



**Flint Hills Regional Council Board of Directors
Minutes of February 18, 2011**

**Flint Hills Regional Council Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes—February 18, 2011
Held at the Riley County Shops, Manhattan, 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; **Jim Sherow**, Manhattan Commissioner; **Dan Deiter**, Alma City Council; **Galen Johnson**, Dwight Mayor; **Stan Hartwich**, Pottawatomie County Commissioner; **Vic Enns**, Wamego City Commissioner; **Terry Heldstab**, Junction City Commissioner; **Linda Hoeffner**, Fort Riley.

Absent from the Board: **Ben Bennett** Geary County Commissioner; **Robby McGowan**, Onaga City Council; **John Armbrust**, Governor's Military Council; **Jackie Hartman**, Kansas State University; **Debi Schwerdtfeger**, Council Grove City Council; **Joe Kormanik**, Alta Vista Council.

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; **Unique Hiram**, Administrative Manager.

Guests: **Col. Dvoracek**, Fort Riley Deputy Garrison Commander; **Carol Blocksome**, Kansas State University; **Dave Yearout**, Geary County/Junction City Planning; **Monty Wedel**, Riley County; **Bruce McMillan**, McMillan Architects; **Abby Amick**, Wabaunsee County EDC; **Rick Jankovich**, Candidate for Manhattan City Commission; **Phil Anderson**, Candidate for Manhattan City Commission; **Ashley Strahle**, Daily Union.

Welcome – President Brown called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and invited Member Karen McCulloh to welcome the meeting to the Riley County Shops. Executive Director Ty Warner encouraged all member communities to sign up for the next Resourceful Kansas energy workshop being sponsored by the Department of Energy in the Riley County Shops.

Approval of Minutes from January 21 – Member Sherow moved to approve the minutes as presented. Member Shover seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

FHRC Logo – Warner gave an overview of the selection process used over the previous weeks and reviewed the voting results from the previous meeting to unveil the new Flint Hills Regional Council Logo.

Website Development – Warner showed the proposed site map for the new website to be hosted at www.flinthillsregion.org. Staff hopes the site will be live in March. Member Steuwe asked if the site would be fully searchable and connected to other sites for easy of use and ease of discovery by Internet searchers. Warner assured the Board that it would be searchable, easily found through Internet searches, and fully connected to regional sites of common interest.

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Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan – Carol Blocksome of Kansas State University gave an overview of the issues surrounding smoke management and burning in Kansas. More detailed information can be found on www.ksfire.org. The plan is largely voluntary at this point. The non-voluntary portion concerns the 16 counties in the Flint Hills plus Johnson, Wyandotte, and Sedgwick Counties. For these counties there is an April Burning Restriction prohibiting non-agricultural burning in April. The three urban counties of Johnson, Wyandotte & Sedgwick have agreed to this restriction because a non-attainment ruling from the EPA brings very large expenses for the counties and the EPA has stated that an exception will not be granted unless the counties can show that they are trying to avoid non-attainment through all possible avenues.

The voluntary nature of the majority of the plan consists of using models to attempt to predict the direction and height of the smoke plume from any proposed burning location on any given day. A model will be available on the www.ksfire.org website into which folks who plan to burn can indicate the county they will burn in, how many acres they intend to burn, the date of the proposed burn, and the fuel load/type to see if the plume of smoke generated would drift toward the Kansas City or Wichita. If the smoke is likely to drift toward those areas, the management plan asks that the burn be put off if at all possible until another suitable day. If this voluntary regulation does not work, then this part of the plan will be regulated like the restriction on April burning. The County Emergency Managers will be responsible for enforcing the April burning restrictions. KDHE will not be doing the enforcing.

Stuewe asked how the urban communities lose money for non-attainment. Blocksome indicated that the Federal Transportation dollars the cities get through the MPOs are what is in jeopardy. The cities stand to lose \$10 million dollars of transportation funds for urban transportation if they continue to be in non-attainment. Both metro areas have put stricter regulations in place on automobiles that result in higher gas prices in the metro areas in an attempt to reduce the non-attainment days. Besides the Federal Transportation dollars, the metro areas also know that having existing air quality issues discourages companies from locating in those metro areas. They have also instituted gas cap testing programs to reduce the amount of gasoline fumes released and gone as far as building bridges over the train tracks to reduce idling while waiting for train traffic.

Blocksome suggested that FHRC members could borrow the gas cap testing equipment to test gas caps on farm machinery as well as vehicles that could be set up. Warner pointed out that as the FHRC becomes an MPO, attainment will be an issue closer to home as well. McCulloh stated that the plan needs to contain flexibility to work since there have been some springs where there are only three good burning days or there are weeks of weather that are too wet or too windy. Blocksome suggested that part of the plan includes looking more closely at why people burn. Only if you're burning for livestock yearly production is it necessary to burn in April. For most other outcomes another month of the year will work just as well, or even better.

