

**Flint Hills Regional Council Board of Directors  
Minutes of October 15, 2010**

**Flint Hills Regional Council Board of Directors  
Meeting Minutes—October 15, 2010  
Held at Geary County Emergency Management Center, Junction City, KS**

Present from Board of the Regional Council: **Ben Bennett** Geary County Commissioner; **Stan Hartwich**, Pottawatomie County Commissioner; **Vern Hay**, Morris County Commissioner; **Terry Heldstab**, Junction City Commissioner; **David Shover**, Riley City Council; **Karen McCulloh**, Riley County Commissioner; **Sharon Brown**, Clay Center Mayor; **Linda Hoeffner**, Fort Riley; **MarySue Roller**, Woodbine City Council; **Ervan Stuewe**, Wabaunsee County Commissioner; **Loren Pepperd**, Manhattan; **John Armbrust**, Governor's Military Council.

Absent from the Board: **Debi Schwerdtfeger**, Council Grove City Council; **Jim Sherow**, Manhattan City Commissioner; **Vic Enns**, Wamego City Commissioner; **Robby McGowan**, Onaga City Council; **Jackie Hartman**, Kansas State University.

Present from the greater Regional Council Membership:

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

Guests: **Dave Yearout**, Geary County/Junction City Planning; **Major Mike Essary**, Fort Riley; **Abby Amick**, Wabaunsee County EDC; **Jeffery Black**, Realty Executives; **Rod Warner**, Sarasota-Manatee MPO Citizens Advisory Committee; **Cheryl Beatty**, Junction City; **Dewey Terrell**, KJCK; **Ashley Strehle**, Daily Union.

**Welcome** – President Brown called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Vote to Add the City of Alma** - The Alma City Council has voted to join the FHRC and has submitted a signed membership agreement for acceptance by the FHRC Board. Member Shover moved to accept membership from the City of Alma. Member McCulloh seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Alma representative Dan Dieter was unable to attend today's meeting and will be seated in November or as soon as he can be present.

Discussion on possible addition of Salina to the Flint Hills Regional Council: The Executive Director informed the Board that he and Member Armbrust and Member Hartman were responding to a request for a meeting with interested parties from Salina to have an initial conversation on Salina joining the FHRC. This would require a change in the definition of the Flint Hills Area as defined in the Bylaws to include Saline County. Member Brown had talked to the Salina Chamber President at the ACC meeting and he had expressed some interest in exploring this option then. Member Brown then asked for input from the current Board on the possible addition of Salina to the FHRC.

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Member McCulloh had no concern with the possibility, but thought that the addition of Salina in particular might change the focus of the organization. More is not always better, especially adding an entity the size of Salina might change the focus of the FHRC; for example, in transportation or housing issues, Salina functions differently than those entities in the current membership. The question is can the FHRC and its Board handle those differences at this point? Member Armbrust indicated he didn't think there was any reason not to start meeting with Salina as a way to learn their concerns and figure out what concerns the Board might have - there was general agreement on this point.

Member Hoeffner suggested that this interest might have come from the Army Community Covenant process. The Salina community is just becoming familiar with the concepts of a Military Affairs Committee and are trying to figure out what else they might want to be involved in.

Member Bennett expressed concern that the group not grow too fast. Member McCulloh asked if the territory had to be contiguous. Since Dickinson County is already defined as part of the Flint Hills Area in the Bylaws adding Saline County would be a contiguous addition, but it would require a specific Board action to alter the initial area of the Flint Hills Regional Council as contained in the by-laws. Member Armbrust suggested the FHRC start by making clear what questions exist on both sides after this preliminary meeting.

The Executive Director pointed out that there is a 90 day waiting period indicated in the Bylaws as a requirement before voting to add new membership. This was likely included in the Bylaws to consider the impact on expanding services as the Council grows, but at this stage of the Council's development a shorter timeframe is probably appropriate. Nevertheless, the issue of Salina's membership is being raised now in order to begin such considerations in advance.

