

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

Woodland Park – Sycamore Room

December 3, 2015

Members/Guests: Geof Benson, Dorreen Carey, Jennifer Gadzala, Maggie Byrne, Lara Gonzalez, Andrew Pelloso, Brian Oneill, Ashley Snyder, Nicole Barker, Catherine Yoder, Brenda Scott-Henry, Tina Rongers, Kevin Breitzke, Kay Nelson, Deb Backhus

NIRPC Staff: Kathy Luther, Meredith Stilwell

Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Benson called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions.

Approval of September 3, 2015 EMPC Minutes

On motion by Paul Labus and second by Jennifer Gadzala, the September 3, 2015 EMPC meeting minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

Working Discussion of the One Region Indicators Report Environmental Metrics

Tina Rongers, Karnerblue Era, LLC

Update on One Region Indicators Report Process and Progress

One Region, is in flux currently and still emerging with respect to its purpose and platform. While there is currently not an Executive Director, there is a Board of Directors. There have been Indicators Reports since 2000 and while previous reports from 2000, 2004 and 2008 were driven by sustainability, the 2012 report focused on looking at the baseline of the indicators to see the improvement made between 2000 and 2010. While there were improvements in certain areas, they were not largely upward improvements and there was decline in some indicators which reflected a region in transition. Karnerblue was hired by One Region to start a new process and indicators report for 2016. The 2016 research project is backed by the board, but is in the hands of a sub-committee. The focus for the 2016 report is similar to the past reports and will maintain the structure of the 10 policy domains of people; economy; environment; transportation; education; health; public safety; housing; culture; and government. While the 10 factors are still relevant, one change in the new report will be to change the first chapter to be about who we are and where we live. There is value to looking at sense of place and attachment to Northwest Indiana to better tell the story of how it is becoming a region in motion. Even though some indicators may not show dramatic change, there is a need to recognize the great work that is happening and the work being done toward those indicators to move toward a strong, vibrant region.

Update on One Region Indicators Report Process and Progress

The Environmental chapter of the 2012 Indicators Report took a lot of heat from many sides. Lack of data, data that was not up to date and interpretations of the report were some of the issues. Environmental indicators in the 2012 report reflected a steady state, and many felt a lot of progress had been made. In late summer of 2014 One Region commissioned a Harris poll public opinion survey looking at public opinion as it related to regional priorities. The results identified economy, education, transportation and regional coordination as the priorities. While the environment didn't rise to the top, it is underlying for all of the priorities identified. Previously there were 20 environmental indicators being looked at. One Region would like the number reduced to 10 for the 2016 report. The EMPC will begin the conversation to define the 10

leading indicators. In addition, how to illustrate the interconnection between environment and the other chapters in the report needed to be looked at. Prior reports presented letter grades for the chapters with 2012 moving to an arrow system to show upward or downward movement or a block to show a steady state in order to focus on substance and not on subjective evaluation. The 2016 report will continue with the arrow system. Action measures will be enhanced to show what is happening in the region and highlight how work is being done together to effect change. Another element to be added is to highlight some sort of regional collaboration that is enhancing the region. Ideas for a story or best practice for that element are being looked for so as not to be limited in thinking by looking at just what has happened in the past. A summit was held and the results of that summit are currently before the One Region board. Other than access to Lake Michigan, there weren't specific environmental goals that came from the summit.

It was advised that the environmental and economic chapters tend to be controversial and is important to be mindful of the data that is looked at and how it is interpreted to have a strong consensus prior to the published report. A better design for the report is being figured out. There will most likely be one or two more listening sessions and wrapping up by the end of January 2016 wrap up.

The working discussion to preliminary review and tweak the list of current indicators took place first looking at the air indicators. Based on the discussion, it was decided that while keeping some of the air quality information in the environmental chapter, the majority should shift to the health section adding stories and anecdotes regarding urban and toxic issues since it is a local and not a regional issue and talking about the issue as something that has been looked at. Also discussed was adding charting regarding ozone and particulates and one as to where the region stands with the national air quality in the environmental section and adding a chart regarding air quality sensitive days to the health chapter. In addition, it was suggested to make it clear that we are in the Chicagoland metropolitan statistical area. Tina indicated that to the extent possible the attempt will be made to integrate mapping and charts into the report to be more visual, but she would like it to be consistent with other chapters.

Discussion regarding the land indicators was held. Tina relayed that the recreational trail miles by number in the region is most likely being moved to the transportation chapter and that typically land issues regarding sprawl and development were addressed. Chairman Benson advised looking at the list in regard to which chapter each indicator should be placed regarding the biggest impact and how to elevate awareness. Suggestions were made regarding where best to put certain indicators and discussion was held regarding brownfield metrics and how to best measure them to reflect a positive direction since some metrics don't make sense unless you put something else with them to translate and tell an actual story that means something. Since the only indicator that appeared to be popping up for land measurement was total acres permanently allocated as open space by % in county, Tina suggested wrapping up the land conversation and as a next step exploring the ecosystems study to see what are other ways to talk about land.

Bikes on the South Shore trains and the Indiana Dunes Ecosystem Alliance were suggested as stories regarding collaborative efforts that could be added to the report.

Only air and land indicators were reviewed during the meeting, leaving water and solid waste indicators to still be discussed. Tina also noted that climate change and energy had yet to be touched upon. Kathy also indicated her desire to talk about the remedial action plan and the dredging in the Grand Cal. It was decided the next working discussion will take place following the January 7 EMPC meeting from 10:30 a.m. until Noon.

Public Comment: None

Announcements: None

Meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.