

**Flint Hills Regional Council Board of Directors
Minutes of December 17, 2010**

**Flint Hills Regional Council Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes—December 17, 2010
Held at the Alma Community Center, Alma, KS**

Present from Board of the Regional Council: **Vern Hay**, Morris County Commissioner; **David Shover**, Riley City Council; **Karen McCulloh**, Riley County Commissioner; **Sharon Brown**, Clay Center Mayor; **MarySue Roller**, Woodbine City Council; **Ervan Stuewe**, Wabaunsee County Commissioner; **Debi Schwerdtfeger**, Council Grove City Council; **Jim Sherow**, Manhattan Commissioner; **Dan Deiter**, Alma City Council; **Galen Johnson**, Dwight Mayor; **John Armbrust**, Governor's Military Council; **Linda Hoeffner**, Fort Riley.

Absent from the Board: **Ben Bennett** Geary County Commissioner; **Robby McGowan**, Onaga City Council; **Stan Hartwich**, Pottawatomie County Commissioner; **Vic Enns**, Wamego City Commissioner; **Terry Heldstab**, Junction City Commissioner; **Jackie Hartman**, Kansas State University.

Present from the greater Regional Council Membership: no additional members present

Present from Staff Support: **Ty Warner**, Executive Director; **Karen Davis**, City of Manhattan; **Kristina Hyland**, Regional Growth Coordinator.

Guests: **Col. Dvoracek**, Fort Riley; **Maurice Baker**, Mayor Alma; **Jim Suber**, Wabaunsee County Commissioner; **Joe Kormanik**, Alta Vista Council; **Dave Yearout**, Geary County/Junction City Planning; **Monty Wedel**, Riley County; **Miki Bowman**, Council Grove Housing; **Bruce McMillan**, McMillan Architects; **Lyle Peterson**, Kansas Department of Commerce; **Cheryl Beatty**, Junction City; **Abby Amick**, Wabaunsee County EDC; **Todd Moore**, Junction City/Geary County Chamber; **Daryn Soldan**, Junction City Geary County Chamber; **Ben Kormanik**, Alta Vista; **Ashley Strahle**, Daily Union.

Welcome – President Brown called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and invited Abby Amick to welcome the meeting to Wabaunsee County and the City of Alma.

Approval of Minutes from November 12 – Member McCulloh moved to approve the minutes with two changes: Non-voting members should be identified as such and on page two a misspelling. Member Deiter seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Accept and Seat the New Member from the City of Dwight – Member Hay moved to accept the City of Dwight as a new member. Member Sherow seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Mr. Warner swore in the new member from Dwight, Mayor Galen Johnson.

Domestic Leasing Review – Non-voting member Hoeffner indicated that Fort Riley was still researching the finer points of these options. She also indicated that they would require help from the local communities in gathering some necessary data. Col. Dvoracek examined 3 options from Title 10 of the US Code (sections 2828, 2835 & 2836) and the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program as outline in the handouts included with these minutes. Sections

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2835 & 2836 require that the Department of the Army have on hand and set aside the entire amount necessary either to build or lease appropriate off-post housing over the course of the 1-25 year lease. Because of this requirement these options are not viable as the Department of the Army is not willing to encumber money in this fashion.

Per non-voting member Armbrust, the Low-income Housing Tax Credit is not particularly viable, as it had been set up in Kansas and there was very little use made of it by developers or builders. This low usage rate of the designated funds combined with several natural disasters caused the legislature to re-allocate the funds for recovery. Armbrust feels it is unlikely that the legislature will be willing to set aside much funding in this manner in the future.

The fourth option is under section 2828 of the US Title 10 Code. It allows Domestic Leasing by the Department of the Army for temporary housing (probably less than 10 years – most likely less than 5 year leases) per the requirements and restrictions listed on the accompanying sheet, included with these minutes.

