

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Steering Committee
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
ECWRPC Offices
June 21, 2007

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Merlin Gentz, Chair.

Committee Members Present

Merlin Gentz, Chair.....	Calumet County
Brian Kowalkowski	Menominee County
Clifford Sanderfoot.....	Outagamie County
Marshal Giese	Shawano County
Dick Koeppen	Waupaca County
Norm Weiss	Waushara County
David Albrecht.....	Winnebago County

Committee Members Absent

Others Present

Eric Fowle	Executive Director
Angie Cottrell	Financial Specialist

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Statement of Compliance with Wis. Stats. Ch. 19, Subchapter V, Sec. 19.84 Regarding Open Meetings Requirements.
3. Public Comment
4. Election of Vice Chair for Steering Committee

Mr. Fowle explained that at the first meeting of the Steering Committee after the April Annual Meeting, a Vice Chair is elected. The members elected Brian Kowalkowski from Menominee County as Vice Chair of the Committee. There were no other nominations. Mr. Kowalkowski was elected Vice Chair unanimously.

5. Update on New Office Space

Mr. Fowle stated that a lease extension was requested and accepted from the present landlord, Mr. Laeyendecker. A copy of the updated floor plan for the new office space was included in the packet for the Committee’s review. Mr. Fowle noted that the Brownfield grant that the City of Menasha applied for did not get funded. Randy Stadtmueller, the developer; Joe Laux, the City of Menasha Mayor; Greg Kiel, and Jeff Brandt from the City of Menasha have rewritten the developer agreement and will go forward with the project without the Brownfield funding. Mr. Fowle indicated that the basic change in the agreement is that more of the project will be completed through the developer financed TIF. It also allows the City the opportunity to repay the developer’s financing if the Brownfield grant is received in 2008. He noted that occupancy is anticipated by March 1, 2008.

6. Update on Salary Study

Mr. Fowle indicated that due to budget constraints, a consultant will not be hired for a salary study; however, an evaluation of current salary situations will be conducted by Mr. Raith and himself. He referred to the outline that was put together showing the approach to this study. The information that would be obtained consists of: annual salary ranges by type of position; examples of most recent hires for a number of entities for the past year; and a list of fringe benefits provided and the level of staff contribution. The information would be sought from all RPCs, four urbanized counties with one county being outside of the Commission's region and four large cities. Mr. Fowle requested the Committee's views on if he should inquire at the next AWRPC meeting about the other RPCs interest in performing a study collectively. The Committee concurred that AWRPC should be asked about this.

A brief discussion followed regarding the Salary Study that was conducted in 1994.

7. Dissolution of Shawano County Contract

Mr. Fowle explained that in May, Shawano County re-evaluated their budget for their Planning Department and by resolution dissolved the contract between the Commission and the County. Mr. Fowle indicated that it would be appropriate to have the dissolution in the Commission's records also.

Mr. Sanderfoot moved to dissolve the contract between the Commission and Shawano County, seconded by Mr. Kowalkowski. Passed unanimously.

8. Request from Town of Eden, Fond du Lac County regarding Withdrawal of Membership

Mr. Fowle explained that with the transition of the Financial Specialist position it came to light that the Village of Marquette and the Town of Eden, Fond du Lac County owed past levy dues. Documentation for the Village of Marquette had been located, and therefore that entity did not owe past levy dues. Mr. Fowle contacted the Clerk for the Town of Eden regarding the past due levies for 2006 and 2007 and she stated she would discuss this issue with the Town Board. A letter was received without payment on May 30th expressing the Town's desire to withdraw from the Commission for 2008. Mr. Fowle noted that the Town owes approximately \$3,200 for 2006 and 2007 dues.

A discussion following regarding the situation, a motion was made by Mr. Weiss and seconded by Sanderfoot to accept the withdrawal of the Town of Eden for the 2008 and future calendar years. The Committee consensus was that Mr. Fowle should pursue payment from the Town of Eden for past due levy amounts.

Chair Gentz stated that the Committee members should be aware of the consequences of not being a member of the Commission and inform their County Board members of the benefits of being a member.

9. Financial Report

Ms. Cottrell explained the financial table to the Committee. Under program receivables, she noted that EDA has been billed for the first quarter, but payment has not been received. Mr. Fowle stated that one change that he is considering is to have Shawano and Outagamie Counties pay their dues annually like the other counties versus quarterly which will improve cash flow. A letter requesting such a change had been sent out, but no response has been received as of yet.

