

**Itasca County Joint Community Readiness Assessment
Steering Committee Meeting
April 25, 2007**

Meeting Summary

Mayor Dave Lotti, Chair, called the meeting to order.

Cindy Petkac, ARDC, provided a follow-up from the March 28th steering committee meeting.

- Steering committee membership was expanded to include chambers of commerce, Itasca County commissioners, schools, emergency service personnel and several other organizations.
- The meeting materials are available on ARDC's website at www.arrowheadplanning.org/itascareadiness.

Pat Micheletti, Excelsior Energy, provided an update ...

Have made a commitment for the projects getting built. Are confident that this project will happen. Have filed a petition with PUC.

Question re: the timing, next steps. July 2007 expect the next decision from PUC.

Congressional hearing yesterday re: tax credits - good feedback.

Question - John - administrative judges in the purchase power agreement decision raised 2 issues - 1 not innovative technology and 2 emissions the same as regular? Power plant

Pat replied that a plan is in place to sequester 30% of emissions right out of the box.

Pat - concerns re: innovation has to do with using natural gas to power the plant ??

Question:

Dave Lotti - what happens if this project is blocked to future power plants getting built.

In Texas, 11 plants are being build (but not coal powered)

Original timeline is still intact.

Bob Johnson, Minnesota Power, provided ...

Permits were received in the spring and construction has begun. Currently 90,000 yards of fill is being hauled in.

The number of construction workers:

By summer 2007	100
December 2007	300
June 2008	500

Boswell #3 is also undergoing maintenance work and has approximately 250 construction workers on site.

Re: Housing

"Letting the community take care of itself" and were planning on "staying out of the housing business." But Home Away from Home approached them a few weeks ago and MN Power has decided to work to have them manage the housing process.

Stewart Bastian, Home Away from Home, then spoke ...

He said that housing needs should overlap from the MN Power project to MN Steel. And that they're looking at building new, permanent housing - multi-family to single family. They see workers coming to work for all of the various projects and then staying in the area and retiring here. Their company plans on building some of the housing themselves as well as subbing out some. They will be looking at funding from private and public/government sources.

Discussion re: bonding issue (ask John)

MN Power - the Cohasset project will not open up any land for development along the river. Although they may be open for use of any unused land as parkland.

John Grahek, Iron Range Building and Construction Trades Council, ...

Talked about project labor agreements (PLAs) - provide harmony throughout a project - getting local people to work.

Heirarchy of where workers will come from:

Range

Duluth

Detroit Lakes

Twin Cities

If coming from out-of-state, many will bring trailers and set up at a campground.

Per diems ? could be applied to housing at man-camps.

He doesn't see a man-camp being built here because there are more housing options available throughout the Range.

What incentives can we provide if there is a higher demand?

Housing should not be a problem here.

Catherine, Itasca County, said that the County is looking at project - labor agreements.

John Fedo, RLK, gave a quick update on the status of the MN Steel project. He said that Trout Lake township recently passed a resolution to block the construction of the pipeline for the project.

The question is does the township have the authority to block the project?

Some thought that a "higher government authority" can override the township's. In the end, the PUC has the final decision. The resolution, though, may affect the review process.

May 18 is the PUC deadline for ? PUC still needs to decide if a short or long permitting review process will be followed.

Short - 2-3 months

Long - 6-9 months

Catherine indicated that the RR construction will start to move forward. \$20 million? In the bonding package will take care of major infrastructure projects (ask John about this)

What about timing of the number of construction workers that will be needed for these projects???

John Chell gave a brief overview of the status of several infrastructure projects

Cindy Petkac distributed the draft community questionnaire and readiness assessment matrix for review and discussion.

Questions/Discussion

What about expanding the study area further to the north and south. People travel further for work. Private developers might find it easier to build in smaller communities. If we don't include these areas in the study area are we in essence making these areas more attractive to developers?

Why are there more housing units for ... that population. Is seasonal housing included in those figures? (check census)

Suggestion to include Harris Township.

For information on schools, it was suggested to contact the superintendents.

It might be helpful to meet with the Township boards to get information for the community questionnaire rather than individuals, i.e., clerks, etc.

Cindy added that ARDC would be contracting with someone to do a windshield survey

Diane Larson suggested that the housing study that was done for Itasca County be a good reference point for that.

The questionnaire should also include a question re: use of legal/illegal fishing, boating, etc.

Also a question about parks, recreation.

Should ask a question re: staffing to do site visits by sewer workers to check permits at campgrounds. Public service and public safety issues.

Andy this will be part of the discussion once the assessment is completed and deficiencies/needs are identified. There is going to be a need after the assessment to analyze the data/information collected.

John Fedo suggested that the mining companies and land trusts, DNR need to be involved in the dialogue to talk about how set-backs are determined on the lands. We need to get them in the room to talk about these issues. RGGS? What about the DNR and their mapping capabilities.

The Chair opened the meeting to general discussion.

Sheriff Medure stated his concerns about the number of workers that will be on the roadways of the County. He is also concerned that local residents may be less tolerable of the incoming workers and the resulting impacts than they have been in the past.

John G. (don't know last name...building trades guy) states that any rise in crime will most likely be traffic related.

Mike Andrews stated his concerns about a scenario that has TH 169 being reconstructed at the same time the projects are being constructed.

John O'Leary talked about the upside of these projects and that local businesses should prepare for the needs of the workers, such as stocking more steel-toe boots. Mike Andrews echoed O'Leary and asked Bud Stone about the Chamber's approach. Bud stated they have had discussion and that many inquiries from people about potential business locations near the project areas. People from Nashwauk and Taconite stated they were receiving similar questions.

Pat Michilletti (check spelling) announced that Excelsior Energy would be holding an open house at their offices on May 30.

The Chair announced the next meeting will be held in Marble at 4:30pm on June 27, 2007 and adjourned the meeting.