

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
RAM Center, Roscommon, Michigan
Thursday, October 21, 2010, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Meeting Summary

Members in attendance: Jon Allan, Sandra Batie, Jeremy Emmi, James Clift, Jeffrey Haynes, Chuck Hersey, Brian Kandler, Pat Norris, Del Rector, David Rinard, Gildo Tori, and Paul Zuggger

DNRE Staff in attendance: Frank Ruswick, Mindy Koch, Jim Sygo, Cindy Salmon, Lynne Boyd, Bryce Feighner, Emily Finnell, Jim Kasprzak, Dan Lord, Lynelle Marolf, Russ Mason, Ron Olson, Becky Patrick, Liane Shekter Smith, and Robert Wagner.

Opening:

Frank welcomed everyone. Director Humphries could not attend.

Current Events:

Citizen's Advisory Council letters have gone out seeking members. Becky Patrick, Lake Michigan Regional Director, gave an update. The application process goes through October 23, 2010. We would like to have these councils up and running by the end of the year. We will establish four citizen's advisory councils – two in the Lake Michigan region and two in the Lake Huron region. The selections will be made by a committee. We would like 20 members on each of the councils. The appointments should be made by November 8, 2010. There is a kick-off meeting of all the members scheduled for early December at the RAM Center.

Jim Kasprzak noted that he heard from Stacy Welling in the UP last week – she has tried to recruit members from the environmental groups but has found it difficult. .

Mindy Koch discussed the injunction against Vreba Hoff Dairy on its wastewater discharge. The property is in the process of being foreclosed.

Mindy also noted that at the Natural Resources Commission meeting last week they agreed to add a small number of cold water streams to those subject to fishing gear restrictions. This is very controversial.

In addition, we are getting a lot of calls, e-mails, and press coverage regarding the potential killing of a mother bear that attacked a hunter. The hunter had come from a pig roast prior to climbing his tree stand, and the bear and her cubs tracked him to his stand.

Pat Norris is spearheading an effort at MSU that expands the conversation started by the EAC Roadmap. The Environment and Natural Resources Governance Fellows program will explore governance options for the future of Michigan's environment and natural resources. They have sent 90 letters of invitation to join this program. They have already received six notifications of interest and they will cut off the group at 35. They will hold seven sessions between January and May 2011. The hope is to produce a formal document regarding a Model of Governance.

October 1st was the start of our Parks Passport. Ron Olson said they have worked with the Secretary of State to get its staff to encourage the purchase of the passport. In the first four days we had over 45 percent participation in the counties along Lake Michigan; however, participation in Wayne County was in the teens. To get the same amount of money that we generated in the past, we need about 23 percent participation.

Frank discussed the state retirement – 900 people are eligible department-wide out of approximately 2,600. We anticipate about 30 percent will take advantage of it. Divisions have been asked to develop initial response plans.

Jim Sygo noted the solid waste area will have a significant reduction not only from retirements, but because of the inability to increase fee rates. The Water Resource Division is losing many of its program managers. We are losing a lot of administrative staff in the budget area.

Mindy Koch stated that it is made more difficult because it hits right at the end of the current Administration. We will have to look at reorganizing based on the numbers that leave. We probably will only be able to replace 1 out of 2 retirees. The new administration will most likely put all hiring on hold for an extended period of time.

Frank noted that the Director has asked that we not schedule meetings for the Environmental Advisory Committee for next year. This maintains the ability of the new administration to structure such advisory forums as it sees appropriate. This makes it more important that we finalize our recommendation document before the end of the year. We are not going to be drafting by committee today but will go through the document section by section. If we identify a proposed change, we will try to as a group decide what that change will be, however, we will not draft it here. If you have word choice suggestions, please send those to Frank by e-mail. We only want to address significant issues and come to consensus. The planning committee will develop the revised draft based on comments today.

A member added that the weight of these recommendations has been derived by consensus which is amazing.

Background

Lynelle suggested that in the 4th paragraph we add “and maintains” after achieve.

Recommendations

Section A

A member asked if this will create broad outcomes for the Department. Frank stated it is more focused on program outcomes. The member stated with all the changes coming with retirements and a new administration, we need a comprehensive plan for the Department.

Lynelle suggested that a statement could be added in Section B of Recommendations. Members agreed that we should add some statement to this affect.

Lynelle thought “program managers expressed some concerns and doubts” sounded negative. She felt the first two bullets under this statement sounded a lot alike. However, one of the members thought this was the best part of the document.

Once stakeholders agree on outcomes, they will have to stay involved in the process. Members felt this section is the voices of the program staff and we shouldn't try to rewrite that.

Frank stated that we can be more explicit that statutory change may be necessary to achieve the outcomes.

The catch 22 is that until we discuss a specific program, the outcome isn't clear. A few members felt this belongs in Section C.

