



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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2007

Welcome

As we begin the New Year, many new planning projects are underway. There are numerous comprehensive plans underway and several more that are soon to kick off throughout our region. We are working on All-Hazard Plans, a Wildfire Protection Plan, Outdoor Recreation Plans and local transportation plans. In addition we have several economic development efforts in process, including the Technology Zone Program, Regional Revolving Loan Fund, Grow North Economic Development Initiative, local grant assistance, and the update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Clearly, another busy year.

I would like to congratulate Bettye Nall as our new vice-chairperson. She has been a long time active member of the Commission serving Marathon County. I would also like to welcome Tom Haferman as a new Commissioner. Tom was recently appointed by Wood County.

Finally, I would also like to welcome the Town of Lac du Flambeau, Vilas County, as the newest member of our organization. Staff will be working with them to develop a comprehensive plan this year. We urge all non-member communities to consider membership.

As always, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at (715) 849-5510, Extension 304 or at dlawrence@ncwrpc.org.

Dennis Lawrence, AICP
Executive Director

Commission Meeting Highlights

The September meeting of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission was highlighted by the adoption of the 2007 budget and the election of a new vice-chairperson.

The Commission approved a \$696,473 budget for 2007. Revenues are made up of three basic components: the levy, continuing grants and projects. As you may recall, the annual levy rate for 2007 was lowered again, the fourth decrease in the last five years. The levy now makes up barely 27 percent of the overall budget, while several years ago it peaked at over 45 percent of the overall budget. The Commission is committed to providing real cost savings to its members. Continuing grants, from EDA and DOT, make up about 20 percent of the budget. The remaining 53 percent comes from project revenues, much from grants secured by the NCWRPC for members. Expenditures have remained very stable. Overall, there was only a six percent increase over 2006, including wages and health insurance.

Quarterly Quote:

In a democracy, the public has a right to know not only what the government decides, but why and by what process.

Gerald Ford

Commission Meeting Highlights Continued...

In other business, Bettye Nall, from Marathon County, was unanimously selected as the new vice-chairperson. She will replace Virginia Heinemann, also from Marathon County. In her new role she will sit on the Executive Committee and will serve as the NCWRPC representative on the North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation (NCWDC). The NCWDC manages the Regional Revolving Loan Fund.

The Commission also had a presentation from the DNR about the Brownfields Program. Each of the state's regional planning commissions are partners in this program and annually apply for funding from EPA to fund this program, which is available to all of Wisconsin's communities. The Commission also discussed the findings of the recent Northern Rail Study. The Commission will be communicating with other organizations to develop a regional approach to this issue. In addition, three projects were reviewed through the Federal-State Referrals process totaling about \$700,000 dollars and all were approved.

The next NCWRPC meeting will be held in Wausau on February 28, 2007. All are welcome to attend.

Staff News

James Hanke has recently been promoted to Senior Planner. James has been with the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission for nearly eighteen months and has been working in the area of Economic Development.

His day-to-day duties include managing the Regional Revolving Loan Fund, the Technology Zone Program and two Angel Investment groups.

Congratulations James!

NCWRPC Secures Funds for Counties

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) coordinated a regional air photo effort in 2005. Air photos are used by local governments for a variety of purposes, such as facility planning, emergency management planning, and land use planning. This was a major regional effort that included 35 counties, three regional planning commissions, and numerous state and federal agencies. By working together, all of the participating counties involved in this regional effort saved between 30 and 40 percent on the cost of their air photos and related products. As a result of on-going efforts, the NCWRPC was able to bring dollars back to the counties of North Central Wisconsin. Each county received a rebate check of \$1,000 to \$6,000 resulting from new partners brought in by the NCWRPC.

"One of our many roles is to provide leadership for regional projects, and this is a great example of how we can bring together local governments and state agencies for the benefit of all. Even our non-member counties of Marathon, Portage and Wood benefited from this project", said Dennis Lawrence, NCWRPC executive director. He went on to say, "In these challenging fiscal times, not only did we save our counties money up front, but we were also fortunate enough to be able to bring back a little money as well. Clearly, working together we can accomplish more than working alone".

