



**Flint Hills Regional Council Board of Directors**  
**Board Retreat Minutes – August 18, 2011**  
**Board Retreat Location: Camp Wood YMCA - Elmdale, KS**

Present from Board of the Regional Council: **Cecil Aska**, Junction City Commissioner; **Ben Bennett**, Geary County Commissioner; **Dan Deiter**, Alma City Council; **Stan Hartwich**, Pottawatomie County Commissioner; **Vern Hay**, Morris County Commissioner; **Linda Hoeffner**, Fort Riley; **Galen Johnson**, Dwight City Mayor; **Karen McCulloh**, Riley County Commissioner; **MarySue Roller**, Woodbine City Councilwoman; **Debi Schwerdtfeger**, Council Grove Commissioner; **Jim Sherow**, Manhattan Mayor; **David Shover II**, Riley City Mayor and **Ervan Stuewe**, Wabaunsee County Commissioner. **Phil Weishaar**, Mayor of Chapman, was also present and accepted onto the Council as a new member during the course of the meeting.

Absent from the Board: **John Armbrust**, Governor's Military Council; **Vic Enns**, Wamego City Commissioner; **Honey Grant**, Grandview Plaza Vice-Mayor; **Jackie Hartman**, Kansas State University; **Joe Kormanik**, Alta Vista Commissioner; and **Jimmy Thatcher**, Clay Center Mayor.

Present from the Greater Regional Council Membership: No additional members present.

Present from Staff Support: **Ty Warner**, Executive Director and **Jeff Adams**, Regional Planner.

Guests: **Bob Cole**, Pottawatomie County EcoDevo; **Thomas Dow**, KDOT; **Mike Rice**, Wamego Telecommunications; **Angie Schwerdtfeger**, Tri-County Telephone; **Stephanie Watts**, KDOT; and **Melissa Wengemann**, Kansas Association of Counties.

**MISSION & FOCUS:**

Handouts and Resource Packets for today's agenda were given to each member in attendance, providing follow-up on past work and today's agenda topics: accomplishments this year, business not completed in July, KAC legislative matters, broadband in rural areas, KDOT/MPO status, ground rules and regional issues.

Ground Rules, including the following:

- Make sure that in our discussions we are all looking forward and making forward progress rather than rehashing past differences.
- Share the floor giving everyone a chance to express his or her views.
- Take mutual responsibility in our decisions and take meetings seriously.

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Mission, Vision and Goals:

- The four goals of forming the Regional Planning Organization (which became the Flint Hills Regional Council) are in areas of Regional Service, Local Service, Building the Organization, and ensuring effective Funding Resources.
- Based on past retreat work by FHRC Members, the FHRC's four service areas can be drawn to include the following themes, tied together by a central, unifying theme of Vision & Leadership:
  1. Housing & Infrastructure Support
  2. Transportation & Mobility
  3. Economics & Opportunity
  4. Assets & Resources
- Each of these four service themes translates into specific goals/milestones for the organization, all through the portal of FHRC:
  1. Housing Plan & Tool
  2. MPO Status & Transportation Plan
  3. Economic Development Plan & District
  4. "Greenprint"/Regional Asset Inventory
- At the same time, the funding for engaging in this work is 90% Department of Defense-related, with only 10% provided by FHRC membership. The challenge of needing to provide continual benefit to the Fort Riley installation versus a myriad of very local needs was discussed, and how the OEA has funded the Regional Council to address these regional issues.

Focus Strategic Direction:

- Discussion between Ty Warner, Executive Director, and the Board showcasing progress that the Council has made by highlighting where they are going as a body.
- Warner showed a slide of the strategic work session timelines, and he also highlighted how discussions from the initial retreat assisted in building perceptions shared towards Imagery & Branding (e.g. new FHRC logo), staff work direction, and plans for capacity building.
- Distinct strategic concerns included imagery, organizational expectations and regional expectations. The regional expectations lead to Regional Key Concerns of equity, sharing and effective use of resources.
- A list was compiled of future milestones that include data and information collaboration, education, economic development and regional cooperation.
- The group reviewed the "Top 5 Issues" exercise of each community, and identified the few most important issues faced today by their community.
- Members were then asked to post these issues on a combined chart containing all four service themes in quadrants (Housing & Infrastructure Support, Transportation & Mobility, Economics & Opportunity, and Assets & Resources), placing their issues on target areas of local versus regional concern.

