

NCWRPC NEWS

A Newsletter of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC). Serving Adams, Forest, Juneau, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas and Wood Counties for over 30 years.

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Welcome

As we begin 2005 there is increasing discussion of cooperation and regionalism throughout the state, especially in the area of economic development. There has been a realization by many that we need to work together to maximize our limited resources and not work against each other.

Several state-wide associations, including the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) are supporting these regional efforts. At the Annual WCA Conference a Resolution was adopted to support legislation to enable the formation of "Regional Development Authorities". These would be voluntary associations formed to encourage the relocation of a large employer and that would have revenue sharing power among those units of government.

Meanwhile, the Alliance of Cities has introduced a regional revenue sharing proposal as well. Their proposal would create regions that are economically and socially linked with the aim of providing incentives to those that plan together, rather than compete against each other. Clearly, the next legislative session will be busy and cooperation and regionalism will be major issues.

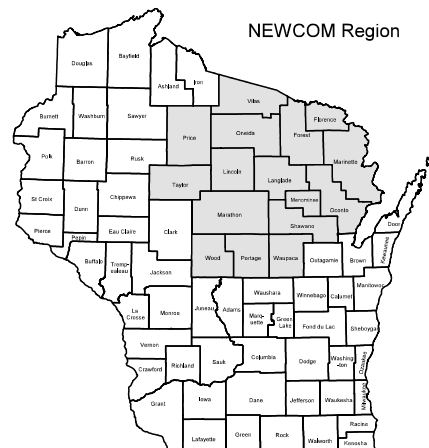
Related to this economic development regionalism discussion, the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission recently hosted a meeting with many of our area economic development professionals to discuss the possibility of conducting a study to identify economic opportunities throughout the Region. The discussion was positive and all agreed this is a critical step in maintaining the economic vitality of North Central Wisconsin. You will hear more about this in the next few months.

As always, please feel free to call me if you have any questions.

Dennis Lawrence, AICP
Executive Director

NCWRPC Secures Region \$640,000

The State of Wisconsin, Office of Justice Assistance awarded \$640,000 to the sixteen counties of northeast Wisconsin to complete a study of existing radio and mobile data systems and make recommendations for future systems design. The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission coordinated the effort and prepared the application with the assistance of many area law enforcement agencies, led by Oneida and Wood Counties.



The counties of northeastern Wisconsin have a long history of working cooperatively to address the public safety needs of the area. This latest effort, called the North East Wisconsin COMMunications or NEWCOM, will create a plan that will

NCWRPC Secures Funding Continued...

identify the communication needs for the area, so the 500 or so law enforcement and public safety organizations can communicate effectively throughout the Region.

The plan is needed because of the unique challenges for both radio and mobile data systems in the Region, because of the diverse terrain and areas of dense tree cover; both of which make it difficult to provide mobile radio and data systems that provide adequate coverage, often requiring the need for additional tower locations, special equipment and additional backup systems. It is critical to maximize the existing infrastructure and upgrade or replace the current system to best meet the goals of the State to foster interoperability through radio and mobile data systems that will meet the safety needs of the Region.

For more information contact Andrew Faust at (715) 849-5510, Extension 305, or email afaust@ncwrpc.org.

Town of Stella Update

The NCWRPC Staff have begun work on a comprehensive plan for the Town of Stella in Oneida County. Stella is a few miles east of Rhinelander along County Highway C. The rural Town is known for its potato farms, but has recently felt development pressures. Town officials wish to balance agriculture with rural development through the use of planning. The plan is funded in part by a Lake Planning Grant from the WDNR. To date, the Town has sent out an opinion survey to community residents for input and created its own planning committee to review draft elements of the plan as they are completed. The Town of Stella is scheduled to have the plan completed this fall.

For further information contact Craig Stahl at (715) 849-5510, Extension 311, or cstahl@ncwrpc.org.

Oneida County Department on Aging Completes Strategic Plan

To plan for the increasing demand for services over the next twenty years the Oneida County Department on Aging asked NCWRPC to assist them in a strategic planning process. In addition to the normal aging of the overall population, common to most rural areas, there is an additional dynamic at work, as seasonal vacation cottages become full time retirement homes.

This offers the County both opportunities and challenges. Many of those retiring to the area bring financial resources with them that strengthen the local economy. But as we age we have special needs, most notably in the area of health-care, which can put a strain on the ability of local governments to deliver services.