The Wisconsin Land Information Association awarded the NCWRPC Air Photo effort its *2005 Local Government Achievement Award*; and the American Council of Engineering Companies awarded it the *2006 Best of State Excellence Award*. In addition, this project was highlighted at the Wisconsin Counties Association Annual Conference.

For more information on this project contact Andy Faust at (715) 849-5510, Extension 305 or at afaust@ncwrpc.org.

Planner Volunteers in New Orleans

It's been nearly a year and a half since Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans on August 29, 2005. The failure of the levee system flooded 80 percent of the city for over a month, leaving hundreds of thousands of residents homeless. Nearly half a million people were forced to evacuate, and as of October, New Orleans' population is estimated at 200,000, less than half of pre-storm levels. Most of the historic areas of the city came through the storm alright, but huge, mostly residential tracts were underwater and today thousands of houses remain uninhabited and probably beyond repair. Only about a third of pre-Katrina businesses are open, tourist and convention traffic is down significantly, and reduced tax receipts have forced the City to lay off more than half of its staff.

Although Federal funding for the rebuilding has been slow in arriving, and settlements from private insurers have been inconsistent. It is anticipated that more reconstruction money will become available in coming months. Since Katrina struck there have been a number of planning efforts, but the need for a coherent overall planning process to focus these efforts is apparent. Mike Agnew, AICP took a leave from his position with NCWRPC during the month of October and volunteered to work on the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP). Funded entirely with private money, including a three million dollar grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, UNOP seeks to provide an overall plan for the rebuilding of the city.



Lower Ninth Ward

AmericaSpeaks, a non-profit organization that specializes in large-scale planning projects including planning for the redevelopment of Ground Zero in New York City, makes use of technology that allows them to poll participants instantly and report

the results so that a consensus can be developed in real-time. The basic information gathered in the initial phase was shared at Community Congress I, in the form of presentations on the status of levees, housing, utilities and public services, as well as the demographics of those who have and have not returned to the city. At Community Congress II, which was conducted simultaneously in New Orleans and four other cities with large populations of displaced residents, over 2,500 participants met for an all-day session to discuss how investments in infrastructure and services should be prioritized. The result of the citywide plan and district plans will be coordinated and combined into a single document.

While in New Orleans Agnew performed a preliminary inventory of the City's library system, participated in a number of meetings that defined the direction of the planning process, drafted a series of questions that formed the basis the polling questions employed at Community Congress I, and served on the "theme team" that identified themes in participants' written comments. These themes were used for final polling questions that identified where Congress participants thought resources should be directed as the rebuilding process goes forward.



Near the 17th Street Canal

In his own words: Mike Agnew

"I thought I could picture what Katrina did to New Orleans as well as anybody, after living there for seven years and working for the Planning Commission for three, but until I saw the damage myself I couldn't really take in the scope of what happened. There are mile after mile of abandoned houses, neighborhoods with almost no one living in them, except for a few scattered FEMA trailers. People are trying as best they can to go on with their lives, but due to delays in insurance payments and bureaucratic obstacles to implementing

aid programs many parts of the city are like ghost towns.

Most of the historic areas of the city came through the storm relatively unscathed. In the French Quarter you'd hardly know anything had happened, but a pall hangs over the city. Everyone went through the flood in some form; everybody has their own story. A huge amount of work has been done: the levees have been patched, mountains of trash hauled away, and thousands of houses gutted. Everything is in a kind of state of suspended animation waiting for the rebuilding to begin in earnest. The problem is no one knows exactly the form that rebuilding will take.

In my opinion there has been a terrible political failure in New Orleans. People whose major financial asset, their home, has been ruined have been forced to decide what to do with virtually no guidance on what is likely to happen in the larger city, or what their neighborhood will be like in the future. No experience I've ever had has shown me so clearly why planning is important and what it can do to provide real help to people.

NCWRPC to Develop Regional Economic Development Strategy

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is a designated Economic Development District by the U.S. Department of Commerce. All designated districts are required to prepare and submit a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to remain eligible for federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding for its public works, economic adjustment and planning programs.

A committee comprised of public officials, community leaders, representatives of the workforce development board, labor groups and businesspeople develops the CEDS. The CEDS Committee is responsible for creating an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy.

