

Regional Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Meeting 1 Summary

Date: June 3, 2024

Time: 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Place: Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Loretta Baughan, Jason Grunenberg, Doug Machon, Betty Manson, David Meuerrett, Paul Millan, and Tim Reed

Staff Attendees:

Christian Boulanger, Dennis Lawrence, and Sam Wessel

Meeting Overview:

- NCWPRC staff provided a brief overview of the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) planning process. The four past regional planning efforts were outlined, including the most recent plan named the “Regional Livability Plan.” This plan, adopted in 2015, addresses four specific areas: Housing, Economic Development, Transportation, and Land Use. NCWPRC has begun updating its Regional Comprehensive Plan, formally known as the “Regional Liability Plan.” This plan will provide data, trends, and goals that local comprehensive plans should reference and/or incorporate into their own comprehensive plan since many regional challenges also affect local and county governments.
- Staff provided a tentative timeline for the project. This project will likely involve 4-6 meetings with the Steering Committee to discuss/review a few chapters at each meeting. Before each meeting, a Doodle Poll will be sent out via email to pick a date and time that works for most committee members. Staff also explained the goal is to complete the rough draft around June 2025, with the full Commission adopting the plan in October 2025.
- Staff reviewed the Public Participation Plan and highlighted the actions that will be taken to meet Wisconsin’s Comprehensive Planning law (ss. 66.1001).
- Staff reviewed the Introduction and Chapter 1 sections of the Regional Comprehensive Plan. Committee members supported the demographics/data findings in Chapter 1.
- The Committee held an open discussion on regional issues that should be integrated into the Regional Comprehensive Plan. As demand has decreased, several members voiced their concern about the future of the region’s forestry/paper products industry.

Additionally, the topic of resiliency came up; with economic and environmental factors impacting a community's ability to adapt to changing conditions. Further, the lack of effort to increase resilience in a community can impact bond ratings, one member said. Several members also brought up changing demographics in their area, brought on by a declining school-age population and an increased elderly population, impacting local schools and the workforce. Related to this issue is the lack of ability to attract new or returning people to the region. A couple of members are concerned about the lack of services for elderly people in rural areas. Other issues brought up included: aging infrastructure, groundwater quality, and the future of automation and work from home. Staff said they would incorporate/explore these issues in the Regional Comprehensive Plan.

- Staff concluded the meeting by mentioning that they will send a Doodle Poll to identify dates/times for the next meeting, likely in August.

**NORTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION 2024 - 3**

RECOGNITION OF HARLAND LEE FOR SERVICE TO THE NCWRPC

WHEREAS, Harland Lee served as a Commissioner on the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission since 2013, having been appointed by the Governor to represent Oneida County; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Lee has been a strong advocate for Oneida County and all of North Central Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Lee has been involved with various local and county organizations, including serving on the Hazelhurst Town Board; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Lee has been an enthusiastic proponent of planning and collaborative approaches these many years.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission hereby expresses its sincere gratitude and appreciation to Harland Lee for his service and contribution to this organization and to all of North Central Wisconsin.

ADOPTED on the 31st day of July 2024.

Approved:

Paul Millan, Chairperson

Ronald Nye, Secretary - Treasurer

**NORTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION 2024-4**

COMMITMENT OF MATCHING FUNDS TO AN EDA TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT

WHEREAS: the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) is a voluntary association of local governments established under Wisconsin Statute; and

WHEREAS: since 1979 NCWRPC has been designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA); and

WHEREAS: NCWRPC seeks grant funds to promote economic development in our region; and

WHEREAS: NCWRPC will financially contribute up to \$75,000 to leverage the same amount from EDA; and

WHEREAS: the NCWRPC has the locally generated, non-federal resources to commit to this effort; and

WHEREAS: the NCWRPC maintains a reserve account with these funds and available for the grant period; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the NCWRPC commits \$75,000 as local match for the 2024 Technical Assistance Grant; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED; that Dennis Lawrence, Executive Director, is designated the authorized representative to accept and sign the grant award and related documents.

Adopted this 31st day of July, 2024.