Col. Dvoracek indicated two challenges with proceeding with Domestic Leasing:

1. As the process is initiated by Fort Riley, Fort Riley must be able to assess the current availability of Rental Property in the Region (especially in the Housing Market Analysis (HMA) Area designated by the Army – 30 minutes or 20 miles from post) so it can compare that number to the HMA's determined needs. Must define the need and the length of time housing is needed – the idea is for the Army to lease properties long enough to get private developments finished and available to fill the need.
2. Once it is determined that there is a temporary need, what documentation is necessary to begin the process with the property owners? The installation (Fort Riley) has to initiate the request to the Army, but they still need to do some research to find out what they need from the potential properties and how long the leases are.

Non-voting member Armbrust clarified that the HMA currently shows a shortfall, but questioned what that gap actually is. Col Dvoracek agreed, but noted that the Army doesn't entirely believe the numbers from the HMA. Member Sherow asked what was meant by shortage in this case as the City of Manhattan is overbuilt in certain types of available housing. Col. Dvoracek indicated that in this case a shortage included matching both number and types/affordability. Member Sherow then asked what a lease obligated a property owner to in this case. Col. Dvoracek indicated that certain minimums would be required – maintenance, repair, available utilities, appliances, etc. would be required at the outset, but that the details beyond that needed more research.

There was some discussion on the Section 2836 option which appears to be well-suited to helping alleviate some of the available lots in Junction City, but it was reinforced several times that this option was not viable because of the requirement of up-front funding for the whole lease period. Also, discussed was the desire to avoid a situation similar to the 2006 request from Fort Riley

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for single family homes which could lead to a larger mismatch between what was available and what was sought by the soldiers. Several members suggested a cautious approach with the intent of not building rental housing for 18,000 soldiers if there is not a solid idea of how many soldiers will be at Fort Riley in 5 years -- especially if the number is likely to be fewer than there are now. Non-voting member Armbrust asked what constituted "enough" housing to bridge the gap and how long was the "gap." Non-voting member Hoeffner pointed out that even at 85% staffing Fort Riley's numbers indicate there will still be about 1000 housing units short in the community. She also indicated that a letter from the Regional Council or at least from the communities indicating what's available in infrastructure, for sale and for rent/lease would be helpful in Fort Riley's initial approach to the Department of the Army exploring Domestic Leasing. Hoeffner also suggested that if the community was unable to meet the demand for leased/rental housing, the infrastructure number could be used to argue for help filling the available lots. Armbrust requested Fort Riley provide the numbers again showing the need for housing units even at a reduced staffing level.

There followed some discussion on how to identify the rental housing availability in those communities lacking a rental inspection program. Manhattan is the only community running an inspection program and its program was offered as a good model that will have the consequence of giving them robust rental unit information. Junction City indicated an intent to explore a rental inspection program of its own. Member McCulloh suggested the region approach the appropriate amount of housing as a question independent of the Army's needs both in type and in price and suggested that the Regional Council staff pursue calculation of what would be reasonably needed by this region. Member Sherow suggested that requiring that the community house such a large portion of the soldiers off post puts an unwarranted burden on the local communities when it is a national responsibility to house soldiers. Member Hay suggested that a government contract of any kind usually includes an escape clause letting the government out of the contract at anytime -- creating a rather large drawback to entering into a contract with any governmental entity.

Col. Dvoracek agreed that government contracts have their distinct drawbacks. He also reiterated that the Department of Defense's 1/3-2/3 rule, while not written down, is seen, from the DoD's point of view, as a local burden which includes economic benefit through purchases and rentals and a chance to integrate the military population into the surrounding communities and market what the military is doing in a positive way. Certainly, the DoD is fickle when it doesn't work out and is often the first to say you're not meeting our needs. Fort Riley has a good idea of what their needs are for rental properties, but will need information from the communities on rental properties -- number, size, price to make a good comparison.

Mr. Warner indicated this was the first time he'd heard the 1/3 - 2/3 guideline questioned. It's possible that this guideline is one that doesn't make sense in the local reality. With that said, it is hard to say what mix is correct for any given area. There are consultants who make their living trying to ascertain what mix of housing types is best for an area, and this is predicated

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on each community's individual goals and needs as reflected in their local comprehensive plans. Member Sherow suggested that the Council's focus should be on how it and its member can help collect what rental information can be collected. Mr. Warner suggested that if Junction City does adopt a rental inspection program then, coupled with Manhattan's program, these would account for the great majority of rentals available in the region. There was some discussion on the Housing Database as it stands now, how that fits into the information needs now and how to construct a language that is common across all parties. Non-voting member Hoeffner suggested that the appointed housing contact for each community meet in a group with Fort Riley to figure out how to collect the necessary information.