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- Members then shared their placements, identifying areas of mutual concern as well as further discussing whether these issues are regional or local issues in nature.
- A summary list of concerns were as follows:
  - **Geary County** – Road infrastructure, \$40M DOT for corridor studies, cooperating & collaborating with Fort Riley, projecting a positive image and working well with others.
  - **Riley County** – Viable fixed-route bus system, workers to work, economic development working together, mental health access and significant increase in jail population, state cut-backs concerned about closing SRS office and other mandates.
  - **Chapman** – Maintain local businesses, maintain community businesses that are aging-out, expand city limits by incorporating growth outside city limits and county-sprawl.
  - **Pottawatomie County** – Road & bridge upgrades, public building process and funding. BREAKING NEWS: CAT will expand in Wamego.
  - **Junction City** – Indebtedness plan, economic development, employment opportunities and vacant lots due to special assessments.
  - **Alma** – Streetscape delay, population stability (no growth and less younger people) and sewer project Phase Two.
  - **Woodbine** – Post office to close, lost café and don't have another business to house it and businesses aging out.
  - **Grandview Plaza** – Traffic problems, 420 new apartments, feasibility study, sewer expansion and sidewalks on the west side of State Street.
  - **Riley County Cities** – Shrinking towns, road problems and grants, funding process, infrastructure, getting businesses into small communities and schools. (Currently looking to the regional council for grants)
  - **Manhattan** – Regional planning with watersheds, transportation and housing (recent elections have made this more difficult), education, component clusters of business, coordinated policy formation (from corridor issues and future of the Fort). The possibility of forming sub-committees, especially when traveling to DC, to working with legislatures.
  - **Council Grove** – Attracting young families (nothing in town for them), quality jobs, hotel needs for tourists, family hotels and Governor Brownback's concerns.
  - **Morris County** – Economic development, shrinking county, affordable housing, transportation, tax structure takes care of roads but bridges are not funded as well, city lake issue and viable long-term lease.
- While issues were placed in all four quadrants, they largely fell along an access relating to Economics & Opportunity and Assets & Resources.
- Further, most of the issues placed fell within a circle of Local Concern, versus truly Regional issues. The group discussed the necessity of building the regional organization with limited staff and the necessity

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of maintaining a largely regional focus early on, involving the key service areas above.

- There was a general concern expressed about ensuring the Regional Council is included as the Fort moves forward. For example, how do we work together on legislative concerns?
- There was further discussion that the AUSA National Convention is where the council should be coordinated in these discussions, because of the heavy involvement with congressional representation and support. How do we position our resources and ourselves?

**HUD REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY GRANT:**

- Jeff Adams, Regional Planner, summarized a new planning opportunity, which would be a great asset to the region.
- The Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant would provide opportunities to enhance transportation, housing and land use planning that is built on a robust inventory and modeling of our current regional resources.
- Highlights of Grant: two-tiered approach – one based on regional boundaries and encompassing the entire Flint Hills ecosystem.
- This particular grant is offered through HUD, DOT and EPA but the funding is originated from the Department of Defense.
- Current entities invested in this process are the Governor's office as an outgrowth of Governor Brownback's Flint Hills Visioning Summit, a resulting regional workgroup on which the FHRC has been given a seat, and a coalition team that includes BNIM (Kansas City) as well as the LEAM group (Illinois), which is currently engaged in impact analysis work at Fort Riley.
- Warner relayed the importance of this opportunity to the Regional Council's future work in establishing a broad-based asset assessment tool that will greatly assist local decision-makers in assessing the region-wide impacts of local decisions, as well as prepare the region to integrate future transportation and economic modeling that would have built-in respect and value for the resources that make the Flint Hills region uniquely special.
- Building a wide coalition will be integral to the success of the HUD grant opportunity. Member Karen McCulloh moved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding that is needed to pursue the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant for the Flint Hills Region. Member Ben Bennett seconded. Motion was carried unanimously.
- The Regional Council jointly signed an initial memorandum of understanding to commit to working together in pursuit of this opportunity.

**CONDUCTING BUSINESS:**

- Member Jim Sherow moved to approve by-laws change of increasing the number of at-large members on the Executive Committee from

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one to two, increasing the total number of members on the Executive Committee from five to six. Member Karen McCulloh seconded. Motion was carried unanimously.