Paul Millan, Chairperson

Ronald Nye, Secretary-Treasurer

**NORTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION 2024-5**

CERTIFYING A 2025 MEMBERSHIP LEVY RATE

WHEREAS: the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) is a voluntary association of local governments established under Wisconsin Statute, Chapter 66.0309; by ten counties; and

WHEREAS: the purposes of the NCWRPC are to:

- Prepare and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the Region, as well as plans for social and economic development.
- Conduct research and serve as a data center for the Region.
- Provide membership services, such as local planning assistance.
- Serve as a forum that fosters communication, cooperation, and coordination among federal, state, regional, and local interests.
- Establish and maintain eligibility for local governments to receive grants and aids by fulfilling appropriate regional planning requirements; and

WHEREAS: in support of NCWRPC activities, it is necessary to receive financial assistance from its members and from various state and federal agencies; and

WHEREAS: Wisconsin statute allows the NCWRPC to levy a service charge not to exceed 0.003 percent of the equalized real estate value to each member government; and

WHEREAS: the anticipated 2025 Work Program and Annual Budget of the NCWRPC will require a service charge not to exceed 0.0005579% in addition to state, federal and other assistance; and

WHEREAS: the amount charged to any one county shall be capped at \$41,000; and

WHEREAS: membership charges must be certified to governmental clerks in August of each year;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: the NCWRPC establishes a service charge of no more than 0.0005579% of the equalized real estate value of each member government for 2025 membership planning activities; and caps the service charge to any one county at \$41,000.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that county clerks be notified of this action.

Adopted this 31st day of July 2024.

Certified:

Paul Millan, Chairperson

Ronald Nye, Secretary-Treasurer

Commissioner Strategic Planning Survey Results

April 24, 2024

Survey Summary

All Commissioners in attendance completed the strategic planning survey distributed during the April meeting. The survey consisted of 8 basic questions that mainly revolved around identifying issues facing the region, goals for the organization, and a SWOT analysis.

The most critical issues facing the region according to the survey results include access to broadband, workforce shortages, aging population/slow population growth, and housing access/affordability. Regarding the prioritization of goals for the NCWRPC work program, the most frequently mentioned goals were ensuring the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce, promoting a variety of safe and affordable housing options, supporting and developing a diverse economic base, and supporting infrastructure needed for economic development.

For the SWOT analysis, the additional strengths that were identified in the survey included were the organization communicates well, is reactive to emerging needs, and addresses timely issues. A weakness identified through the survey was the lack of training for commissioners. Additional opportunities mentioned were a declining workforce and aging population, more importance placed on having updated comprehensive plans, and sustainable/renewable (solar/ev) opportunities. The only threat added in the survey was cyber security.

Some of the responses to the things NCWRPC does well includes collaborating and working with the counties, organized, timely, diverse, and experienced staff, providing excellent services, and bringing resources and players to table. Some of responses to the things the NCWRPC could improve on includes small staff size-capacity/can only do so much, lack of elected official awareness, county and local turnover contacts, and limited financial resources, marketing, cybersecurity, and information on NCWRPC for new elected officials.

Lastly, the survey revealed that most commissioners have been to the NCWRPC website, recommended NCWRPC services to their local county/community, and agreed with the draft mission statement.

Total Commissioner Responses: N=21

1. What are the most critical issues facing the Region today?

	Choice Count
• Broadband Access	13
• Workforce Shortages	12
• Aging Population/Slow Population Growth	8
• Housing Access & Affordability	8
• County/Local Government Fiscal Sustainability	6
• Childcare Access and Affordability	5
• Environmental Issues, such as water quality	4
• Climate Change/Extreme Weather	4
• Social Diversity and Equity	1
• Vehicle Electrification	1
• Other: _____	

2. Have you visited the NCWRPC website?

Yes: 15

No: 5

3. Which goals should be prioritized for the NCWRPC work program?

	Choice Count
• Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce.	15
• Promote a variety of safe and affordable housing options that meet the needs of all community members.	11
• Support and develop a diverse economic base ensuring economic growth and resiliency.	9
• Support infrastructure needed for economic development.	9
• Develop tourism and knowledge-based economy into leading economic sectors.	7
• Preserve and protect the Region's landscape, environmental resources, and sensitive lands while encouraging healthy communities.	7
• Fund the maintenance and expansion of the transportation system.	5
• Provide and improve transportation access to people of all ages and abilities to ensure lifelong mobility and accessibility.	1
• Enhance the regional economy by supporting airports and freight rail systems.	1
• Manage and reduce vacant land and structures.	1