There was discussion of the BAH assigned for Fort Riley – new rates were just announced. Many of the lowest ranks had the BAH drop \$30 or so/month. This change effects only new arrivals to Fort Riley; those already here keep their current BAH rates. The low-income housing tax credit calculations do not include BAH, making a number of the soldiers of lower rank with larger families eligible for the LIHTC. Non-voting member Armbrust indicated he would attempt to get some funding for the LIHTC program again, but he was not confident that it would be possible. There was some discussion on the push back from citizens on LIHTC projects based on perceptions about those who qualify for this program. Manhattan and Riley County indicated they had had success with several small projects of LIHTC and that the paperwork involved is often daunting.

Member McCulloh suggested trying to get an idea of the rental availability – a good educated guess if there was not process like Manhattan's for detailed numbers. David Yearout would like to see this issue at a committee or project level. This would put enough importance to it that folks would perhaps spend some dedicated time on the issue. Member Brown pointed out that Fort Riley has requested housing folks sit down together and move toward a working solution for the rental question. She requested that members go back and appoint a person to work on this housing question, if they have not already. Member Sherow asked that the Board be given deadlines and the format quickly so they can get moving on this option.

OEA Status & Budget Update – Because staff hires have happened later than expected, staff has applied for an extension of the 2010 grant. The OEA project manager has asked that the extension be for as long as possible into the 2011. The comfort level on the time of the extension is through Feb 2011. The application for the extension was put in last week but staff has not heard back from the OEA yet. In addition to the time extension, because hires were not made as fast as anticipated, funds were also reallocated in two areas: Travel and Contract. The application request funds be transferred from Benefits to each of these categories.

In addition to the application for extension and reallocation, staff is working on the budget for the 2011 application which is due to the OEA in January. The 2011 budget is very similar to the 2010 budget as the office is still in the setting up phase and the FHRC is still in the organizational phase of development. There are two places where the budget is significantly different in 2011 than in 2010.

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1. Consultant for a Greenprint (as recommended in the Growth Plan): \$150,000 - This is a project which will create a base framework from which to do future modeling and analysis. Staff applied for funding for this through HUD in August, but did not receive the grant. The sum is set loosely at \$150,000 but staff is in conversation with K-State about synergies and resources that might be available.
2. Corridor Study Reimbursements - \$209,641 - which represent a request to receive reimbursement funds for the US77/K-18 and US 24 Corridor Studies that were completed last year. Staff has questions about how this portion of the application affects the match dollars, as these studies were already matched by local dollars.

The 2012 budget process will start earlier and use a Personnel and Budget committee for a more out of the box approach to the funding of the organization. Having all personnel in place will help that process function a little more regularly and will result in additional program development. As an overview of the 2011 budget (the document is included with these minutes):

1. Personnel - This amount is higher in 2011 than 2010 as it includes funding for all three staff positions for the whole year.
2. Travel - Travel budget has been increased to match this year's expenditures. Staff travel in 2010 was not uncommon for a Regional Council staff and not atypical of future years.
3. Equipment - Most furniture purchases will be completed in the 2010 budget yet, resulting in a lower 2011 number.
4. Supplies - Based on current expenses
5. Contract - Besides the Consultant for the Greenprint, the expenses are anticipated to go down as the Administrative Manager will do most of what we currently pay Reese & Novelty to do for accounting and payroll services.
6. Other - Most of the amount in 2010 was for logo/web design which will be completed for 2011.

Staff is learning the ropes of OEA submittal and the budgeting process, as it will work best with the Flint Hills Regional Council Board. Since the final grant and budget will ultimately be dictated by OEA revisions and approval, staff is asking for the Board's blessing to submit this proposed budget as part of the OEA application for 2011 funding with possible changes as negotiated with the OEA (and K-State as concerns the Greenprint consultant scope). Member Sherow moved that the FHRC staff submit the proposed budget (with possible changes) as part of the OEA application for 2011 funding. Member McCulloh seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Member Hay asked how this budget effects the member match for 2011. Mr. Warner indicated that the member assessment will rise to \$.50/capita for 2011 as per the Board's approved assessment schedule, providing around \$62,000 of membership funds if all members remain members in 2011. Ms. Hyland indicated that this budget was designed to leave about \$10,000 of total member match (assuming all current members continue in 2011) for future grant or program opportunities.