People interested in additional information or serving on the CEDS Committee should contact James Hanke at (715) 849-5510, Extension 306 or jhanke@ncwrpc.org.

Safe Routes to School Program

The application process for the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program is now open. This is a new program under the latest federal transportation act, SAFETEA-LU. The purpose of the program is to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school while making it a safer and more appealing transportation alternative.

Funding is available for development of Safe Routes to School plans including data gathering, analysis and evaluation. A SRTS plan is an important first step in implementing a successful program. The NCWRPC can provide assistance to communities and schools in the creation of SRTS plans. The process begins by working together during the application process. Applications are due March 16.

Possible implementation measures include traffic calming measures, improved pedestrian and bicycle crossings, education programs, enforcement efforts and encouragement programs such as "Walking School bus" or "Walk to School Day". Projects must be within two miles of an elementary or middle school (K-8) to be eligible.

For more information contact Darryl Landeau, AICP, at (715) 849-5510, Extension 308 or dlan-deau@ncwrpc.org.



Tomahawk Comprehensive Plan Adopted

The City of Tomahawk adopted a Comprehensive Plan prepared by NCWRPC. It replaces a Plan adopted in 1985. The new Plan will meet the requirements of the 1999 revision of the State Comprehensive Planning statutes, often referred to as "Smart Growth". The Plan can be viewed at <http://www.ncwrpc.org/counties/lincoln/tomahawk.htm>.

The Plan is divided into nine elements, as prescribed by the statutes, and looks at housing, transportation, natural and cultural resources, utilities and community facilities, and economic development. What makes it comprehensive is that it seeks to examine how all these aspects of the City will impact land use decisions in the future. It contains a Future Land Use Plan and a number of Goals, Objectives and Policies that will be used to guide decision-making.

Among the more significant findings in the Plan were the changing demographics of Tomahawk and the Northwoods area: an aging of the population and the growth in the number of retirees living in and around the City. Related to this is a need to strengthen Tomahawk as a service center for surrounding communities. Although the City has traditionally relied on its strong manufacturing base and this will continue, diversification of the local economy and the strengthening of small business are central to its prosperity in the future. Expansion of the sewer and water system were considered as well as how the area around the interchange on US 51 at State Highway 86 should be developed to provide a gateway to the community and an opportunity for commercial and industrial growth. Perhaps most notable is a comprehensive trail plan that ties together all parts of the City, including a waterfront connection between Veterans Memorial Park, SARA Park and Bradley Park.

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

Northwest Planners Workshop

On November 9th NCWRPC along with the Center for Land Use Education and the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Planning Association sponsored a *Planners Workshop* titled: *So you have a Comprehensive Plan; Now What?* The focus of the seminar was on strategies that local governments can use to implement their comprehensive plans. Nearly 50 people, including fifteen UWSP students, attended the session.

Dan Miller, Zoning Administrator of Lincoln County, described the process that Lincoln County went through in updating its shoreland, zoning and land division ordinances to make them reflect the County Comprehensive Plan, the first "Smart Growth" plan in the state.

Susan Greenfield, former chair of the Town of Caledonia, Racine County, and now with Applied Ecological Services, spoke on the Town's experience in establishing an ordinance that requires conservation subdivisions.

Tom Harnisch, with the Wisconsin Towns Association, made a presentation on the consistency requirement in the Comprehensive Planning statutes. This will become a more important issue after 2010 when land use decisions made by local governments must be "consistent" with an adopted comprehensive plan.

The presentations were informative and led to a lively question and answer session. Power Point presentations are available on our website at <http://www.ncwrpc.org/wapa/nwregion.htm>.



NORTHWEST
PLANNERS
WORKSHOP

Comprehensive Plan Update

As the 2010 comprehensive plan deadline approaches, time is running short for those local governments that have not begun planning. Usually it takes between 18 to 24 months to complete a local planning process, and at the county level it takes even longer.

We are here to help communities plan, and we can make it as easy as possible. However, we are expecting large numbers of communities to approach us over the next two years, so the sooner you contact us the better. Our goal is to be able to help everyone that requests assistance.

Please contact Dennis Lawrence at (715) 849-5510, Extension 304 or dlawrence@ncwrpc.org if you are interested in starting a planning process.

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