4. SWOT Assessment

Strengths

Other responses:

Communicates well

Reactive to emerging needs

Address timely issues

Weaknesses

Other responses:

Lack of training for new commissioners

Sound system at meetings

Opportunities

Other responses:

Declining Workforce

Aging Population

More importance placed on having updated comprehensive plans

Sustainable/Renewables

Solar/EV

Threats

- Other responses:

Cybersecurity

5. In the past year have you recommended NCWRPC services to your county/local community?

- Yes: 17
- No: 4

6. Do you agree with the draft mission statement?

- Yes: 19
- No: 0

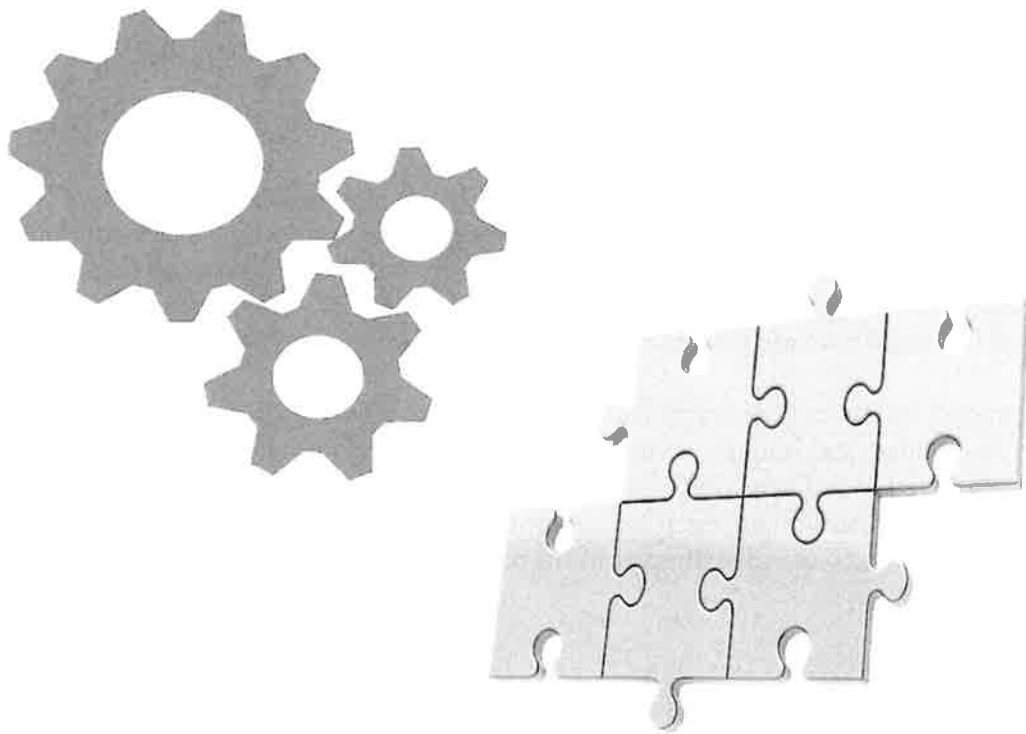
7. What is one thing that the NCWRPC does well?

- Collaborate
- Interpersonal communication
- Help the members
- Organized/timely
- Provides excellent service to its members
- Working with counties on many different projects and getting funding (grants)
- Brings resources and players to the table
- Very experienced, talented, and diverse staff. A pleasure to work with. An asset for our county.
- Collaboration with all municipalities

8. What is one thing that the NCWRPC could improve upon?

- Marketing/communication
- Marketing services
- Lunch
- Staffing
- Cybersecurity
- Meet with County Boards to sell yourself
- Would like to get the Commission meeting minutes when they are completed (sooner)
- Have an information packet, resource guide for new elected officials
- More staffing resources could be utilized

NORTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION



STRATEGIC PLAN

DRAFT - July 31, 2024

Introduction

Every few years the NCWRPC undertakes a strategic planning process. Each process is unique. Some have been large undertakings with the Full Commission and invited guests, others have been driven by the Executive Committee, while others have been developed by staff. These various previous efforts provide the background for this effort.

What is Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a management tool designed to improve the effectiveness of an organization. The planning process begins with the standard planning process of determining where you are now, where you want to go, and how you will get there.