**Approval of Minutes from August 27** – Member McCulloh moved to approve the minutes as presented. Member Steuwe seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**T-WORKS Transportation Projects** - The Executive Director gave an update on what the FHRC has been working on in regard to the T-WORKS meetings held by KDOT on Oct. 22 (Dist 1) and Oct. 25 (Dist 2). FHRC staff arranged Preparatory meetings with engineers and public works directors and related personnel from FHRC members in each of these districts. Member McCulloh mentioned that it was the first time the local transportation engineers in the district had met. FHRC staff was also included in a meeting of northeast

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Kansas area MPO's ahead of the local consult meetings that included KDOT representatives. The Executive Director pointed out that KDOT felt that the K-18 project impacted both Districts and was therefore on both Districts' lists to consider. Member Bennett expressed concern that with so much to do in District 2 K-18 would be a distraction. Member McCulloh couldn't believe that KDOT wouldn't finish K-18 with so much already done.

The Executive Director relayed KDOT's anticipated format and protocol for the consult meetings, including the preparation of one-page summary sheets for projects on KDOT's list that fall within the FHRC region. Based on input from the FHRC preparatory meetings, FHRC staff has prepared project sheets for K-18, K-177, and US-77, which were distributed to the Board for review. KDOT has recently indicated that these meetings will focus on the projects already on KDOT's "short list," culled from those projects solicited from throughout the state in 2008; they are not soliciting new projects at these meetings not already on their list, such as improvements to K-99 between Alma and Wamego as discussed in Pottawatomie and Wabaunsee Counties. Once these local consult meetings take place, the Council will be able to assess the next steps necessary to advocate for the projects in its region.

Though overall prioritization of projects are anticipated to be discussed at these consult meetings, Board members agreed all three projects in their various segments were important to the region. Member Armbrust proposed that an endorsement by the Board for the Executive Director to use the project sheets presented would put FHRC staff in a clearer position in the discussions with KDOT. Member Hay moved to allow the Executive Director to use the project sheets with any necessary changes from Board members' input as he advocates for regional projects at the KDOT meetings. Member Hartwich seconded. Motioned passed unanimously.

**November Meeting** – The regular Nov. 19 date conflicts with a Flint Hills Leadership Program date for the Executive Director. For the similar conflict in September, the Board chose not to have a full Board meeting in September, opting instead to hold and an Executive Committee meeting with the OEA and tour the office space at Fort Riley, which also gave the FHRC staff much needed time to carry through on other Council activities. Member Hartwich felt that moving the November date would be preferable to not having a full meeting November 12 was selected as the November meeting date., which will be held in Pottawatomie County. (Ben Bennett indicated he has a conflict on November 12 and would not be able to attend.) December 17 is the next regularly scheduled date after that; that meeting will be held in Wabaunsee County.

**Perspective from an MPO Citizen's Committee** - Rod Warner, the Executive Director's father, is a member of the Sarasota-Manatee MPO Citizens Advisory Committee. He gave a presentation on his experience on the MPO

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advisory committee, the MPO process overall, and the benefits the Sarasota-Manatee MPO has seen through effective use of roundabouts in terms of safety, mobility, aesthetics, environment, cost, and public acceptance.

**Board Retreat Follow-up** - The Executive Director summarized the results of the FHRC Board retreat held in August and included as an attachment to the August minutes. That summary of the results contained several questions for Board members to consider as they interact with the results of their retreat work. Most notably, these included:

- A) Requesting responses to the possible concerns raised (i.e., are the concerns voiced true and should be addressed, based on misinformation that needs to be corrected, or reflective of fears that need to be assured?), as well as thoughts on specific strategies to address those concerns;
- B) Identifying the threads of various challenges experienced by member communities, whether real or perceived; and
- C) Creating the kind of results that would indicate progress toward the various thematic goals developed through groupings of brainstormed activities.

The Executive Director asked the Board to review the results in the retreat summary attachment more deeply, and to attempt to respond to the questions raised in the Executive Director's commentary on those results, as summarized above.