10. Review of 2007 Budget Adjustments due to 2006 Audit Report

Mr. Fowle distributed new budget materials due to errors found on the summaries that were mailed. He stated that this year he will try to mirror the form of the budget to the audit report, so that the tracking of items is consistent with the way the auditors would track them. Mr. Fowle indicated that the Commission is expecting about \$49,000 less in terms of overall revenues and about \$43,000 less on total expenditures. This will leave a surplus of just \$766. He noted that with the staffing changes and retirement, the budget should just about break even.

Mr. Fowle pointed out that under salaries and wages, the first item under operating expenses does incorporate the numbers that are shown on the staffing modifications page. Under the office space and equipment item, \$40,000 is included that was expected to be spend on the office move, office equipment, IT supplies, etc., but the office will not be moving in 2007, therefore there will be a \$40,000 buffer that does not show up on the bottom line in this version of the materials. He has been talking to the developer to determine what expenses, if any, the Commission will experience in 2007 regarding the move. To execute the lease on the new building a payment of \$10,000 is required that would later be credited towards security deposit and rent. Mr. Fowle also noted that shortly before the meeting, it was brought to his attention that an employee's health insurance was not changed as it should have been last year from the family plan to a single plan resulting in an impact of \$4,000.

Mr. Fowle stated that the Commission still has to meet the local contract budget target of approximately \$50,000 more work for 2007. He referred to the Potential Contracts handout and explained that the highlighted items were projects that have the greatest potential for the Commission to be involved with in 2007. He updated the Committee on the status of those projects.

The question was asked what can be done to get the budget back on track. Mr. Fowle stated realistically to rectify the situation: raising the levy, short or long term, definitely needs to be a component of the solution; the cost on local contracts needs to be moderated; and the Commission still needs to move toward a direction in terms of contracts that look at a more long term or a more stable type of contracts. Discussion followed regarding county budgets, freezes and increasing the tax levy. Mr. Fowle stated that he would prefer the Steering Committee members as the representatives of the counties dictate the increase of the tax levy that their counties would be willing to accept. He noted that if the tax levy is not increased, and with the reduced staff, the counties have to expect projects will not be able to be completed in the same manner or efficiency as years past. The state and federal mandated projects will need to take first priority.

Mr. Fowle referred to the Overhead Budget handout, explaining that the items bolded where items that could possibly be decreased, items not bolded may be stable or see slight increases. He stated that he anticipates that the mini-conferences may be able to be held in our new offices reducing that cost. Mr. Fowle explained the various items in the overhead budget, citing what could be done to reduce costs.

Mr. Fowle stated that the Employee Trust Fund offers other packages of the health insurance that he was never informed of by the previous financial specialist. He said that the changing of insurance packages should not affect retired employees under the State insurance program. Mr. Fowle noted that there are deductible insurance programs that could be a cost savings of 9-10% on premiums for the Commission. The change has to be made by resolution by October 1st. Mr. Fowle will continue to research this option.

A discussion followed to clarify the computer expenditure. Mr. Fowle stated that there is \$3,000 in the budget for 2007 for upgrades/repairs, which is low due to budget constraints and in 2008 that figure will need to be increased to accommodate the needs of the office move, etc.

11. Discussion on Commission Mission, Goals, and Functions as it relates to 2007 and 2008 Budgets

Mr. Fowle handed out a copy of the State Statutes that authorize the Commission's existence. He stated that he felt the Commission's mission is outlined in Subsection 8. He noted that it states that the Comprehensive Plan is the number one priority, providing technical assistance is a priority, and the regional programs that are funded through the State or Federal government are a priority. Mr. Fowle distributed a copy of an outline of the Commission's priority activities. He stated that the federal and state funded programs are the top priority due to their regional nature. He noted that the housing planning element was eliminated from this year's budget due to lack of time and abilities to perform the activities. Projects, such as outdoor recreation plan updates, developing zoning ordinances or amendments are activities that the Commission's has become known for and the local units governments have expected to the Commission to perform on a short notice, are going to have to be denied in the future.

Mr. Kowalkowski asked about the ability of the GIS Department to perform technical assistance. Mr. Fowle stated that the GIS Department has limited availability for technical assistance because most of their time for 2007 is allocated to the programmatic or contract projects to complete projects.

Mr. Fowle suggested programming into the budget technical assistance projects that the communities request. He indicated that the Commission would solicit projects in the fall for the following year and then prioritize these projects. A discussion followed with the consensus of the Committee expressing an approval of the suggestion.

Mr. Fowle asked the Committee members for feedback on the Commission's activities and future direction. He reiterated the items bolded on the handout are the critical items that the Commission should remain involved with. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Albrecht noted that Mr. Fowle has been doing a great job improving the relationship between the counties and the Commission. Mr. Koeppen indicated that his county supervisors also were unaware of the purpose of the Commission membership, but after Mr. Fowle's educational presentation, which they never had before; the county supervisors are more informed about the benefits of being a member of the Commission. Discussion followed regarding educating the public and the county supervisors of the Commission's activities.

