

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

West Square Building, Room B24 & B30

Baraboo, WI

Monday, May 23, 2011

Members present: Marty Krueger, Joel Gaalswyck, Kathy Zowin, Peter Murray, Don Stevens, Dave Riek, Gerald Lehman

Members absent: None

Represented Stakeholders: WSOR, Dave Bierman; WRRTC, Forest Van Schwartz; PLRTC, Alan Anderson; MCRM, Dan Viste; Prairie du Sac, Ray Bolton; Sauk City, Donna Stehling; United Cooperative; Reedsburg, Don Lichte; United Cooperative, Karl Beth; Town of Prairie du Sac / Badger, Bill Wenzel; Village of Rock Springs, Lisa Zautke; Baraboo Chamber, Debra Bauer; Baraboo, none; Sauk Prairie Chamber, Patrick Taggart; Reedsburg Chamber, Kristine Koenecke; Together Sauk Prairie / Snowmobilers (Recreational Trails Advocates), Ted Walmer; Town of Excelsior, none

Others present: Kathy Schauf, Gene Dalhoff, Barb Hummel, Sam Landes, Alan Wildman, Scott Stokes, Shari Walz, Frank Huntington, Dan Viste, Meghan Meinholz, Dana White-Quam, Bill Stehling, Gary Tupper, Rob Sinklair, Tim Lins, Steve Koenig, Anne Chalmers, Virgil Kasper, Tim Damos, Mike Carignan, Sam Landes, Linda Sauer, Laura Cody, Jonathan Cody, John Sauer, John Reinemann

The meeting was called to order and certification of Open Meeting compliance was given at 6:30 p.m. **The agenda was approved on a motion by Zowin, second by Murray. Motion carried.**

Public Comment

None

Review ground rules - Hummel:

1. Each here to build a collaborative relationship not to be “right.”
2. Each here to identify and solve a problem not to place blame.
3. Each can influence the outcome but I cannot control it.
4. Each will share all relevant information with integrity.
5. Each are willing to do the hard work necessary to create understanding.
 - One conversation at a time
 - I will listen actively
 - I will acknowledge others points and feelings
 - I will utilize “I” statements not “you” statements
 - I will speak for his/her benefit, not his/her loss (No zingers)
6. Public comment will be on the agenda at the beginning and end of each meeting. The audience will speak only during public comment.
7. Number of stakeholder representatives needed to hold a meeting: Thirteen (13). (If the primary stakeholder is not available, secondary named representative will be counted.)
8. Recommendations will be formed by consensus. Consensus is defined as “I can live with it”. When calling for consensus, stakeholder representatives will ask for thumbs up or down. Those items not having consensus will be noted as such.

Synopsis of prior meetings and priority groupings was distributed (see below).

Overview of process since last stakeholder meeting on 02/28/11

The County Board of Supervisors approved a resolution in support of acquisition of the UP line by the State, and subsequent development of a recreational trail after the line has been acquired. Resolution 22-2011 Recommending State Acquisition Of The Union Pacific Rail Line From Madison To Reedsburg; approved by the County Board March 15, 2011.

Forest Van Schwartz updated the stakeholders on action taken at 05/06/11 WRRTC full commission meeting. The transit commission unanimously approved the acquisition of the line and agreed to serve as the lead applicant in acquiring the line on behalf of the state.

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Frank Huntington indicated that the acquisition process was underway and that by the end of June they would have some information on the valuation of the land that would be necessary to accomplish negotiations. Huntington noted that the Badger corridor and the corridor through the communities were on different timelines for potential development.

Huntington also indicated that the DOT, DNR, the Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission (WRRTC) and the WSOR Railroad are working together to create a rails to trails corridor thru the vacated Badger plant.

The main reason for moving this ahead is to preserve the rail corridor easement through the facility. If the corridor is not used for either rail or trail purposes it could be lost. Huntington indicated that there were some potential issues with the conversion. In order for the corridor to be placed under the federal rails to trails program the corridor needs to be under the jurisdiction of the Federal Surface Transportation Board (STB). Because the BAAP corridor was owned by the Army, not a railroad it was considered an industrial track and is not under the STB's jurisdiction. We have talked to the STB about the process of placing the corridor under their jurisdiction and then immediately putting into the rails to trails program. This is not something they have done before and they are indicating it may take a year to get through this process and they may not be willing to do it. As a result it appears that a better solution would be for WisDOT and WisDNR to enter into a rails to trails agreement without STB involvement. This would not be part of the official rails to trails program, but we have done something similar with other rail lines in the state. Another issue is the fact that the Army will not be out of BAAP for at least a couple of years. Until then the facility will be gated which affect trail development and access.

Trails Discussion

Dana White-Quam DNR Trail Coordinator, spoke to the issues related to trail establishment and funding opportunities. There is no detriment to funding if the program is not a federal rails to trails program. Indicated that there were many steps in the process to transitioning to a trail. The first stage is agreement between DOT and the DNR. After that the DNR would sit down with the local communities to establish a cooperative agreement in order to move forward. Ties and rails would be removed after the DNR acquires. A stage one environmental assessment would be conducted, and a complete analysis of any trail areas that are out of sync with trail standards would be documented. Grant opportunities would be identified and researched including but not limited to the Recreational Trails Program. A local stakeholder group to work through the process would be identified to take information on the process back to their represented areas. Concerns of adjacent land owners would need to be addressed. Appropriate uses, surface properties, and access points are examples of the variety of questions that will need to be addressed. It is likely that the army will not allow access to Badger until 2016. Regardless, interim steps will be undertaken.

Huntington noted that the railroad needs to file for abandonment of the line between the communities to the Surface Transportation Board. DOT, WRRTC and WSOR will need to develop concurrence on the timeline and process for transitioning.

Krueger lead discussion on what next steps may look like. Krueger proposed a subcommittee of the Economic Development Committee in order to hold discussions regarding trail development. Comments were shared about moving forward and involving all partners in a meaningful way.

Dana White-Quam highlighted that there are vital next steps that need to happen prior to public input and prior to this process moving forward. Any initiative will have to be carefully timed with the negotiations at the state level, and correlate with state activities.

Koenig shared information on the comprehensive outdoor recreation plan that was combined with the County Comprehensive Plan.

Bolton moved, and Lichte seconded that the stakeholder group approved the concept of a subcommittee of the Economic Development Committee working with the respective community and state partners to develop a coordinated recreational trail through Sauk County. Unanimous consent.

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The trail survey component will be handled by the subcommittee.

Public questions and comments

Scott Stokes – working on Good Neighbor trail. They have a template to follow.

Sam Landis – thanked members of the committee for the process, and offered willingness of the snowmobile users to participate and continue planning.

Frank Huntington – WSOR will be filing for abandonment, it will be interrupted and converted to a Rails to Trails process which is technically considered a working rail road. Issues of the use of bridges is an issue that will need to be addressed between the DOT and the DNR to the advantage of all.

Motion by Lehman, second by Stevens, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald Stevens
Economic Development Committee Secretary