**Other Business:**

HB2445: Member Armbrust reminded the Board that this Bill was passed last spring and is now in effect. It covers procedures for any changes that might result in encroachment on Fort Riley. Both the communities and Fort Riley are required to consult with one another should any activity be planned that might cause encroachment. An example of this is wind-turbine construction. He advised that members keep the new legislation in mind as planning progresses.

Office Space: The office space at Fort Riley is now ready to be occupied. Internet will be installed on Monday Oct. 18.

Housing Forecast: Loren Pepperd reported that the Kansas Association of Realtors had hired someone from Wichita State to collect various data on the housing market. He also mentioned that they had approximately 10,500 rentals in the City of Manhattan based on their rental registration and inspection process that is being started.

Member Hoeffner requested the FHRC's help in getting together a list of available properties for consideration for domestic leasing through the Army.

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She would like to gather the points of contact from the communities to discuss the regional database in order to understand the database better, the needs and available infrastructure in the region, the rental rates and available rentals in the region, and affordable housing stock availabilities in the region.

Army Community Covenant: Member Hoeffner offered thanks for the participation of the FHRC membership through the ACC process in the past 3 months). The State level signing will be sometime in February time frame. The Communities will have to decide who will represent them (by County) for that event.

Schools: Member Hoeffner reported that there is top level interest in funding new schools on post based on their age and overcrowded nature. Col. Dvoracek and Superintendent Ron Walker are in Washington DC pursuing these funds.

**Motion to adjourn**

Adjourned at 11:50am

**Board Retreat Activity Results  
Flint Hills Regional Council Members  
Rock Springs 4-H Center  
August 27, 2010**

In consecutive groupings around tables and stations devoted to each focus area, FHRC member representatives were asked to transcribe their thoughts regarding the questions listed under each focus area, as reiterated below.

Following this, the group then migrated to each station to review the transcriptions and offer observations.

**FOCUS AREA #1: Imagery & Branding**

- *What would you like to convey about the Flint Hills Regional Council?*
- *What kind of impression would you like the Council to leave with people?*
- *What characterizes the Flint Hills region?*
- *How would you describe this place to someone who's never been here?*

**Table Transcriptions:**

- consolidation of some activities leading to \$ savings
- common goals
- welcome attitude
- cooperation among communities
- not flat (!)
- the Flint Hills - as a destination
- region = a surprise (pleasant) to newcomers
- opened minds to all ideas
- we need to be efficient with information received + acted on
- people with the intention of helping each other succeed
- we listen
- bring families
- great place to live work and play
- speak with one voice - obtain same accomplishments for the region as a whole
- The Flint Hills are the most beautiful area of Kansas; FHRC is an opportunity for the entire country to share in them
- a group that provide equal representation to all communities no matter how small

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- a way to bring area communities together with a common goal
- we're not all farmer/ranchers (or soldiers!)
- a great concept for the area and especially an avenue of communication between the larger cities that are growing so quickly to the smaller towns, giving them opportunities
- wonderful place to live
- flint hills land of peaceful conservative paradise
- collaborative
- welcoming
- where the prairie still lives
- recreation
- innovative
- positive relationship
- friendly region - great place to live
- cooperative
- cooperative
- friendly
- forward thinking
- ability to work together for common goals
- inclusive
- efficient use of tax dollars
- cooperation to solve regional issues
- unique ecosystem with varied components - fort, university, ag
- developing a "sense of place," or "becoming native to place"
- to find resources for all

**Group Review Comments:**

How to localize?

Our region vs. other part of Flint Hills

Key Words:

place + cooperation

hills

hands/coop

joining

partnership

circle

Kansas NOT FLAT!

