adventure Park”, could coordinate with the masterplan for the Winnebago-Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Corridor.
- Update on Eureka Lock Issue Resolution – Eric Fowle and Ed Kleckner reported that we have been staying in touch with officials of the WDNR, interested citizens of the area and UW-Extension staff who would be facilitating a meeting to discuss what all interested parties would like to do with the Eureka lock and other related issues. Both Commissioners and staff agreed that there are numerous perspectives to be considered and balanced to arrive at the best solution which will serve the needs of local communities and the region. Staff noted that Berlin has changed its motto to relate to the water, and they should be a key player involved in the process. ECWRPC should not be the facilitator because we have an advocacy position which promotes having the lock remain operational to accommodate the Heritage Corridor plan objectives.
- NR820 Update – Jon Motquin - The amendments to NR 820 strengthen the authority the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has to regulate and consider environmental impacts from high capacity wells. High capacity wells have the ability to adversely affect both groundwater and surface water levels. The update proposals detail new regulations and establish precedent for the decision making process for new wells which are located close to lakes, streams, springs, and other surface water. Significant measures were included to protect outstanding and exceptional water resources throughout the state.

Although this is a positive step in protecting regional water resources, local communities will need to remain vigilant in increasing local protection. The proposed rule does not necessarily consider the cumulative impacts of nearby wells. Additional provisions protecting wetlands

and other sensitive water based environments could be added to reinforce groundwater protection measures. In addition, biological and ecological parameters such as habitat degradation could be added. Local communities should remain abreast of how all land use activities, especially high capacity wells, affect local and regional water quality.

8. Other Business / Schedule Next Meeting

Prairie Chicken Festival

Golden Sands RC &D received a Department of Tourism grant to advertise and promote their second annual Prairie Chicken Festival. Since Golden Sands RC &D is required to perform an economic impact analysis of the survey, Jon Motquin has been providing technical assistance under the 1600 work program to develop this survey. He attended a planning meeting to discuss the importance of nature tourism to Waushara County and the East Central region. He has also volunteered to help develop a survey instrument on his personal time.

It was decided that the next scheduled meeting of the Open Space and Environmental Management Committee will be held at 1:30 P.M. on Tuesday, April 10th, 2007.

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:46 P.M., on a motion made by Commissioner Paltzer, with a second from Commissioner Albrecht.