Flint Hills Long View Meeting - Member Hay and Bruce McMillan attended a meeting of an exploratory group called the Flint Hills Long View Gathering.

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It was arranged by the Director of Symphony in the Flint Hills and gathered 20 groups with an interest in the preservation of the Tallgrass Prairie unique to this area. The Flint Hills Regional Council was given the opportunity to join the group in future meetings and provide an organizational profile to be included in a directory of attendees. Member Hay, having attended the meeting, suggested that as one of the only Economic Development oriented groups it would be a good place to continue listening, especially since they are all ecologically based and often have very specific passions agendas. Mr. McMillan indicated that this meeting was primarily to see where there might be common interests among the group primarily in their education purposes. He also noted that as a set they are wind energy adverse for the Flint Hills but this was not the purpose of the meeting. The Council's presence was welcomed as an avenue to involve officials from Flint Hills area communities. Member McCulloh suggested the Council send a representative when they hold their next meeting and move from there. Member Schwerdtfeger asked if they talked about burning and if they were anti-wind energy anywhere? Member Hay clarified that they did not discuss burning, yet, and their focus was no wind energy in the Flint Hills. Member Sherow suggested that the Sierra Club, Kansas Canoe Association, and Konza Research Group be included in the meetings. Non-voting member Armbrust sits on the Interagency Wind Energy Task Force and will keep the Board apprised of that work. Member G. Johnson said he'd run into a strong no from Brownback in reference to wind energy at Dwight/Alta Vista and would like to pursue further discussion.

Discuss Seating of New Members & Seating of Board – Mr. Warner congratulated the Board on serving their first year. Per the Bylaws the seated term of the Board members is one year. At a previous meeting it was suggested that election cycles might call for moving the date of the seating of the Board to May, to accommodate the newly elected city officials. It does not appear to require a change to the bylaws to move the date of the seating of the Board, as the language of the Bylaws reflects January “or such time as the Board may determine,” but it could be incorporated into the Bylaws if desired. Member Sherow suggested Nov to accommodate the County Commissioners. Member McCulloh suggested the Board seating be synced with the Council's fiscal year which would continue to seat the Board in January and make adjustments as necessary as council and commission personnel change. Ms. Hyland clarified that the officers of the Board are a separate election from the seated Board members. Should a member who currently holds an executive committee position resign, the newly appointed representative from that community does not automatically fill the executive committee position. A separate election for that would occur. David Yearout suggested a July to June Board year would give time for the newly elected city officials to get settled before taking office and the newly elected county officials would be seated in January after their elections. This suggestion was well received. Member Sherow moved that the current Board carry over until June 30, 2011 with the proviso that the change be made to the Bylaws at a future meeting solidifying this arrangement. Member McCulloh seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Staff distributed a list of future meeting dates in 2011 and 2012. There was a brief discussion of the changes this causes to the suggested future meeting dates for 2011 & 2012. The Fort Riley-hosted meeting is proposed as the July

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meeting location to seat the Board and the August meeting is now proposed as the Board Retreat. A corrected schedule of meetings is attached to these minutes.

Hiring Update – Mr. Warner received 57 applications for the Administrative Manager position advertised in the region. He has narrowed it to 12 and will continue to work on narrowing to a reasonable number to interview. There were a number of strong candidates and he is not discouraged by the response. He intends to list the Regional Planner position in national locations shortly. Member Sherow asked in what manner, if any, Mr. Warner expected to involve Board members in these hiring decisions. Mr. Warner stated that for the Administrative Manager he intended to move along with the process in the interest of time, but he was considering some Board involvement in the Regional Planner position.

Logo and Website Design Update – Mr. Warner and Ms. Hyland had the first meeting on Logo options with New Boston. The designer used the sheet from the Board Retreat on images and impressions and said it was helpful in forming her initial takes on a FHRC logo. The next meeting with New Boston will be the first week of January with the intent to bring three specific logos to the Board at their meeting January 21.