National Geographic - panorama

prairie fire --> sense of renewal, pastures --> hills are alive, trees, hills, cooperation - hands joined

partnership in a place --> circle

with outsourcing, should be careful logo development is not based on another existing logo

be careful about parts to make unique so don't get lost in whole region

## **FOCUS AREA #2: Outside Communications & Key Concerns to Be Addressed**

- *What “rumblings,” if any, do you hear about the Flint Hills Regional Council?*
- *What concerns have you heard expressed?*
- *What are your own concerns?*
- *Then respond to these:*
  - *Is it true and needs corrected?*
  - *Is it based on misinformation and needs to be communicated?*
  - *Is it a fear that needs to have assurance?*
  - ➔ *What is a strategy to address it?*

### **Table Transcriptions:**

Overcome stereotypes of each community - i.e. army town, college town, etc.

How to provide equity (and trust)

Sustainment after OEA grant

Are we being innovative or just another RPO

Will eco/devo run roughshod over sustainable/ecological planning & concerns

A disparate need to education governmental entities about the functions and services of the FHRC

Manhattan and Junction City dominate FHRC functions

Can we get buy-in for new ideas and methods

Perception that more is being asked of some members

Another layer of government (amen, ditto)

Smaller communities need to think outside the box

When will we see benefits of membership in FHRC?

Can we build more trust between members?

Rural vs urban? - general direction of our energy's, headed down dead ends?

How effective will the council be in effecting regional planning?

Another level of government?

How much is this going to cost city taxpayers?

Will it last more than 3 years?

Another layer of government - need to communicate with public. It will be hard for everyone to agree on what is best for the region

What will be \$ impact on membership post OEA

Too much of what we do is geared to Fort Riley (but this is why we came together right?)

We're too small to make a difference! (the smaller communities will have less of a voice) (JC & Manhattan having more say in regional issues)

The smaller communities will have less of a voice (If they don't stand at all how can you be heard)

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Have a plan and goals but be flexible to change (when will we see benefits of membership in FHRC?)  
Exactly what are we going to achieve for our membership  
Must get off the spot  
The smaller communities will have less of a voice (realistic balance of rewards of membership for small and large communities)  
Realistic balance of rewards of membership for small and large communities  
Problems with clear definable goals and outcomes (have a plan and goals but be flexible to change)  
As members in office change, will the focus of the FHRC stay the same?  
It seems like we are kind of on a hold pattern right now.  
Junction City and Manhattan having more say in regional issues  
When will communities see accomplishments/goals and objectives?  
Funding may be limited in current economic climates. How can we, as a region, get those limited funds?

**Group Review Comments:**

Need projects / Tract record  
Resource - provision  
MPO - layer of government vs. final funding source  
Communication of what an MPO is  
Education on services  
Turf  
Another layer of government issues = resolved  
Manhattan & JC have too much say = also resolved (not true now)  
layer of government --> will be to some degree a layer of government as the MPO.  
Not a taxing entity even as an MPO  
Make sure local entities know what's available at the Council  
Working towards services to be offered  
TURF issues --> we've always done it this way, etc. be aware of these and be honest about them.

**FOCUS AREA #3: Regional Cohesion & Community Challenges**

*What do you think are the main challenges facing each community?*

- *Even if you don't know it very well, what are your impressions of their issues?*

**Table Transcriptions:**

**Clay Center**

recognize that it is important to be part of regional  
think outside the box  
peaceful - middle of the road

progressive with in itself

**Council Grove**

beauty

historic

distance from middle of region

nice lake(s)

low tax base

high & higher property taxes are chasing away new existing businesses

needs city an county cooperation to save tax payers money

self contained

**Geary County**

challenge to meet the needs of Fort Riley growth with shrinking funding

how to project a positive image

project a positive image of school district

collaborate with fort riley

milford lake - destination

independent

road infrastructure - corridors

**Junction City**

military residents

debt incurred by growth projections

image of an army town

housing issues

lack of chain restaurants

problems in coordinating with the post re: services, schools, housing, etc.

military home

independent

infrastructure/housing costs

**Leonardville**

upkeep of housing inventory

need to consolidate services with other Riley Co small cities

**Manhattan**

plan the growth  
\$\$ issues  
control growth  
traffic  
big brother, scary  
might get too big  
airport - lower cost to support growth

