

**Itasca County Joint Community Readiness Assessment
Steering Committee Meeting
March 28, 2007**

Meeting Summary

John Chell, ARDC, outlined the goals of the assessment process:

- To make sure all the communities know the timing and status of the proposed “mega” projects and are talking to each other about their implications;
- ARDC will then interview each of the participating communities to better gauge their preparedness for these projects; and
- Through the Steering Committee, the communities will work cooperatively on identifying solutions to any potential problems.

Peter McDermott, Itasca Economic Development Corporation, distributed a handout outlining IEDCs guiding principles.

John Chell talked about Beulah, N. Dakota as a good example to follow.

Andy Hubley, ARDC, explained the planning process.

Steering Committee members identified additional participants that should be invited to future meetings:

- Itasca Housing Coalition
- Goodland Township
- Emergency services from participating communities
- Chambers of Commerce
- MN Arrowhead Association
- Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board

Mike Larson, Iron Range Resources, provided a map showing the “mega” projects planned and/or proposed on the Range and described each of those projects.

- The following is the number of construction (temporary) and permanent workers by year expected with the construction of the Mesabi Energy, Minnesota Steel, UPM-Blandin Paper and the Minnesota Power projects.

Year	Construction (temporary) Jobs	Permanent Jobs
2006	470	285
2007	2,406	385
2008	5,531	385
2009	4,143	735
2010	4,385	535
2011	574	850

Questions and Discussion:

- Is there potential for construction workers to be here for a career?
- What are the number of ancillary jobs that will be created?
 - Oft-sited multiplier is 2.1 ancillary jobs for each full-time job.
- What about impacts to local school systems?
- Is there a potential for housing displacement of seniors, low-income renters (vouchers) in lieu of renting to construction workers?

Ed Shaughnessy, AMEC, talked about his experience with temporary housing, i.e., “man-camps.”

- Beulah, N. Dakota is a good example of how to deal with temporary housing and meal provision for construction workers.
- Talked about the housing needs of construction workers - how many workers will be from outside the “free zone” and need temporary housing, i.e., rental homes, apartments and man-camps.
- In his experience, temporary housing needs to be dedicated to each project separately. Security is a must!
- Modular unit camps can be set up rather quickly (30 - 90 days)

Questions and Discussion:

- What about retrofitting a vacant school building or a library for temporary housing?
- Who decides what gets done with regards to temporary housing?
 - It’s an agreement between the community and the company.
- What happens to the man camp site when it’s dismantled?
- Do construction workers bring their families?
- What about women at man-camps?
- There is high turnover by construction workers - around 40%
- A lot of RV parks in the area were former temporary, construction worker camp areas.

Stewart Bastian, Home Away from Home, talked about challenges to providing temporary housing for construction workers.

- Agreed with the comment that there will be displacement of low-income renters with the influx of temporary workers.
- Also could impact tourism and resort occupancy, i.e., Rainbow Hotel booked with construction workers for 7 years!
- With all these projects there will be fierce competition for workers. Companies will have to entice workers to bring them up here.
- Besides housing - need to have entertainment options for workers (dining, etc).
- Their company has begun purchasing single-family homes in the area and remodeling them.

Questions and Discussion:

- Need to address workforce diversity issues.
- What about community input into this process?
- Need to address fire/police issues with man-camps.
- Need to inventory vacant buildings. The costs to renovate them would off-set the costs that would be associated with extending sewer and water to a greenfield site.
- There's no such thing as "temporary housing" in building codes.
- Housing needs are different for temporary workers vs. permanent workers.
- What is the state of the current housing market?

Infrastructure Discussion:

- Concerns with safety issues along roads. Need to complete Iron Range Expressway.
- What about weight limitations on the roads?
- What about the need for a better connection south to 2 from 169? (73 will be torn up)

- ARDC will look at long range transportation plans and provide summary of projects planned for the area.
- What about local roads?
- Are communities doing 5-year transportation plans?
- It comes down to funding. State transportation bill is critical.
- Also need to look at impacts to recreation, health care, internet communications, cell/mobile phone service.
 - ARDC will be reviewing/summarizing water and sewer plans.
- Are local communities aware of financing tools available to them? (TIFs, etc)

Other issues: zoning, planning

- Brownfield issues - federal grant to map and inventory Brownfield sites in this area.

ARDC will meet with Readiness Assessment steering committee one more time before conducting community interviews.

Steering Committee Chair and Vice-Chair chosen:

- Chair - Dave Lotti, Mayor of Marble
- Vice-Chair - Tom Sampson, Mayor of Keewatin

Next Steering Committee Meeting: Wednesday, April 25, 4:30 p.m.