Mr. Fowle referred to the handout that he has developed for the Planning and Zoning Committees which listed the activities and benefits of Commission membership. Discussion ensued about the type of information listed and how it is interpreted by the various members of the county boards and planning and zoning committees.

Mr. Fowle indicated that communication and the purpose of the Commission are still issues in the counties, therefore, he has compiled changes that can be made to improve the situation. Some of the changes he is proposing are: redesigning the website to document hits; more detail on the breakdown of A-95 Reviews in the Annual Report; sending the Weekly Report to county department heads and planning and zoning committee members to keep them informed weekly to what the Commission is involved with; and have the Commission receive copies of the County Board agendas so that the Commission stays informed. Mr. Fowle said, as transitions occur, he recommends that the County Board select a member from the Planning and Zoning Committee as a Commissioner. Discussion followed regarding county board selections for Commissioners.

Chair Gentz suggested in the Weekly Report, under the previous week's activities, if there could be statements in terms as how that activity ties into the regional issues might be helpful. An activity attended by staff in one county can have ramifications in terms of the whole region. A discussion followed regarding the benefits of the Weekly Report.

12. Discussion Regarding Establishment of 2008 Levy

Mr. Fowle referred to the tables that were included in the packet, regarding the 2008 levy options, and noted that the tables are to serve as an informational item for the Committee. A levy rate decision will have to be made in July and the rate will have to be approved by the full Commission at the July Quarterly Meeting. He was providing this information now so that the Committee would have time to review it before the July Steering Committee meeting. He reminded the Committee that the levy is based on the prior year's equalized property valuation. Mr. Fowle explained the alternatives list on the table.

13. Other Business & Announcements

a. New Commissioners

Mr. Fowle indicated that two new Commissioners have been appointed. Randy Reiter, Chair for Menominee County, did not get reelected; therefore the elected Chair becomes a Commissioner. The new Chair for Menominee County is Elizabeth Moses. The new Commissioner for Winnebago County is Jim Erdman, Supervisor from the Town of Oshkosh.

b. County Board Meetings – Annual Report Presentations

Mr. Fowle stated that he has met with almost all the County Planning and Zoning Committees. He will be meeting with the Winnebago Committee at their next meeting and with Outagamie County next week. He will be meeting with most of County Boards in July and August.

c. AWRPC Activities

Mr. Fowle said the next meeting of the AWRPC will be in July. He informed the Committee that another regional planning agency was formed entitled Capitol Area Regional Planning Commission representing Dane County. It is a single county regional planning commission with a primary responsibility to the DNR sewer service/water quality planning.

d. Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Legislation Status

Mr. Fowle handed out the preliminary draft of the legislation for the establishment of a regional transportation authority. At this point the bill does not have a sponsor. The legislation was crafted to be flexible so it meets a number of different needs across the State. Discussion followed regarding possible sponsors.

e. State GIS / RPC Activities

Mr. Fowle informed the Committee that the Commission was involved in coordinating the aerial photography consortium in 2005. The Commission followed up with the other RPCs with a survey to the agencies that participated. The majority of the responses were very positive regarding the collaboration. Andrew Jennings, who worked on that project, has been working with the other RPCs and the Wisconsin Land Information Association (WLIA). WLIA has created an Orthoimaginery Task Force and discussions have started regarding a similar project

for 2010. Mr. Fowle distributed a newspaper article that discusses the effort to coordinate GIS at the state level.

f. NEWSOC Agreement / WDNR Grant Status

Mr. Fowle reminded the Committee that at the April Quarterly Meeting, the Commission adopted a memorandum of understanding with Bay-Lake RPC stating that East Central would be the sponsor for a WDNR grant for the North East Wisconsin Stormwater Consortium. There has been no word from WDNR on the awarding of that grant, but based on discussions of the Consortium staff with WDNR things sound encouraging. He noted that due to comments by the Consortium staff, modifications may have to be made to the memorandum of understanding between Bay-Lake RPC and East Central, as well as, between East Central and the communities before the communities sign the agreement.

g. Regional Program Opportunities

Mr. Fowle informed and explained to the Committee regional programs that the Commission may in the future become involved with: A Regional Agricultural Preservation Program, Regional Revolving Loan Fund, Groundwater Management, Regional Industrial Park Mapping, and the Fox River Heritage Corridor.

14. Schedule New Meeting

The next Steering Committee was scheduled for July 19 at 10:00 A.M.

15. Adjourn

Mr. Albrecht moved for adjournment, seconded by Mr. Weiss. Meeting adjourned at 3:50 P.M.