The impending retirement of the baby-boom generation has the potential to overwhelm the capacity of a number of agencies to deliver services to this large cohort of retirees. To prepare, the Department of Aging with assistance from NCWRPC and UW-Extension, looked at how services to the elderly are delivered today, how demand is likely to change in the future, and how greater efficiency might be brought to these programs. In addition to examining demographic trends and inventorying existing programs, a series of focus groups were held with both users and providers of services to the elderly, including caregivers who are literally on the front lines of providing care to loved-ones.

As the number of elderly increases it is the services that allow seniors to remain in their homes rather than being forced into more expensive institutional settings that become crucial. It is these supportive services that represent the best hope for allowing local governments to serve this growing elderly population without busting the budget. Integrating the traditional senior activities and “meals on wheels” that have been associated with services to the elderly with a more pro-active approach to the supportive services that allow people to age in place in a more cost-effective and dignified way is the challenge for the coming century.

Department on Aging Continued...

Planning at the Department on Aging has been integrated with the larger, long-range planning process that has been initiated for all Oneida County departments. In this way, it is hoped that strategies identified to meet the Department's mission as the elderly population within the county grows can also further the larger goals of delivering efficient and effective services to all the citizens of Oneida County.

For more information contact Mike Agnew at (715) 849-5510, Extension 307, or email magnew@ncwrpc.org.

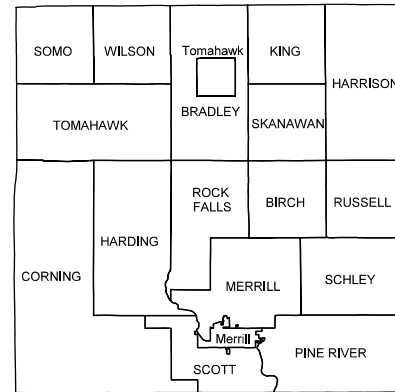
Comprehensive Planning in Lincoln County

On December 21, 2004, the Lincoln County Board passed a comprehensive amendment to their County Zoning Ordinance, bringing to a successful completion an eight-year process that began with the adoption of the state's first comprehensive plan under the statutes commonly known as Smart Growth. In 1996, the process began when the NCWRPC was asked to complete an audit of the County's planning documents. An update of the County Development Plan, and a rewrite of the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances based on that new plan was recommended.

After a series of public meetings in 1998 it was decided, with the consent of 82 percent of those in attendance, that the County should go ahead with a countywide plan. In the summer of 1999 a consultant was awarded the contract to prepare a plan. Two months later the Wisconsin Legislature passed the revision of the comprehensive planning statutes and the County Plan was structured to meet the requirements of the new law.

Fifteen of the County's sixteen towns participated in the planning process. After countless hours by volunteers and numerous public meetings, town plans were created and used as the basis for an overall County Plan, which was adopted in 2001.

The County has followed through on the audit recommendations from NCWRPC, and revising its shoreland and subdivision ordinances and making the zoning regulations consistent with the adopted Plan. Lincoln County now finds itself in the position of being ahead of almost every county in the state in meeting both the letter and the spirit of the comprehensive planning law.



There has been a great deal of disagreement, and no small amount of misinformation, on the burdens that the comprehensive planning law puts on local governments. In its simplest form the law requires that local government must have in place by January 1, 2010, a comprehensive plan that meets the criteria of the law in order to exercise certain powers in relation to land use control. Plans are submitted to the State, but there is no approval process. The Plan prepared by the local community is the plan.

The Lincoln County Plan was prepared under the County's own initiative utilizing its own money to better achieve the goals of the residents of the County. Wood County is taking a similar approach, where County staff will, over the next few years, develop a county comprehensive plan. Other counties in the Region have accessed the state planning grant program. There are numerous approaches that a community can take to comply with this law. Each community must decide what approach is best for them.

For more information contact Mike Agnew at (715) 849-5510, Extension 307, or email magnew@ncwrpc.org.

Farewell

It is with great sadness we report the untimely death of David Pelton, a Commissioner and friend.

Dave served as a representative from Juneau County since July 2001. He was active in his community, serving on numerous boards and commissions. He served as the Mayor of Mauston from 1994 to 2002. He was also a strong supporter of regional planning.

He will be missed!



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