Sherow suggested that the Council invite Carl Brooks of the EPA Regional Office to speak to the meeting. He indicated that Brooks has good

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understanding of the ecological necessity of burning on the Tallgrass Prairie and has gone to bat for the necessity of burning in the state. Blocksome agreed that there will likely still be days where non-attainment is caused by agricultural burning because of the weather, but that without a Smoke Management Plan and an attempt to reduce levels through cooperation EPA would not consider an exceptional ruling.

Member Hay voiced concern over the unfunded mandate that was being passed on to Counties through the requirement that the county emergency manager be responsible for regulating the April non-agricultural burn ban. Blocksome suggested that once the counties have information on what the costs are, this information should be passed back up the line. Member Hartwich pointed out that, costs aside, there will still be an extra burden on the counties to enforce it. Blocksome agreed and indicated that if the urban areas are still out of attainment, a Statewide Air Quality Plan will be required and that would be an even larger burden on everyone. Sherow suggested that if the Board could collect good information on the issue, the council could issue a joint resolution on recommendations regarding the smoke management plan. Shover agreed. McCulloh suggested that Pat Collins, the Riley County Emergency Manager, explain to the Board what the member counties do now in reference to this plan. Sherow suggested that Brooks of the Regional EPA be asked to put it in the political context. McCulloh indicated that along with smoke management there are also new pesticide management requirements.

Regional Housing Task Force – Warner reported that the Task Force meeting resulted in more progress on the Regional Housing issue than had been made previously. He thanked the County and City planning staff for making good suggestions and following up to test the methodology. Warner gave an overview of the meeting, saying that the group reviewed the process currently being used, agreed that the rental situation is not well covered, and that the template was somewhat overwhelming to fill out and perhaps not the best instrument. A different approach was discussed in order to extract the data using information from county appraiser records and applying vacancy rates from the American Community Survey (ACS) or from the municipalities themselves. Warner invited the planning staff members present who attended and helped to generate the preliminary data to give their perspective on the methodology.

Monty Wedel, Director of Planning and Zoning for Riley County said he and Greg McHenry, the Riley County appraiser, have been working to create the query which will pull the information on number of bedrooms from appraiser records. He also mentioned that they had checked the ACS vacancy rates against those collected by the appraiser's office and that those rates are within range and are assumed valid for the smaller communities as well as the larger ones.

David Yearout, Geary County/Junction City Zoning, indicated that he is working with the state's guru on the new ORION system to create the query to pull information on rentals by bedroom. Once created the query should work for any County which has moved their information into the new Orion system. President Brown said she was encouraged that the query approach

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would use consistent information comparable across counties that could be used for other purposes once collected. Advisory member Hoeffner affirmed this data would be close enough for the information that Fort Riley needs. She was also encouraged by the progress made by the Task Force in such a short time.

Yearout went on to explain that because the appraiser's information includes parcel information, which in turn is tied to GIS information, in the future it should be possible to map the information once it has been pulled. Member Shover asked if the County data included information on the Cities, and Wedel indicated that it does. Yearout further clarified that the County data includes information on tax district that will identify the cities in the County.

Hoeffner pointed out that once the Task Force has average vacancy rates and numbers of rentals, it'll need to work on data concerning the vertical structure going up so it can be better at predicting future increases and needs. Warner indicated that once the Task Force gets a handle on the rental needs they will re-convene the larger group to start looking at fine-tuning the data collection and analysis, which may still involve going to the communities directly, but with a much simpler informational request. Col. Dvoracek indicated that having a baseline with which to compare will be a great help.

Subcommittee Assignments – Warner presented a list of possible subcommittees including: Housing Task Force, Economic Development, Legislative, Budget and Personnel, Grant Writing. Each of these subcommittees was discussed briefly – some have been designated by the bylaws while others were suggested in previous Board meetings. The discussion was opened for comments. Sherow suggested that an additional committee be included: Environmental. Hoeffner suggested that an Environmental committee might be the appropriate place for the next Joint Land Use Study to be asked for by Fort Riley which will benefit from input from the Council.

Member Heldstab asked if it would be better to wait until after April elections to assign subcommittees. Sherow opined that some of the committees have a designated member or are of such importance that they should be formed as soon as possible. Shover pointed out that it will likely take two months or more to get the members selected and the committees set up. McCulloh suggested that the Budget & Personnel could be set up quickly as most of the members are designated by the bylaws. Economic development's core group was also outlined at a previous board meeting according to Sherow.