A member discussed “marginal goals” at the top of page 3. We need to define “what is a goal vs. what is an outcome.” Marginal “gain” might be a better term.

Liane noted it is difficult for preventative programs to measure outcomes.

Section B

A member asked if the heading “sewer bond funding” could be broadened to “sustainable funding for wastewater infrastructure.” Another member stated the outcome should be getting the sewage out of the water. Lynelle suggested it state “desired program management strategy” in the last line rather than desired outcome. A member stated that the public doesn’t care if the program is sustained – they want the sewage out of the water. We need to define long-term viability. A member asked that we simply state what Liane said about getting communities to address their infrastructure needs on their own through long-term budgeting and planning. Liane agreed to rewrite the Sewer Bond Funding program section.

Ron Olson didn’t like the last line at the bottom of Page 3 that suggests that the following list of programs is where our focus is. Frank stated that we made the choice that this is not an exhaustive list and that is stated in the paragraph that Ron is referring to.

Lynelle suggested that these projects listed were “ripe” at the time the document was drafted. Becky Patrick stated that as a newcomer to the group, she keyed in on the fact that these are timely issues for the Department.

A member suggested that C. and D. should come before Section B. He thinks people will get tripped up by looking at this list of program areas. It was agreed to do this.

A member stated that this could be reworded so that this list could be descriptive examples of the process.

Frank agreed – we could highlight what the tough questions are. Mindy stated that these programs are all at different stages in the process.

A member noted under critical dunes, we should strike the word subjective.

Suggestions were made regarding Non-native Invasive Species. He wanted to state that this is inevitable due to techniques, policy, etc.

A member stated that under Biodiversity, we should state multi species approach. Frank asked him to send suggested language.

Lynne stated we should use the term living legacy under biodiversity.

Russ Mason stated we have the regulatory authority to ban invasive species, but we won’t do that if there is pushback regarding the loss of economic value. The public doesn’t understand that there is potential danger.

Frank summarized that we will use the discussion of these topics to illustrate the process.

Section C.

The second bullet point is unclear. Frank suggested we delete it. A member then noted we need to have recognition of a diverse public. The question is over the word alternatives. Frank suggested the language “Recognize the value different stakeholders place on the outcomes.”

Last paragraph on page 7 – reword last sentence. Strike environmental and industrial and just say interests.

1a on Page 8 – is the process we are suggesting always going to reach consensus? Our tone needs to be forceful enough to get the group to reach those conclusions. Agreeing on the outcomes is easy – agreeing on committing the resources to get there is what is difficult. Frank will try to draft a new f. or add language to e. to clarify this. Maybe a statement of principle. In the event that we can't agree, it is an invitation for someone else to make the decision.

Lynelle inquired about page 8, 2nd paragraph, “for the DNRE to initiate the conversation by convening interested parties.” A member stated these are recommendations to the DNRE. He doesn't think he would change anything if we were addressing it to someone else.

Another member said somewhere it says that consensus means “I can live with it.” Frank said that is later in the document.

Page 2 f. just permanent is sufficient – don't need extremely.

Section D.

1st bullet on page 10 add (s) after metric

2nd bullet on page 10 - The standard that will be considered success...

Section E.

A member now suggested that we not move Section B. There was initial disagreement. It was felt that it is more important for readers to understand the purpose of the list. The question was raised “who is the audience for this document?” The right people in the organization are going to read it. After discussion, it was decided to leave Section B where it is.

A member felt that we don't give suggestions for conflict resolution. Here we should acknowledge there might be lack of consensus. Who would be the final arbitrator?

Conclusion

2nd sentence in the 2nd paragraph – don't use the word recipe, use prescription or model. They don't like “thought process.”

Two bigger questions

How does what we are doing here fit into a larger plan or concept about the use of agreed upon outcomes? We need to make this real – something tangible and meaningful in the near term.

A member asked if we give this whole list to the Director, what is she going to do with it? Maybe our recommendation should be, pick one or two and try it.

If the new administration is our audience, we want them to adopt the concept that we need to be more outcome driven.

Liane said we need to go full circle, if we try this process on two or three projects, we need to come back and learn from the process to see what worked and what didn't.

Frank said the realistic nature of what we are putting out here – there is a danger that it won't be achievable or it might move in a direction that we don't find beneficial.

A member stated if we don't do this, after all the time and effort that has gone into it from a broad base of interests, will these programs be run in a vacuum? The starting point is the status quo. It is easier to implement it across the board. The programs currently are working toward outcomes, but it is spotty.

Individual program outcomes currently are not well articulated.

There is still work to be done on building collaboration.

Part of the process is to always look at the outcomes, because they change.

CLOSING

Frank noted this was a great discussion. Get any further changes to him within the next week. When you see the final draft, get any changes to him as soon as possible, so that on December 16th we can all say that we agree to this document.