

MINUTES
CLEAR Plan 2030 Consortium Meeting
EARPDC 3rd Floor Conference Room
February 14, 2012
9:00 am

Mr. Frost called the meeting to order and those in attendance introduced themselves.

Members Present:

Deborah Lindley (Coosa Valley Resource Council)
Jesse Cleveland (Community Action Agency of Talladega, Clay, Randolph, Calhoun and Cleburne Counties)
Jennifer Maddox (Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama)
Bill Meehan (Jacksonville State University)
Margaret Morton (Sylacauga Alliance for Family Enhancement)
Jack Plunk (Calhoun County MPO)
Sharon Fenstermaker (Collaborative Solution, Inc.)
Charles Merkel (East Alabama Mayors Association)

Observers:

Tina Leemaster

Staff Present:

James W. "Bill" Curtis (EARPDC, Executive Director)
Randy Frost (EARPDC, Director of Aging)
Dawn Landholm (EARPDC, Principal Planner)
Robin Caler (EARPDC, Principal Planner)
Ashley Myers (EARPDC, Regional Planner)

Mr. Frost thanked those in attendance and discussed briefly the agenda and the purpose of the Consortium and overview of the CLEAR Plan 2030 planning process. He then went on to discuss how the term "livability" with respect to the CLEAR Plan 2030 be used interchangeably with "sustainability". The word "sustainability" has been associated with negative connotations and communist plots to take over the world and tie up all the federal dollars in these programs. Mr. Frost stated that is not our intent and while we have not heard any of that backlash in this area, it is a very touchy subject and to be proactive, this project would from the onset, use the term "livability" over "sustainability".

Mr. Frost then went on to discuss the variety of plans in existence in the Region, Aging Plan, CEDS, transportation plans and how these are all stand alone documents. These documents will probably continue to be stand alone documents, but they need to communicate with each other so that the community has a better idea of what is hoped to be accomplished by putting all of our data together as we develop a concept of livability. We think that livability impacts all aspects of community life, from access to services, mobility patterns and community security and economic development; making it more attractive for people to age in place and have access to resources they need. Mr. Frost stated this is a very long range plan.

On the dollars and cents side, Mr. Frost went on to state, if things hold up, one of the benefits of this region having this plan and by participating in this planning process is that applicants for HUD programs would receive “bonus points” on their applications that work toward the goals of this plan. Mr. Frost then turned the meeting over to Ashley Myers.

Ms. Myers asked those in attendance to reflect on what they would like to come out of the project or if they had any specific interests. Dr. Meehan stated that Jacksonville is working on a long range plan with Alabama Communities of Excellence and that this plan should incorporate the long range plan for the University. Mayor Merkel stated that Childersburg has just completed that process and Sylacauga is getting started up on it now. Mayor Merkel stated that is an excellent suggestion and the ACE population limit for participation is at least 2000.

Mr. Jessie Cleveland asked if one of the goals of this program were to establish partnerships. Ms. Myers stated it is. Mr. Cleveland asked how and in what way would the people that he deals with on a daily basis dealing with transportation and the elderly, nutrition – that his entity is strictly a poverty fighting program. He stated that he is tied closely with the SAFE program. He asked what is it that you can see that I can contribute here. And how is there a direct or indirect tie in to what activities that he is involved in. Ms. Myers stated that would come clear as we talked through it all. Getting people involved to care about what they want for the region and participate in the planning process. Ms. Caler stated a little bit later in the meeting that the attendees would be going through the consortium work plan which identifies the roles of the members and what is expected of them. She also stated that Consortium members will be supervising Livability Resource teams and everyone has their own areas of expertise. She stated Mr. Cleveland’s expertise is assisting the poverty stricken and that is a particular group targeted by the plan. The Consortium and planners will be looking to use data collection and any information that Mr. Cleveland’s entity to make a case for avenues chosen to be addressed by the plan. Mr. Cleveland stated “now that I can do”.

Mayor Merkel queried how the HUD Sustainable funds would be used to bring forth the information that we want through this consortium. Ms. Caler stated the funds would be used to develop the planning document and there were funds set aside for outside sources to provide services such as citizen input and that the purpose for outside sources was to provide objective views. Mr. Frost stated the purpose of this funding is to develop this document which is a tremendous resource to the region, and to make sure we identify the data we already have and to uncover where data is weak and to acquire that data. We will be able to strengthen our data sets and make those data available to communities so that when they apply for grants that data will be available to them so that they may have stronger applications and resources and go to non-traditional sources for funding. Ms. Landholm stated that this plan is not merely a data plan, but will also include implementation strategies, pilot projects and we will be looking along the way for “low hanging fruit” – projects we can get on the ground during the planning process. She also provided a brief overview of HUD’s Preferred Sustainability status.

Ms. Myers then moved on to MOU’s. She stated there were several completed and collected those that were available to be submitted. Mayor Merkel asked about an MOU required by the Mayors Association and Mr. Frost stated that Mayor Merkel as Chairman of the Mayors

Association was an authorized signatory for the MOU from that entity. Mayor Merkel signed and submitted the MOU on behalf of the East Alabama Mayors Association.