Strategic planning is forward looking. The timeframe covered by a plan can range from several months to several years. A strategic plan may be updated and revised at that time to reflect any strategic changes. Our timeframe is about five years.

Our Process

This effort began with a staff retreat on March 27, 2024, followed by Executive Committee input on April 24, 2024, and finally a Full Commission survey conducted on April 24, 2024. The draft document was then prepared and mailed to all Commissioners. The draft document was reviewed and discussed on July 31, 2024, prior to adoption. This plan should provide direction for the organization for the next several years.

The process followed here started with an overview of various materials, such as state statutes, bylaws, and budget; reviewing both the mission statement and organizational goals, followed by a discussion of values, and finally a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats exercise. Following these steps a variety of recommendations were identified as items to work on over the next few years.

Background

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) was created in 1973 under Wisconsin Statute 66.0309 by the ten counties of Adams, Forest, Juneau, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas and Wood as a voluntary association of governments with the purpose of preparing plans for the physical development of the Region and its communities; to conduct research; to serve as a data center; and serve as a forum for communication, cooperation and coordination among federal, state, regional, and local interests; and to provide technical assistance.

NCWRPC is one of nine regional planning commissions serving Wisconsin. Nationwide, there are about 500 similar types of regional organizations.

Governance

The NCWRPC is governed by an appointed board of 30 members called a commission. The commission oversees the activities of the executive director and the organization. As detailed in state statutes, three commissioners from each member county govern the NCWRPC. One is selected directly by the County (C), one directly by the Governor (G), and the third is a Joint (J) selection between the County and Governor.

There is one standing committee – the Executive Committee. That body is made up of one commissioner from each county. Various ad hoc committees are created as needed, such as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee.

Mission Statement

NCWRPC offers cost-effective, specialized planning services and expertise to counties and communities to support resilient development throughout the Region. Additionally, we lead and assist with collaborative efforts that address shared challenges and opportunities to create a better future for all.

Organizational Values

Staff participated in a planning exercise to identify the values of the organization. These are:

Accountability	Integrity
Effectiveness	Professionalism
Impactful	Quality
Innovation	Reliability

State and Federal Relationships

NCWRPC is an independent area-wide planning agency created by state statutes and serves the counties, towns, villages, cities, and tribes within the Region. In addition, there are two long-standing relationships with the State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and the federal U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA), that support planning efforts.

In 1975, NCWRPC was designated as a rural transportation planning region by the WisDOT. As such, the NCWRPC receives a planning grant annually to provide transportation planning assistance to support the state transportation work program throughout the Region. In 1980, the NCWRPC was designated as an economic development district by EDA. The NCWRPC also receives an annual economic development planning grant to provide local economic development assistance and prepare a regional report called a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which helps maintain eligibility for EDA grants.

In addition, the NCWRPC works in partnership with numerous other state and federal agencies to carry out activities throughout the Region. These include USDA-Rural Development, WisDNR, and WEDC.

These relationships continue to be critical to the organization. The connection with these programs is important to assisting both county and local communities.

Critical Issues Facing the Region Today

A survey was taken of all Commissioners, and they identified the following top five issues facing our Region.

- Broadband Access
- Workforce Shortages
- Aging Population/Slow Population Growth
- Housing Access & Affordability
- County/Local Government Fiscal Sustainability

Core Program Areas

The core program areas were evaluated and continue to be relevant based on the needs of the Region. NCWRPC is a regional planning and economic development agency, which provides assistance to local governments throughout the ten-county Region in the areas of economic development, geographic information systems (GIS), intergovernmental cooperation, land use planning, and transportation. The NCWRPC supplements existing staff or takes the lead where there are no staff. The goal is to not duplicate efforts but rather provide an effective system of planning to fit each community's needs.

NCWRPC provides assistance both regionally and locally in the following five areas:

ED - Economic Development

NCWRPC annually prepares a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that analyzes the economy and identifies potential economic development projects. This report maintains the Region's eligibility for U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration public works programs. Other federal and state programs utilize this plan as well. NCWRPC also prepares EDA grant applications, among others, to bring funding into the Region.

NCWRPC provides local communities with assistance in a variety of other economic development related studies, including preparing detailed economic development plans that examine the local economy, assess local trends, and identify strategies to spur development. In addition, the NCWRPC provides grant writing and administrative assistance to communities that are seeking funds from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, as well as a variety of other grant programs, including WEDC, DNR, WisDOT, and USDA-Rural Development.

