



Flint Hills Regional Council Board of Directors
Minutes of October 21, 2011

Flint Hills Regional Council Board of Directors
Board Retreat Minutes – October 21, 2011
Board Retreat Location: Indian Hill Golf Clubhouse – Chapman, KS

Present from Board of the Regional Council: **Ben Bennett**, Geary County Commissioner; **Dan Deiter**, Alma City Council; **Vic Enns**, Wamego City Commissioner; **Honey Grant**, Grandview Plaza Vice-Mayor; **Vern Hay**, Morris County Commissioner; **Galen Johnson**, Dwight City Mayor; **Joe Kormanik**, Alta Vista Commissioner; **Karen McCulloh**, Riley County Commissioner; **MarySue Roller**, Woodbine City Councilwoman; **Debi Schwerdtfeger**, Council Grove Commissioner; **David Shover II**, Riley City Mayor; **Ervan Stuewe**, Wabaunsee County Commissioner; **Jimmy Thatcher**, Clay Center Mayor; and **Phil Weishaar**, Chapman Mayor.

Absent from the Board: **John Armbrust**, Governor's Military Council; **Cecil Aska**, Junction City Commissioner; **Jackie Hartman**, Kansas State University; **Stan Hartwich**, Pottawatomie County Commissioner; **Linda Hoeffner**, Fort Riley; and **Jim Sherow**, Manhattan Mayor.

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

Present from Staff Support: **Ty Warner**, Executive Director; **Unique Hiram**, Administrative Manger; and **Jeff Adams**, Regional Planner.

Guests: **Joan Atkinson**, Chapman EDC; **Chuck Bartlett**, Alfred Benesch & Co., Sr. Project Manager; **Gerry Bieker**, Chapman City Administrator; **Jim Brown**, Clay Center City Council; **Karen Davis**, Manhattan CD Director; **Bob Diehl**, Chapman EDC; **David Dillner**, Abilene City Manager; **Karen Hibbard**, Manhattan Chamber of Commerce; **Terra Hummel**, Chapman City Clerk; **Roger Jacquet**, Chapman EDC; Doug McKinney, North Central Regional Planning Commission; **Brett Regan**, KJCK News Reporter; **Angie Schwerdtfeger**, Tri-County Telephone; **Tom Silvosky**, Junction City Chamber of Commerce; **Gerry Vernon**, Junction City Manager; **Don Wissman**, Manhattan Chamber of Commerce; and **David Yearout**, Geary County/Junction City Planning Director.

CALL TO ORDER:

- Vern Hay, FHRC President, called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

WELCOME:

- Phil Weishaar, Chapman Mayor, welcomed all board members, staff and guests to the host community.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- Member Honey Grant motioned for the September 2011 minutes to be approved. Member Dan Deiter seconded. Motion was carried unanimously.

HUD SUSTAINABLE GRANT UPDATE:

Ty Warner, FHRC Executive Director, gave an overview of what the HUD Sustainability Grant entailed up to the submission date.

Discussion Highlights:

- Sustainable Frontiers as defined in the grant application: “The Flint Hills of Kansas are a national treasure, an endangered ecosystem, and compose a region that is simultaneously experiencing unprecedented growth and continue rural decline.”
- The three elements of work are: using an ecological boundary as the basis of planning recommendations; creating a clear strategy of blended conservation and development; and the establishment of a toolbox full of public outreach techniques that allow for a robust community dialogue to take lace over a large geography with a dispersed population.
- Sustainable Frontiers consists of three aspects: the Frontier of National Defense, the Frontier of Economic Sustainability and the Frontier of Cultural & Natural Resource Preservation.
- HUD Sustainable Grant Requested Amount: \$1,987,507.00.
- Two focus areas were included in the strategy for addressing this planning process across the entire Flint Hills region: Focus Area 1 Population is 168,346 and Focus Area 2 Population is 274,521, for a Total population across the Flint Hills Eco-Region of 442,867.
- Based on a \$2 million grant request, the minimum match amount required at 20% was \$400,000.00; however, our final match total was \$1,016,129.00 consisting of both cash and in-kind contributions.
- Overall, the total match and leverage amount equated to \$1,432,411.00, which included \$272,569.00 (local partners), \$150,000.00 (K-State Cooperative), \$659,842.00 (KS State Departments) and \$350,000.00 (K-State Research).
- The proposed grant timeline includes the phases of Mobilize, Discover, Analyze, Plan, Adopt, and Implement. In addition, three ongoing project phases are proposed in terms of Alignment, Training and Sustaining, over a three year period from the beginning of 2011

FLINT HILLS WELCOME CENTER:

- The three presenters were Karen Hibbard, Manhattan Chamber of Commerce; Don Wissman, Manhattan Chamber of Commerce; and Tom Silvosky, Junction City Chamber of Commerce.
- Consultant Team consisted of Verner Johnson and Economic Stewardship, Inc.
- Vision and Process:

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1. The Welcome Center process was started in the early 1990s.
 2. The Feasibility Analysis by DRPA was conducted in 1996 and evaluated on these two concepts: economic impact and location.
 3. Fermata, Inc conducted the Experimental Tourism Strategy in 2005.
- It is estimated that 13,000 vehicles travel on I-70 and KDOT had an 8.5% capture rate whereas other studies were as high as 12%.
 - The two aspects of experience that were essential to the chosen location of the Welcome Center were: physical/virtual portal to the region and state-of-the-art experience.
 - There were six locations which were considered for a possible Welcome Center site: Exit 295 (K-77), Exit 303 (K-18), Exit 307 (McDowell Creek Road), Exit 313 (K-177), Exit 328 (K-99) and Mile 340 (Maple Hill Rest Area).
 - The locations were narrowed down to three and a rating factor that ranged from 1 (least) to 3 (most) based on the following criteria: visibility to I-70, quality of Flint Hills view, infrastructure, control of future context, interchanges access & capacity and proximity to destinations. The final three were K-18, K-177 and Maple Hill; however, the Maple Hill Rest Area doesn't allow for commercial development so that eliminated it from the making appropriate for the future site.
 - The selected location site for the Welcome Center is Exit 313 (K-177) due to a number of factors: K-177/I-70 interchange, centered in all five counties, the Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce holds 7.2 acres of the land needed for building, Flint Hills Discovery Center and Scenic Byways.
 - Design Goals:
 1. Two main design goals were *feasible* (create a landmark, attract travelers, create business for surrounding communities) and *flexible* (accommodate media approaches).
 2. The concept includes a 90-foot tower to the observation platform, which will provide a 360-degree view of the Flint Hills.
 3. The concept also includes 250 parking spaces to the south and a gas station to the north.
 4. Some of the building materials that will be used are layered limestone, glass and silver metal.
 - Economic Feasibility:
 1. There is an estimation of 212,000 visitor days based on the fact that 10% of visitors will be motivated to change their behavior.
 2. There is an estimation of a \$25 million revenue increase in the surrounding areas.
 3. Stand-alone costs are estimated at \$268,849.00 and an estimated cost including a hotel is \$513,582.00.
 4. Hard costs for the Welcome Center are estimated at \$5.4 million.
 5. Soft costs for the Welcome Center are estimated at \$3.5 million.
 - Organizational Structure
 1. The Flint Hills Regional Council was included among possible entities that might be a suitable organizational approach to the welcome center.
 2. The Flint Hills Regional Council was also identified as a potential user with offices on the facility, as was the potential of a state office for the issuance of hunting and fishing licenses.

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

- Member Deb Schwerdtfeger brought some flyers to the meeting about a grant research company that Council Grove is considering utilizing in order to identify small community grants. The Arizona Company has 15 people who conduct grant research (private/public). (70% of the grants coming from private sources.) The annual charge for their services is \$5000. President Vern Hay asked all board members to review the flyer and decide if this something that the communities would consider utilizing. The company's website link is as follows: www.ecivis.com.
- There is a Federal Grant Writing Workshop that will be held on November 7, 2011 from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. in Larned, KS. The FHRC Administrative Manager, Unique Hiram, is scheduled to attend this event. The website link for this workshop is as follows: <http://www.larnedks.org/economic-development>.
- Member MarySue Roller, Woodbine Councilwoman, informed the Board that the Woodbine post office has been placed on the USPS closing list. The two alternate locations that they have been told which can be utilized are: Herrington (11.6 miles) or Dwight (15.5 miles). Woodbine's population is approximately 200 people and there is great concern about their post office being closed down along with a number of the smaller communities because it is essential each of the its respective cities. Member Roller has asked the board to draft up a letter of support for Woodbine and the smaller communities in stating that the various post offices are essential to those communities; therefore, they should not be closed down. Member Karen McCulloh made a motion for the support letter to be drafted up by Warner and submitted to the Board for review and signature. Member Galen Johnson seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.
- Member Ben Bennett informed the Board that the Junction City/Geary County and Manhattan group met to set forth the legislative agenda for the AUSA conference. As a result, the MPO question was brought up and both senators indicated that this might not be passed (increasing from 50,000 base urbanized population). BRAC was also mentioned at the conference. Also, Bennett will be working towards getting the legislative sub-committee together with representatives from each area. In the near future, Bennett would like to see if the FHRC could fund a dinner with the regional legislators to include Morris and Dickinson counties (November, December or early January).
- Redistricting – how can the region, as a whole, support or address this issue?
- Member Karen McCulloh indicated that Riley County is holding their lunch for legislators next week and perhaps Warner could be included. Additionally, McCulloh has asked that John Armburst report on the Fort Riley troop strength at the next board meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

- Member Ervin Stuewe made a motion to accept the Statement of Financial Income & Expense, which was provided to all board members. Member Dan Dieter seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

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OTHER BUSINESS & NEXT MEETING:

- The next meeting will be held on November 18, 2011 at Flint Hills Discovery Center, 315 S. Third Street, Manhattan, KS 66505.

MEETING ADJOURNED:

Member David Shover motioned to adjourn the board meeting at 11:29 a.m. Member Joe Kormanik seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.