Top 5 Exercise: Community Challenge – Member McCulloh suggested that as part of the Board meeting there be a report from the host member or host county on the statistics and issues facing that county/member. This would give some real-life to the “impressions” work the Board has been doing as a follow-up to the Board retreat. She also suggested that staff create a template for this local community update to give the report some structure and data gathering viability. Mr. Warner heartily agreed and mentioned that the part of the Board Retreat exercises meant to be addressed by the follow up questions was exactly the reality-support and “ground-truthing” for or against the more “impression-based” observations from the first part of the Retreat exercises.

To begin this exercise Member Brown recounted an instance where it became apparent to her that it requires constant communication to make sure the correct and accurate information is out there. By communities that were present at the meeting and had persons from these communities there to comment, the results of the Top 5 issues exercise are:

Alma

1. New water treatment plant south of town.
2. New sewer treatment plant south of town.
3. Schools – good for now, but student population is dropping
4. Infrastructure – near the top of the indebtedness. In an agricultural county, losing tax rolls hurts.
5. Alma foods – doing well, Creamery – has its ups and downs, need more businesses
6. Housing – have high end and middle about 30 homes available for sale in the city any time.

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Clay Center

1. Recognize that it is important to be part of region. The network helps support accurate information and creates opportunities for shared knowledge.

Council Grove

1. Dwindling population. Many retired folks, but no young families. Need to provide jobs, but do not have a population which is qualified to do the jobs available
2. Self-contained – Not at all. Must go shopping for many items in Manhattan. No electrician, No plumber.
3. To attract a higher wage structure need less inflated house pricing – many properties are in disrepair, and priced too high. No retirement center to move some current homeowners to which would free up better kept properties which could be sold for current prices.
4. Beauty/Historic – nice perceptions. Never hear anything bad about Council Grove from visitors.
5. Nice Lake(s) – Council Grove about to be sued by Lake residents. Cottages supposed to be rental and temporary, now want to be permanent residents on the City water source.

Dwight

1. Morris County – Dwight/Alta Vista – school consolidation is an immanent issue. No representation on the School Board and no idea how it will play out.
2. Business have left – not collecting taxes now. All the shopping has left for Manhattan
3. Original water supply from 1958 in 2007 applied for new \$660,000 supply which will open shortly in 2010.
4. Housing – have 5 houses which should be knocked down and 4 other lots ready to build on

Geary County

1. How to project a positive image.
2. Independent – Can also be seen as “doesn’t play well with others”
3. Collaboration with Fort Riley
4. Road infrastructure – corridors – unified voice/front for outside dealings

Junction City

1. Debt incurred by growth projections – Got to have to work through it. Would like to work well with Fort Riley, but Junction City took a chance and it’s our responsibility to get out of it. Maybe shouldn’t pass on issues to Fort Riley as much as they do.
2. Housing issues - Opportunities with domestic leasing
3. Infrastructure/housing costs
4. Lack of chain restaurants – can’t use Fort Riley daily population in numbers for economic development – companies strictly use the census numbers.

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Leonardville

1. upkeep of housing inventory and need to consolidate services with other Riley County small cities – no resources for infrastructure upkeep
2. small commercial businesses needed – hair dressers, etc.
3. expansion – nowhere to go or no desire to grow

Manhattan

1. Plan the growth: they are engaged in economic development, environmental protection, gateway studies, including the importance of fire for prairie. Ranchettes stop fire burning and lead to cedar and hedge forests – how to retain the prairie and control the growth.
2. Traffic, airport – lower cost to support growth – transport for the region, flights, public transport working on both
3. When does the intergovernmental meetings currently held by Manhattan , Riley County, and Pottawatomie County become irrelevant because of the work the Flint Hills Regional Council is doing?
4. “Big brother, might get too big” – No. Manhattan is growing and conscious of it. Flint Hills Discovery Center reaching out to whole region for collaborative effort from the communities. Having this out reach helps these perceptions.