GIS - Geographic Information Systems

NCWRPC is a depository for a variety of demographic information for the area, including U.S. Census, American Community Survey, Economic Census, State Employment and Labor Information, and other specialized data sets. A Regional GIS database and computerized mapping system, including digital orthophotography, is also maintained. NCWRPC also coordinates efforts to acquire regional and statewide orthoimagery, including securing partnership funding.

NCWRPC maintains an extensive digital mapping database for local mapping. Custom data sets and maps can also be created for communities on request or as part of larger planning efforts. County Profiles are also prepared and updated as needed. Also, in partnership with WEDC, NCWRPC prepares quarterly economic development reports for each county in the Region using Lightcast, specialized economic development analysis software. In addition, the NCWRPC provides redistricting assistance throughout the Region.

IGOV - Intergovernmental Cooperation

NCWRPC is available to conduct specialized studies on request. Over the years, a wide range of studies have been completed on subjects such as merging ambulance services, community consolidation, economic impact analysis, and boundary agreements. Many of these projects include a regional focus because they involve multiple units of government. The NCWRPC also maintains a website and produces a regular newsletter to provide information and other resources. In addition, four quarterly meetings are held to discuss various issues in the Region.

LU - Land Use

NCWRPC is responsible for the development of a regional comprehensive plan for the ten-county Region. The Regional Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2004, the first regional comprehensive plan in the state under the new planning law. That plan was last updated in 2015 with a five-year mid-plan review prepared in 2020. NCWRPC also prepares other regionally focused plans from time to time.

NCWRPC prepares a variety of plans for local communities, including outdoor recreation plans, all hazard mitigation plans, land and water resource management plans, sewer service area plans, wellhead protection plans, and wildfire protection plans, among others. In addition, the NCWRPC assists local governments in the preparation of comprehensive plans under Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law, as well as assistance with zoning and land division ordinances that implement local plans.

TR - Transportation

NCWRPC prepares regional transportation plans including highway corridor studies, long-range urban area plans, parking studies, county-wide bicycle planning, Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plans, and grant writing for various WisDOT funding sources. The NCWRPC also provides on-going assistance to the Wausau Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

NCWRPC assists local governments in a variety of areas, including the preparation of local road improvement programs. These road plans provide a capital improvement schedule for upgrading local roads and help local units obtain Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) funding for road reconstruction projects. Pavement rating and other assistance with the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR) program is also available.

From time to time the NCWRPC needs to evaluate its core work programs and adjust as needed. Every year new state and federal requirements are established and there are staff changes with our members. These changes must be monitored, and programs modified to best serve the Region.

Organizational Goals

NCWRPC goals were reviewed and revised to:

- ✓ Provide cost-effective planning services to our members,
- ✓ Assist communities with state and federal requirements,
- ✓ Communicate benefits of regional and local planning,
- ✓ Advance sustainable and resilient growth,
- ✓ Leverage state and federal dollars, and
- ✓ Continue to adapt to the future needs of the Region.

SWOT Assessment

A Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted as part of this effort. Initially staff were engaged, followed by the Executive Committee and finally the Full Commission. Participants were asked to identify internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization, as well as to identify external opportunities and threats.

Strengths

The prompt was simply, what do we do well as an organization? The top responses are below:

- Staff Experience and Expertise
- Strong Relationships with county and local staffs
- Good Reputation/Resource
- Budget Friendly
- Productivity
- Complete regional membership
- Reactive to emerging needs

In summary, NCWRPC has an experienced and knowledgeable staff. Staff focuses well on identifying trends, setting priorities, and planning for the Region. Many are long term staff with substantial institutional knowledge of the organization and Region. Staff also have developed strong relationships with county and local staff.

Staff are seen as a resource for information and data. Often staff are contacted to answer questions or provide ideas for approaches to problems. Generally, we provide a variety of services at no cost and our billable rate for other projects is very low when compared to other organizations. Also, we prepare a substantial amount of work products over a given year.

Over the last few years, the last two non-member counties joined the organization. It is good to have all the counties in the Region be active members. The counties provide the base funding for the organization and help leverage additional funds. In addition the organization has been able to react quickly to the needs of our Region.