**Morris County**

capture existing market (i.e. keep \$\$ in the county)  
make the county a tourism destination (expand)  
improve communication/relations between city of Council Grove, the county  
and City Lake  
improve highway 177 between manhattan & Council Grove  
prevent being irrelevant in the FHRC  
distance from larger "cities"  
attract young citizens  
rural

**Onaga**

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

**Pottawatomie County**

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

**Randolph**

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size  
thinking more regionally  
needs more info out there about it  
head of turtle - water, water playground

**Riley**

antiques  
difficulty of expansion to grow  
jordy nelson star (\*)  
size & keeping housing inventory in good condition  
difficult to embrace outsiders  
cooperative needs between pott county, riley county and manhattan

**Riley County**

cooperation with Manhattan and neighboring counties for government  
efficiency  
needs workforce from Region - need manhattan good relations  
hidden secret

**Wabaunsee County**

low tax base  
bedroom communities  
distance from "cities"  
national scenic by-way can be used to attract more visitors  
rural-peaceful neighbors

**Wamego**

tulips  
maintain/control growth  
financial support from local businesses that have teh \$\$  
good image  
progressive  
get a lot done

**Woodbine**

where are you?

in the middle of a lot of locations -

- 20 min from JC
- 1.5 hours from Topeka
- 45 min from Manhattan
- 45 min from Salina
- 20 min from Abilene

small town living

concern to keep a cafe

size & enough people willing to be forward thinking

keeping restaurant open

**FOCUS AREA #4: Prioritization of Immediate Goals & Activities**

- *Arrange the brainstorm goal-related items from the FHRC's March meeting into groups or clumps according to common theme*
- *Additional goals that are not on this Following this, Option to After you've done this, use an orange sticky note for anything you think should be on the wall that isn't (optional).*

**Groupings:**

**1. GOAL: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- Regional EDD plan to meet EDA requirements
- Capitalizing on agri-tourism and uniqueness of the area
- Vision for the region as jewels set in field of smaller jewels
- Regional marketing campaign
- Promote region for tax base/economic development
- NEW: Create inventory of assets/resources for internal & external partners - existing & potential

**2. GOAL: FINANCIAL COLLABORATION**

- Purchase fuel in bulk
- Tax saving through regional coop

**3. GOAL: DATA/INFORMATION**

- Produce data to promote region

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- Center of data sets
- Facilitation of info exchange
- Becoming an effective turn to organization – comfortable asking about info, idea, sources

**4. GOAL: EDUCATION**

- Educating citizens
- Grant writing
- Common enterprise
- NEW: Educate about Flint Hills

**5. GOAL: TRANSPORTATION**

- Implementation of transportation plan from KDOT (ADDED: Broaden: KDOT approval of transportation)
- Development of transportation plan infrastructure/mass transit
- Improve transportation (ADDED: remember small community needs w/ transportation issues)
- Grants – transportation (ADDED: T-Works meetings)

**6. GOAL: COLLABORATION AND REGIONAL COOPERATION**

- Forum for awareness of different needs
- Grants/possibilities available lists
- Continuing to build relationships with other communities eligible
- Recognition of diverse needs
- Respect for individual communities
- Assistance inventorying assets (ADDED: Housing database vert important)
- A seat at the table for smaller communities when decisions are made (ADDED: "Place" & "Voice")
- Share proportionally in benefits (ADDED: replace "proportionately" with "equitably")
- Regional Forum
- Venue for big partners to provide technical assistance

**OVERARCHING THEMES IDENTIFIED:**

- Sustainable Future
- Return on the Investment
- Communication:
  - Communication Planning with Fort Riley
  - Work with Fort Riley & K-State

## **COMMENTARY/GUIDE FOR ENGAGEMENT & DISCUSSION**

### **FOCUS AREA #1: IMAGERY & BRANDING**

The results of this exercise provide the base material to give to both branding/logo contractors and a website developer, and will serve as the launching pad for design development and image/icon production. These images and characteristics help define the impression Council members want to convey in creating an identity for the Flint Hills Regional Council.