Morris County

From the Council Grove visioning exercise this summer:

1. Need economic development
2. Need adequate and affordable housing
3. Need education
4. Need to deal with fire issues on the prairie – new situation – EPA & State created the Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan (Dec 2010) making inroads in controlling burning – could destroy prairie as we know it. Will impacts ranching. Suggests developing FHRC consensus on this issue for legislators.

Onaga – Not Present

Impressions given in August exercise:

*continue with good health care - given state economy
maintain identity
very progressive for small community
distance*

Pottawatomie County – Not Present

Impressions given in August exercise:

*lower taxes
diverse needs as bedroom community of Manhattan/Fort Riley and towns with individual personalities
keeping growth controlled
scattered growth*

Randolph

1. upkeep of housing inventory and need to consolidate services with other Riley County small cities – no resources for infrastructure upkeep
2. small commercial businesses needed – hair dressers, etc.
3. expansion – nowhere to go or no desire to grow

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Riley

1. bring in businesses – Riley Development Authority has promoted and helped 7 new businesses start in Riley including a restaurant. Need to recognize that all Riley County’s smaller cities are in this together.
2. Size & keeping housing inventory in good condition
3. Expansion – nowhere to go or no desire to grow
4. Antiques – not really existent anymore

Riley County

1. cooperation with Manhattan and neighboring counties and small cities for government efficiency
2. importance of good planning

Wabaunsee County

1. low tax base – exemptions really hurt the County. Alma foods not in rural areas, get slammed by the tax exemptions. Interested in legislative movements to keep any more of the exemptions from being added or to repeal the current ones.
2. Bedroom communities, distance from cities – some folks are living in the county because it’s an easy drive for shopping and gives the feel they are after, but also means they going to other counties to shop.
3. National Scenic By-way can be used to attract more business – not happening yet, but there has been an uptick in business at the ones that exist because of it.
4. Rural-peaceful neighbors – excellent school, etc. but not showing up as any help attracting folks yet.

Wamego – Not Present

Impressions given in August exercise:

tulips

maintain/control growth

financial support from local businesses that have the \$\$

good image

progressive

get a lot done

Woodbine

1. keeping restaurant open – this is the town hub. Found a young family to take it on. Keeps us going.
2. Small business – several 50-year businesses now in limbo as proprietors age. Will lose the community if can’t find someone to keep the shops open.
3. Hometown competitiveness program – didn’t have this in time to save some of the businesses in town.
4. Mostly folks go to shop elsewhere.
5. Small town living is a positive but hard to maintain. Can’t sustain a grocery or convenience store.

Mr. Warner indicated that this activity was extremely helpful in finding issues which cross the region and in correcting perceptions. It will help staff in figuring out what we can tackle as a region as well as what local assistance is needed. Member Sherow expressed Manhattan’s support for the tax

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exemption issue in response to what Member Steuwe mentioned. Non-voting member Armbrust reminded the Board that it was discussed previously to arrange a State legislators day for the region, but that this shouldn't be planned for any earlier than February to allow them time to get situated. Member Sherow offered to share Manhattan's legislative agenda to give the Board members something to work from when preparing a regional version. Member Brown suggested the Board come back to staff with any alignments they see in the agenda with items their community is concerned with. Mr. Warner suggested each community include him on their commission or council agenda distributions so he can keep abreast of the issues facing each member community. It was also suggested that at the January Meeting a preliminary outline of the legislative issues be developed.

Other Business:

Leader's Retreat: Mr. Warner relayed that all Board members are invited to the Joint Junction City, Manhattan & Wamego Chambers Retreat in Kansas City in January. Todd Moore mentioned that there will be a small business session on Friday morning, per the request of several chamber members. Mr. Warner will be speaking later that afternoon. Staff will send out the information on the retreat.

Executive Director 6 Month Review: President Brown talked about the 6 month review conducted earlier this fall during which the Executive Committee endeavored to give Mr. Warner some more direction. They asked him to return with some specific goals for the next 6 months, which he has done. They also asked him to increase the frequency (essentially every week) but shorten the length of the dispatches he sends to the Board.

January Meeting – The regular January 21 meeting will be held in Woodbine, KS, location TBD, from 9am to noon.

Adjourned at 12:15pm