- Member David Shover moved to accept the Executive Committee's nomination of the slate of officers. Member Ben Bennett seconded. Motion was carried unanimously.
- Member Ben Bennett moved to approve the nominated slate of officers for the Executive Committee. Member Jim Sherow seconded. Motion was carried unanimously.
- Member Jim Sherow moved to accept 2010 Census numbers as the basis for membership assessments at a rate of 50 cents per capita. Member Stan Hartwich seconded. Motion was carried unanimously.
- Warner relayed that a Membership Agreement had been signed by the City of Chapman, but was lost in the mail and not received prior to the retreat; however, during the course of the meeting, a copy of the document was received from the City Clerk, sent by email, as proof of signature. Member David Shover moved to accept the City of Chapman as a member with the Flint Hills Regional Council. Member Jim Sherow seconded. Motion was carried unanimously. Mayor Phil Weishaar was subsequently sworn in as Chapman's representative on the Flint Hills Regional Council.

**LEGISLATIVE MATTERS:**

Guest Speaker Melissa Wangemann from the Kansas Association of Counties (KAC) gave an overview about her agency and presented information to the group about what legislative matters were likely to be addressed in the legislative platform of the Kansas Association of Counties.

- The Kansas Association of Counties has a Legislative Policy Committee and a Finance Committee. The Legislative Committee produces the document and formulates the 2011 policy statement, taking position on Federal issues. Some of the legislative items making their way onto the platform are community health centers and clarity about whether counties can accept credit cards payments so that a surcharge fee can be passed (the customers would cover the costs).
- The 2012 session will focus on changing income taxes "March to Economic Growth Act": the Director of Legislative Research is required to certify at beginning of each fiscal year revenues coming in; if growth occurs, deduct from income taxes.
- The 2012 session will also be spent trying to defend positions such as home rule, which includes preserving money on community mental health.
- Pell Grants were cancelled for Summer 2011.
- The 911 taxes were passed because some of these fees are essential for public safety.
- Congressional Redistricting: There have been several meetings held across the state on the redistricting due to the 2010 Census data. We are still in the early stages but it looks like southeastern and western

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Kansas could lose seats as the population continues to move to eastern Kansas. Ms. Wangemann expects that the final decision will be made on the legislative floor at the last hour and the higher court is not likely to overturn that decision. The decision should be made by April 2012.

Bob Cole, Pottawatomie County Economic Development, introduced Mike Rice of Wamego Telecommunications. Angie Schwerdtfeger, Tri-County Telecommunications, was also present for the discussion on broadband in rural areas and the FCC.

- Currently, 28% of the country does not have access to broadband.
- There are 35 independent telephone companies operating in Kansas.
- The Kansas legislature unanimously passed a resolution that 4 MB is inadequate service. Please refer to [www.kansastelephone.com](http://www.kansastelephone.com).
- The Universal Service Fund was intended to support rural networks. Rural communities also received power based on the same model.
- "Wireless" is only wireless after it gets to a tower at which point it is connected by wire.
- Wichita State University conducted a study on the impact of broadband in rural areas to show its economic benefits to the state.
- Rural Local Exchange Carriers provide service in every Kansas county except Wyandotte, serving 50% of the geographic area of the state but less than 10% of the population.
- Recently, Verizon and other major national companies pay for calls terminated on local networks but lobbied this amount down to almost nothing.
- Due to the proposed changes at the FCC to the Universal Service Fund, 50% - 70% of rural telecom revenue is at risk.
- For additional information, please access [www.saveruralbroadband.org](http://www.saveruralbroadband.org).
- Member Stan Hartwich moved to approve the resolution objecting to changes to the Universal Service Fund and the debilitating effect that it would have on rural communities. Member Jim Sherow seconded.
- Member Phil Weishaar (Mayor of Chapman) moved to amend the resolution to include the City of Chapman. Member David Shover seconded. Motion was carried unanimously on the amendment, after which the amended motion was unanimously approved.

**TRAVELING FORWARD:**

Thomas Dow and Stephanie Watts, both from KDOT, presented information in regards to the following: Note on Transportation Bill Reauthorization Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in Kansas.

- If the new Census urban area for our Metropolitan Statistical Areas passes the urban population threshold, KDOT and the area of MPO will have to negotiate what the boundaries of the MPO will actually be; however, it is essentially the area that is planned to experience growth over the next 20 years.

