

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
Lansing, Michigan
Thursday, July 15, 2010, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Members in attendance: Sandra Batie, Jeremy Emmi, Jodee Fishman Raines, Brad Garmon, Jeffrey Haynes, Chuck Hersey, Brian Kandler, Rachel Kuntzsch, Erin McDonough, and Paul Zuger.

DNRE staff in attendance: Frank Ruswick, Jim Kasprzak, JoAnn Merrick, Ron Olson, Gary Hagler, Lynn Boyd, Jim Sygo, Lynelle Marolf, Bob Wagner, Vince Hellwig, Hal Fitch, Stacy Welling, Liane Shekter-Smith, Liz Browne, Sharon Shaefer, and Daniel Lord.

OPENING:

EAC members and DNRE staff introduced themselves.

Frank provided an overview of the project schedule and what should be accomplished at the meeting.

Frank indicated how it is important to identify what needs to be done between now and the end of the year. He recognized December 16, 2010, as the date the recommendations should be final and submitted to Director Humphries.

Frank pointed out the need to develop a list of priority outcomes. A member asked what this meant and what scale should be used and how broad or narrow do we go. Frank responded that one of the key issues that needs to be addressed in developing the EAC's recommendations. Hopefully, today's discussion will help us in considering that issue.

Frank clarified the need to develop a process for priority outcomes. These should be included in the final recommendations. A draft of the EAC's recommendations should be ready to be reviewed in October at the meeting at the Ram Center. The discussions at meetings until then will help determine what is to be included in the draft recommendations.

Frank shared the proposed timeline as follows: the August meeting should include process-based discussion; followed up in September with specific priority areas for the development of discussions. Finally, the October meeting will be to discuss a draft of the EAC's recommendations, which should be finalized at the December meeting.

Frank provided a handout that captured desired future conditions based on what was shared from the break out groups at June's meeting (Attachment 1). These are more specific direct results of what we are undertaking. A member of senior management asked if the outcomes will be quantifiable. Frank explained that it is an option but may be difficult to obtain.

Members discussed whether outcomes always need to be quantifiable. A member suggested that we create the picture so others in the future can address when we are gone.

Discussion occurred on the desired future condition and how they are listed. Should they be listed first, then identify how to get there? Should we identify resources that get us to the desired

future condition. A member gave an example how they call desired future conditions as “impacts.”

Frank continued by sharing an example of how the efforts of citizens and non-governmental organizations, such as foundations, can support achieving desired future conditions.

Frank indicated that today’s meeting is designed as a framing discussion – more than brainstorming but less than fully resolving the issues. The goal to develop a robust, though not complete, set of outcomes to work with and get a sense of issues that will arise in the process through which outcomes are eventually actually developed and agreed upon.

A member gave an example of water - miles of fishable or swimmable water – as a desired future condition.

A member asked how to distinguish between desired future condition and outcomes?

Members brainstormed. Several issues and questions were raised, such as how desired future conditions are written; where and when are terms defined; what are the expectations; where are risk judgments made; who decides how to measure; should goals be less than “100 percent;” do outcomes need to be necessary and sufficient for the desired future condition; what is the timeframe for outcomes; how do we evaluate; where is “ecosystem” concept expressed; what are the benefits to qualitative outcomes.

A member indicated that setting “100 percent” goals will ultimately create the inefficient use of scarce resources. He recommended we move away from designing programs that anticipate achieving 100 percent of a given interest.

A member asked if there are benchmarks related to the various desired future conditions that we can work from.

A member of senior management indicated some benchmarks could be measured by public surveys. The responses could be evaluated by public perception (e.g., rivers are clean, parks are safe).

Frank asked if we have a number of outcomes contributing to a desired future condition; do we have to achieve all of them to accomplish the desired future condition?

Members discussed how some outcomes are metric and some are not measurable; while other things are qualitative and some not.

A member provided an example of the state’s water quality and the output is meeting water quality standards.

Members discussed the importance of encouraging citizen understanding of ecological principles, fostered by participation in outdoor activities, if they are to effectively participate in natural resource and environmental decision-making. The concern is that the trend is toward less involvement in outdoor activities. Members suggested some ways of reversing this trend, including increasing hunting and fishing classes; increasing the number of trails; providing broader ecological education; offering stewardship by participation; marketing; and public access to outdoor experiences.

A member indicated that when citizens get educated they become advocates.

A member raised the question about how many under people under the age of 25 actually recycle. You have to start young. Behavior can change when children in school bring back home what they have learned.

There was discussion about how everyone wants a healthy, economical place to live. The local units of government will need to play a strong role and the indicators are a part of it. The measurement could be surveys to the public. The Citizen Advisory Councils could also serve as a approximation of public sentiment.

Members discussed the importance of addressing the health of our communities. For example, the health of Detroit is important for the entire state. The nature of what constitutes a community and the issues important for its health could be defined differently in various parts of the state.

Frank asked the participants to reflect on this discussion and provide observations that may be important as we define a process for developing outcomes.

A member of senior management indicated the need to make sure the purpose of the discussion is clear.

A member indicated we are lacking clarity and vision. We are thinking departmentally.

A member asked if the audience is the department, Legislature, citizens, local government, or educational community? It is too broad and we need to focus on who the audience is.

A member suggested a better grouping of similar items.

A member of senior management suggested finding innovative ways to ensure the effort we are developing results in real action and not just a report that no one follows. We need to figure out how to really provide impetus to the change we would like to see.

A member of senior management indicated that how we communicate recommendations will be important.

A member pointed out that this project is timely given the creation of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment but asked how we can ensure our work is carried forward given upcoming changes in the Governor and a large number of legislators.

A member questioned what the scope and scale of the project should be: Does it only apply to the department broadly? Do the outcomes only speak to department activities?

A member indicated how important it is to identify these things, but at the end of the day we need to focus on what we can do.

Frank thanked the members and DNRE senior managers for their participation.