



REGIONAL COUNCIL OF MAYORS
July 13, 2009

DISCUSSION

Mayors asked for ideas about urban policy

Burnsville Mayor Elizabeth Kautz, vice president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, said The White House is working on a rollout of an Office of Urban Policy http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/urban_policy/, seeking ideas in a series of town hall meetings around the country, starting in Denver, Philadelphia and Kansas City. She said that when Adolfo Carrion, who will head the new office, comes to the Twin Cities, there will be a meeting the evening before for local mayors to meet with him and present their ideas. She said she believes he will be interested in some of the initiative work of the Regional Council of Mayors.

Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities

The U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson have created an interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/2009-0616-epahuddot.htm> to help improve access to affordable housing, more transportation options and lower transportation costs, while protecting the environment in communities nationwide.

The Partnership's six Livability Principles reflect the kind of work ULI Minnesota has been engaged in, said Caren Dewar, ULI Minnesota executive director. She said 10 regions are expected to be selected to demonstrate how sustainable communities can work—and ULI Minnesota and RCM want the Twin Cities to be one of those regions. A number of local members of ULI Minnesota and RCM, including Mayor Kautz and Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, are making connections with the federal agencies to make sure the Twin Cities region becomes a demonstration area for the new partnership.

RCM BUSINESS

Housing Initiative

A report on the Housing Initiative will be completed shortly, said Cathy Bennett of Bennett Consulting, and all of the data collected for the five pilot cities will be available on the website. A website toolbox with best practices from the region and around the country also will be available.

Caren Dewar said there will be a second round of pilot cities soon, but the criteria for selection have not yet been determined.

Jobs and Economic Development

Mayor Stan Harpstead of Arden Hills, who is leading the RCM work on regional jobs and economic development, said there are two parallel, collaborative efforts now underway to identify key economic

clusters in the region. “What I’m trying to lead you into thinking about is regional economic competitiveness, based on innovation,” he said.

Allison Barman and Kathy Schmidlkofer of the Itasca Project said that Ken Powell will be leading an Itasca effort designed to create job growth. “Itasca came together about six years ago to look at regional competitiveness and what is most important to job growth,” said Barman.

Itasca is creating a task force, which will include Harpstead, that will convene shortly and work for about six months. The end result should be action plans that lead to results, said Smidlkofer, who represents General Mills at the Itasca Project.

At the same time the Itasca Project work is proceeding the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) has awarded \$250,000 for a two-year study of economic clusters in the metro region, according to Burke Murphy of DEED. “One of our hopes is that this will increase regional competitiveness,” said Murphy. [\[link to Power Point here?\]](#)

Lee Munnich, senior fellow at the Humphrey Institute, is working with Murphy and DEED on the project. “We think that focusing on key competitive clusters in the region will mean those clusters will fare better in the future,” Munnich said. He said he hoped that the project would be able not only to identify incentives for key economic clusters in the Twin Cities region, but to build a model that could be taken to a national level.

The DEED/Humphrey Institute project will work closely with the RCM initiative. “One of the reasons we ended up being with this group is the energy and enthusiasm Stan (Harpstead) has brought to it,” Munnich said.

Harpstead said the work should result in policy recommendations that would be taken to the Minnesota Legislature, probably for the 2011 session.

REPORTS

Arden Hills: Mayor Stan Harpstead said the city council sent a signal that the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant (TCAAP) property should become a park—which is not part of any agency’s plans. “I have to try to help us get back to balance in how we move a superfund site back to the community,” he said.

Chanhassen: Mayor Tom Furlong said Money magazine has just selected Chanhassen as second on its list of top-10 places to live. He said the magazine talked about, among other things, the city’s fiscal strength and responsibility. Chanhassen’s bond rating recently was upgraded to AAA, the highest level.

Edina: Mayor Jim Hovland said that Family Circle magazine has named Edina one of the top 10 places in the United States to raise a family. Hovland said that Edina has a greater percentage of senior residents than any other city in the metro area. This creates a challenge for the city and, he said, for the region and the state. “It isn’t just Edina that’s aging,” he said, “the whole state is.” He said the city is looking at “how we can make our communities rich and full of life” for seniors.

Lake Elmo: Mayor Dean Johnston said the city continues to look for a long-term solution to groundwater pollution.

Maple Plain: Mayor John Sweeney said the city had gotten a transit-oriented development grant to buy a couple of properties in order to develop a 200-car park-and-ride lot—a first step towards getting bus service to the community.

Minnetonka: Mayor Terry Schneider said the city had reduced staff for the first time in some years, which had been difficult. The city decided to rename shopping centers as “village centers” in order to reflect a new way of looking at their function, but that seemingly simple move had “created quite a bit of activity.”

Richfield: Mayor Debbie Goettel said the city has had good turnout for its adopt-a-house program, which encourages residents to take care of the lawns and gardens of abandoned houses in their neighborhood. But, Goettel said, she is seeing more businesses that are allowing their yards to become unkempt, probably because of their own cutbacks in staffing and/or services.

Shoreview: Mayor Sandy Martin said the city has gotten a lot of attention for its use of pervious concrete to help prevent lake degradation. She said the concrete can’t be used everywhere and it is very labor-intensive. It has to cure for seven days, so it can’t be done at once or it would block residents’ access to their homes. “So far, it’s looking very, very good,” she said.

Wayzata: Mayor Ken Willcox said the economy has stalled development activity, but that’s given the city an opportunity to look at its overall financial structure. He said the city asked residents to “adopt” some city park gardens, in order to save on maintenance. That program has gone well, with all of the gardens being taken care of by residents.

COMING UP

RCM September meeting

The next RCM meeting will be Monday, September 14, 11:30am-1:30pm, Dorsey & Whitney, 50 S. 6th St., Minneapolis, 15th floor-Minnesota Room. **There will be no meeting in August.**

ATTENDEES

Mayors

Terry Schneider, Minnetonka; Stan Harpstead, Arden Hills; Jim Hovland, Edina; Dean Johnston, Lake Elmo; Elizabeth Kautz, Burnsville; Sandy Martin, Shoreview; Ken Willcox, Wayzata; Debbie Goettel, Richfield; Nick Ruehl, Excelsior; Tom Furlong, Chanhassen; Peter Lindstrom, Falcon Heights; John Sweeney, Maple Plain; Bill Droste, Rosemount

Staff

Caren Dewar, executive director, ULI Minnesota; Jill Kiener, RCM coordinator; Linda Picone, publications coordinator

Advisors and guests

Cathy Bennett, Bennett Community Consulting; Elizabeth Ryan, Family Housing Fund; Gretchen Nicholls, LISC; Todd Klingel, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce; Erika Carter, Target; Allison Barman, Itasca Project; Kathy Schmidkofer, Itasca Project; John Bailly, 1000 Friends; Jim Erkel, MCEA; Bob Close, Close Architects; Burke Murphy, DEED; Michael Huber, Blue Cross Blue Shield; Tina Smith, City of Minneapolis; Lee Munnich, Humphrey Institute; Paul Burns, Metropolitan Council