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- A designation agreement will have to be signed, which is a contract with the Secretary of Transportation Deb Miller and the City of Manhattan (as the central city within the urban area) as well as enough local jurisdictions to exceed 75% of urban area population.
- The FHRC will be essential due to its very presence and the collaborative nature of the organization, because some regions have had difficulty working together, as well as getting organized. The FHRC can be that one voice with all the state agencies, and is already set up to do so.
- As opposed to the previous discussions about “unfunded mandates,” the MPO is actually a *funded* mandate. The money comes from two entities: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA); that pot of money is divided among MPOs throughout the state by a formula that KDOT utilizes. KDOT is considering ways to modify their current formula. It is currently based on an 80/20 formula; that 20% could come from municipalities and counties or other innovative sources.
- The MPO Policy Board would not be the same as the FHRC Board. Included at the table would be the MPO itself, KDOT, and any fixed route transit in the region (which, incidentally, may be easier to fund under an MPO with designated funds for this purpose). Representatives on the FHRC may be represented on the MPO Policy Board, however.
- The main entities governing the MPO would be the Policy Board (which from KDOT would likely be represented by Thomas Dow or Dyanna Moore), and a Technical Advisory Committee (e.g. City Engineer, County Road Superintendent, or etc.).
- The MPO core documents would include:
  - A **Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)**, including highway, transit, pedestrian, bicycle, etc. This has to include a list of projects (Federally funded or regionally significant), and has to be fiscally constrained (that is, take into account how much money we think we have to spend on projects). Funding is through a consolidated planning grant - not for actual contraction projects, but for day-to-day, planning work (which could be \$100-300,000 per year).
  - The **Transportation Improvement Program** (similar to a community’s Capital Improvement Program) – is a project list, but in this case, money has actually been set aside for these projects. Projects have to be listed here in order to obligate funds. Once a project is on this list, has to be spent within three years. All Federally funded projects have to be on this list.
  - The **Unified Planning Work Program** – a list of planning work that all entities agree have to be taken during the next fiscal year (which follows the calendar year); the plan for how the Federal funds under the MTP are going to be spent.
  - A **Public Participation Plan** - provides the opportunity to be consulted, and recognized that no one person has a lock on all the good ideas. Explains how the MPO intends to gauge the local public.

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- KDOT is expecting the 2010 Census Urban Area boundaries to be released in the first quarter of 2012.
- Trends are destabilizing the Federal Highway Trust Fund and this has been a concern for Secretary Miller. Warner referred to his presence on KDOT's Reauthorization Workgroup following this issue and the possible consequences of not continuing the current bill beyond September 30.
- Stephanie Watts works with the Lawrence and Wichita MPOs; she has already requested to work with the Flint Hills Region MPO, as she is a K-State graduate and did an internship at the City of Manhattan.
- Member Jim Sherow inquired about the effect of declining entering into an MPO, if that were even possible. KDOT responded that it would not be able to spend any Federal money in that area if it doesn't enter into an MPO agreement.
- KDOT's T-LINK process led to the statewide transportation plan (Transportation Implementation Plan). The agency is currently in charge of rural areas, whereas the MPO gives much more influence and control to local officials. MPOs develop plans and program funds – they do not operate the program construct roadways. The role of the MPO is to set the table and figure out what is best for that particular region.
- Member Karen McCulloh stated that the region organized the Regional Planning Organization/FHRC with MPO status in mind as part of its development plan, and asked for further comments on organization of the MPO. KDOT responded that housing the MPO in the Regional Council is one option, but is done often and in many places throughout the country. It would be formulated as a subgroup for transportation decisions.
- Member Ben Bennett indicated that with the current region being what it is with Fort Riley that he couldn't imagine Secretary Miller not being on board about including Junction City or other communities in the MPO area. KDOT replied that the FHRC could be the group that convenes the discussion to sign the agreements and the planning area will get figured out once the urban area is established.
- Member David Shover asked about the inclusion of Fort Riley within an MPO. KDOT gave the example of Wichita Airforce Base being included in the planning area of the Wichita MPO. Shover stated that Riley is on the northern end of the Fort; therefore, it could be excluded or included depending on how the boundaries are determined.
- Member Ben Bennett indicated that the populated area of the Fort is split almost in two between two counties.
- Stephanie Watts feels that the most comparable MPO in Kansas for the Flint Hills Region is Lawrence.

**FINE-TUNING & PRIORITIES:**

- The next board meeting will be held in Wabaunsee County on September 16. Fort Riley Commanding General Mayville will be present at this meeting and the agenda will include discussion

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concerning Fort Riley, as well as the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant package.

**MEETING ADJOURNED:**

- There was a motion made from the floor to adjourn the meeting at 1:15 p.m. Motion was seconded and approved.