There was some discussion of the need for a Grant Writing committee as many of the smaller communities miss out on grants for lack of staff. After some discussion, Sherow suggested that what was termed a "Grant Writing committee" should be set up as a process by which the FRHC Staff review available grants, then consults with the communities on which grants might be possible or worth pursuing, then the FHRC would help write the grants and administer them. Yearout felt that the committee as discussed would be actually be doing two things: (1) Technical Assistance – which he suggested to be the name of the subcommittee – and (2) an FHRC blessing that would only necessary for those grants which require a regional entity as the applicant or which will involve multiple municipalities.

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Warner suggested that the member communities identify who would need to be part of the conversation as the FHRC determined possibilities for grants, much as the Regional Housing Task Force was convened. Karen Davis, Director of Community Development for Manhattan, reminded the Board that there are limits to what can be used for overhead and on funding for some grants and asked if there should be a cost associated with FHRC staff help. President Brown reiterated that it is important to have technical assistance available for the smaller communities.

Brown then asked if the Kansas Open Meeting Act applied to the Board; Warner indicated that there are differing opinions on whether KOMA applies to an organization like the FHRC, so staff has erred on the side of KOMA compliance. He will be looking into the issue further.

Warner also mentioned that the FHRC has purchased a subscription to GrantStation which will afford more targeted access to grants including those from private foundations. Warner suggested that the Technical Assistance committee be less a committee of Board members and more a committee of local administrative and staff folks who would be able to help the FHRC with content. Brown urged the Board to go back and figure out who at each community would be the best contact for this subcommittee, keeping in mind that the committee would also be the venue through which the FHRC staff would be able to train grant writers at the local level.

Yearout suggested that the Council define how it will provide technical assistance. McCulloh said the Housing Task Force, Budget & Personnel and Economic Development committees were basically already formed. Warner agreed and asked what the Board would like to do about the Legislative, Technical Assistance, and Environmental/JLUS committees. Sherow suggested that the Executive Committee lay out the parameters for the technical committee. Warner agreed that committees need defined missions in order to be effective. Sherow suggested as the Economic Development core group was already there that they work on their outline after the meeting.

Executive Director's Report –

National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) Conference of Regions: Warner indicated that the mood of the conference was that everything is on the table regarding future Federal funding. He mentioned that it was good to see how closely NARC partners with ICMA, NACo, NLC, etc. in a spirit of collaboration, as in this economic climate it is good to create shared resources. Hoeffner affirmed that similar sentiments were communicated at the Association of Defense Communities (ADC) winter conference that was held at the same time as the NARC Conference of Regions. ADC also talked about the upcoming cuts to be expected in various Federal areas and how Regional Councils & Partnerships will be critical. As budget cuts hit, the region will need to do things as partners. Warner wrapped up by saying the NARC conference reinforced the idea that working collaboratively will be essential in this environment in order to effectively share resources, and that this region was already well positioned to work in that vein by the formation of the Regional Council.

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Legislation: Warner indicated that he was working to keep the Council and its issues in front of the State and Federal legislature and took a one page FHRC summary paper with him to the DC conference for meetings with the offices of both senators and Representative Jenkins' office, making sure they were aware of the Flint Hills Regional Council and its purpose as they will be hearing more from the FHRC in the future.

OEA Grant: The FHRC has been working closely with OEA on the process of the OEA Grant for 2011, as the 2010 grant ends at the end of February. The OEA hopes to provide feedback on the application for 2011 funding by the end of the month.

Hiring: Warner introduced Unique Hiram as the FHRC's new Administrative Manager, and relayed that Unique has a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration, a Masters in Human Resource Management, and is in the Navy Reserve after 8 years in Navy service, all of which will be extremely helpful in this position. The Regional Planner position was posted with closing date of February 22. Kristina Hyland, the Regional Growth Coordinator, will be leaving at the end of February when the 2010 grant ends, as the Regional Growth Coordinator position was created by the City of Manhattan and was funded through the 2010 grant as their employee. Warner thanked Kristina for her service and assistance during the RPO Project and the launch of the FHRC.

Membership: Warner indicated that he will be going to present to the City of Chapman, which is also a member of the North Central Kansas Regional Planning Commission, and to Grandview Plaza. This is without any formal campaign to obtain new members, which is very encouraging.

Other Business: McCulloh mentioned that the K-18 project was funded by KDOT, thanks to the FHRC membership for the support and help with the TWORKS project.

Resourceful Kansas is still taking applications; the deadline is March 25. The seminars can include energy audits for participating communities. Application instructions and additional information may be found at www.resourcefulkansas.org.

March Meeting – The regular March 18 meeting will be held in Morris County, location: Morris County Courthouse, from 9am to noon.

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m. to tour the Riley County Shops.