Weaknesses

The prompt was, what can we improve as an organization?

- Small staff size – capacity/can only do so much
- Elected official awareness and communication - marketing
- County and local staff turnover
- Limited Financial resources
- Lack of Commissioner training

In summary, as a small organization, staff do not have the capacity to do everything. Projects need to be prioritized to determine which are most needed. Workload priorities regarding staff and the demands of state and federal mandates, as well as county and local units are challenging. One result is there is not enough capacity to do everything. Awareness of the organization continues to be an issue with changing elected officials and staff turnover.

There is also a need to continually educate members about the mission, services, and successes of the organization. In addition to the handouts, reports, and newsletters showing the types of projects we help with, we should have formalized meetings with new county and local staff.

Financial resource limitations impact all organizations. Being able to have funds to allow for training and adequate compensation and benefits are important to maintain and recruit staff. There was also some discussion about the need to continually improve planning graphics in our documents. Various software packages are needed to do this, or outsourcing might be a possible option. Finally, there was identified a need for training for new Commissioners.

Opportunities

The prompt was, what existing and emerging trends or needs do you see?

- State and Federal Funding programs
- New planning needs/trends – housing – broadband – consolidation – others
- Elevating comprehensive plans

In summary, much of the discussion related to funding and emerging planning trends. Could provide more grant writing assistance. Currently there are numerous State and Federal programs, more than we can monitor efficiently. Need to determine which grants best fit with our Region's communities and make them aware of those opportunities. Numerous new planning needs and trends were discussed. Staff need to continue monitoring. In addition, staff training should better relate to future planning trends. There was also some thought that the comprehensive plan could be used more than a requirement for land use regulation at the local level. The state is now using the housing components for some new state programs, so there may be other areas that could be expanded to help communities.

Threats

The prompt was, what are existing and emerging issues, concerns, or uncertainty?

- Succession Planning/Loss of institutional knowledge
- Recruiting new staff
- Maintaining County Membership/Tight Budgets/Inflation
- Consistent State and Federal Funding/political changes

- Local project development
- Local staff turnover/maintaining relationships
- Cybersecurity

In summary, the primary threat was the loss of institutional knowledge and leadership related to pending retirements in the next few years. There needs to be some effort taken to capture some of that knowledge and plan for succession. Also, related to this is the ability to recruit new staff. Overall, there is a labor shortage which makes finding staff difficult.

Another concern relates to funding at both the county and state/federal levels. Maintaining our county membership is critical to the operation of the organization. Both the levy and cap have been decreased substantially over the years to make it more affordable, but local budgets are tight. State & Federal funding often changes with elections. The last few years there has been substantial funding, but that may decrease in the future.

Project development is dependent on working with our counties and local communities. As those staff change, routine plans are often neglected or bid out to consultants. Need to keep in close communication with our members, especially our newer members. Cybersecurity was also identified as a threat related to digital data, financial resources and general information.

Regional Planning Goals

As part of the planning process the various adopted goals from the most recent Regional Comprehensive Plan were reviewed and ranked. Below are the top six.

- Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce.
- Promote a variety of safe and affordable housing options that meet the needs of all community members.
- Support and develop a diverse economic base ensuring economic growth and resiliency.
- Support infrastructure needed for economic development.
- Develop tourism and knowledge-based economy into leading economic sectors.
- Preserve and protect the Region's landscape, environmental resources, and sensitive lands while encouraging healthy communities.

Recommendations

Based on the above, there are seven priority recommendations that have been identified to be completed over the next three to five years. These are:

1. Maintain the 5 core work areas of economic development, geographic information systems, intergovernmental cooperation, land use planning, and transportation. Add additional planning products within each area as needed.
2. Strengthen communication and relationships with county and local community staff. Develop an annual work program with each county for major projects.
3. Evaluate the fee structure for various planning services and examine options. Most regional planning commissions charge for all planning assistance.
4. Pursue State & Federal Funding for the organization. Identify and seek funding that fulfills our overall mission.
5. Develop a succession plan for pending retirements. Document as much institutional knowledge as possible and plan for departures, including recruitment strategies.
6. Engage an outside firm to conduct an evaluation of the organization's computer hardware and software systems, including cybersecurity concerns.
7. A review of this plan should occur in five years. Every few years the strategic plan process should be undertaken to incorporate new conditions.