### **FOCUS AREA #2: OUTSIDE COMMUNICATIONS & KEY CONCERNS TO BE ADDRESSED**

The list generated in this exercise reflects the amount of possible negative connotations to be overcome in communications concerning the Flint Hills Regional Council. They are a good check to be clear about dispelling myths, alleviating fears, and correcting misinformation about the Council to the population that it serves.

The exercise asked participants to engage these concerns with these questions:

- ▶ *Is it true and needs corrected?*
- ▶ *Is it based on misinformation and needs to be better communicated?*
- ▶ *Is it a fear that needs to be given assurance?*
- ▶ *And lastly, What is a strategy to address it?*

However, participants did not really engage these concerns on these additional levels; as such, it is difficult to ascertain from the list whether individual concerns conveyed are supported by members or reflect merely hypothetical or “rumored” concerns. Communication among both members and staff will have to take the possibility of member ownership of these concerns into account and work toward resolution of these concerns in order to move forward confidently.

The list generated here provides a “checklist” of sorts to ensure these concerns are addressed either subtly or directly in future communications and outreach activities of the Flint Hills Regional Council.

### **FOCUS AREA #3: REGIONAL COHESION & COMMUNITY CHALLENGES**

The purpose of this activity was twofold:

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1. To what degree has the region begun to coalesce in its awareness and sensitivities of its partner communities?
2. What are the similarities among challenges across community members of the Flint Hills Regional Council?

Council members requested additional time to digest the compilation of these challenge assessments. Future discussion of these results should take into account both individual and regional assistance levels as expounded below:

A. Perceptions of Individual Community Challenges:

3. Are these impressions of particular communities true, and can they steer the Council toward assistance efforts to member communities? or
4. Are these impressions based on faulty perceptions that the Council can help rectify in its communications and outreach?

B. Overall Regional Assistance Areas:

5. Are there consistencies and repetitions in responses that signify characteristics of the Flint Hills region that (a) need to be celebrated or (b) uncover where solutions need to be collaboratively discovered? or
6. Are the responses so disparate as to make cohesive, regional problem-solving difficult?

**FOCUS AREA #4: PRIORITIZATION OF IMMEDIATE GOALS AND ACTIVITIES**

Due to time limitations, solicitation of key results that would indicate achievement of these goals was not able to be obtained, but may be compiled in a future activity. Given the resulting six identified goals (which were derived thematically from an earlier brainstorm list undertaken in March), as well as some overall thematic goals, the intended follow-up exercise was to ascertain several results under each goal that would indicate progress toward achieving it, and help staff better structure the specific activities that would work toward meeting the Council's expectations.

This activity may still be undertaken, but even without this, the groupings help to identify in a more concrete way the targets to which staff and Board activities should be oriented.

The three-year strategic plan developed under the Regional Planning Organization steering committee was extremely ambitious, and assumed a timeframe of organizational and staffing development that is not reflective of the timing of several important organizational milestones, namely:

1. The timing of the hiring of the Executive Director
2. The provision of office space in which to develop a staff team compliment, and
3. The actual transfer of the OEA grant to the Flint Hills Regional Council.

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Nevertheless, that strategic plan provided a logic of Council activities that would grow the Council into key regional leadership, particularly in terms of economic development and transportation activities.

The brainstorm exercise of key goals undertaken during Executive Director interviews in March provided a “reality check” in terms of the goals members wanted most to see achieved, and structuring this activity around that brainstorm list provides the opportunity to better identify the steps and resources needed to achieve them.

These four activities undertaken during the August 27 retreat provided helpful direction and initial scoping for four immediate organizational development goals:

1. Branding and logo development and website design
2. Thematic guidelines for communication and outreach
3. Perceptions of community issues and assistance needs, and
4. Prioritization of goals and activities

Through the willing and active participation of Council members, FHRC staff has been given an extensive assessment of member direction from which to move forward at this important organizational phase in the life of the new Council, and Council members have coalesced around a better understanding of the perspectives of community membership that make up this new collaborative partnership.