Ms. Myers then moved on to the review and adoption of the Consortium Bylaws. Mr. Plunk asked if it was all right to have the word “sustainability” in the bylaws. Mr. Frost stated it was acceptable. Ms. Morton suggested a change in the name of The Sylacauga Alliance for Family Enhancement to include the acronym SAFE. The changes were approved and the Bylaws were adopted.

Ms. Myers then referred to Ms. Caler to speak about what Livability Resource Teams are. Ms. Caler explained the workhorse of the program would be the Livability Resource Teams. The Consortium will serve as the overarching guidance of the Livability Resource Teams (LRT’s). The LRT’s will report up to the Consortium with the information they find and with any questions that come up and other items. The LRT’s will be composed of local officials from inside each county and a good cross section representation of local municipalities. Ms. Caler then referred to the handout, “What is a Livability Resource Team”. Ms. Caler then asked if there were any suggestions on members for the LRT’s and reviewed the list of committed members. Ms. Landholm stated that one of the things required from the LRT is to engage people from traditionally marginalized groups. She stated that if anyone knew of any individuals that would fit in the role of LRT member to please let her know and contact would be made. Ms. Maddox suggested a member of Emergency Management as an LRT member regarding resources and data. She also suggested churches as LRT members. Mr. Plunk asked for the 4 LRT’s to be read: Ms. Myers stated

Transportation
Housing
Economic Competitiveness
Community Support and Civic Engagement and Policy

Ms. Caler stated that these LRT’s were not set in stone and that if the LRT’s needed to be expanded, or subcommittees created for the LRT’s that is an option.

After a discussion on land use and transportation, livability as it relates to sustainability, Mr. Plunk suggested an LRT for health and a member from Planning and Zoning Commissions. Mr. Cleveland questioned if each team was expected to come up with their own set of goals and would they be compatible to the overall goals of the consortium. Ms. Caler stated, what we have been looking at is each consortium member would head up an LRT with their expertise, for example, Mr. Plunk for transportation and Ms. Landholm for Planning and Zoning, then the LRT reports back to the consortium member and when we all gather back together the consortium is the one that would ultimately bring the information back to everyone through discussion.

Dr. Meehan introduced the idea that one of the most important factors of Economic Competitiveness is education and that there was no Education LRT. He suggested an Education LRT be created. Mr. Cleveland said that education is intertwined with all livability principles and after discussion it was decided to create an Education LRT. Mayor Merkel reinforced Mr. Cleveland’s point about the importance of education and how it is an underlying element

throughout all livability principles. It was decided to add Health and Education to the livability resources, bringing the total to 6 livability resource teams.

Mr. Cleveland posed the question “are there any restrictions, in the grant that we as consortium members need to be aware of? Some dos and don’ts to make sure we are sticking with the integrity of the grant itself”. Mr. Frost addressed the question with the response that he did not know of any off hand but as the consortium goes through the Work Plan if there is a red flag that anyone sees then the consortium can discuss it. There are deliverables to be submitted to HUD and weekly and monthly calls with HUD that if we need to change anything we can. This is a planning grant, not an implementation grant and even though there may be projects that we identify that we can go off on, we have been very careful to stay at the “10,000 foot level” and not get bogged down in what we can do right now – it’s planning and getting data and information from communities and processing that data. At this time there is nothing on the horizon that really puts us out of bounds.

The conversation then addressed stakeholders and citizen members of LRTs. Mr. Frost stated that there is a Request for Professional Services out at this time for consulting services for citizen input, focus group data gathering. Ms. Landholm stated that one thing which was required in the work program is that at least one member of each LRT represents the underserved.

Ms. Myers then asked those in attendance if they had any preference on which LRT they would chair. Ms. Sharon Fenstermaker stated that she did not want to nominate Ms. Ashley Kerr of Collaborative Solutions, Inc., as a chair of an LRT, but she did know that Ms. Kerr would want to be involved with the Housing LRT. Ms. Maddox asked if there were enough Consortium members for 2 members (co leaders) for each team. It was determined that there would be enough members to have some redundancy in leadership for each team.

Ms. Myers stated that there were approximately 45 minutes left of the allotted time for the meeting and the next item on the agenda was the Work Plan and also discussion of the RFP for Public Engagement. Looking at the work plan and the RFP together, the work plan states the responsibility of the Consortium, East Alabama and then the different Livability Resource Teams. At this point in time in the work plan the process is to form the LRT’s now and invite mayors, council members and other people to be a participant in the process. She stated we also need to be looking at what the consortium thinks is important to and what is a barrier to livability so then we can work towards overcoming it. The work plan was reviewed and general discussion ensued regarding that work plan. The next topic of discussion was the RFP for Public Engagement. Ms. Myers stated the RFP would be issued and published with a targeted deadline of March 23, 2012. The next topic was Livability Resource Team training. One element also included in the RFP was training for LRT members about livability. The consultant would provide a livability seminar that the LRT’s and Consortium could then take to the local level and educate the citizenry about livability and drum up support for the project.

Ms. Myers continued with the explanation of the Work Plan, discussing each element and finishing with asking if there were any questions. There being none, a few comments were made regarding addressing low density sprawl and how that would drive development costs up which conflicts with sustainability (economic competitiveness). It was then stated, with that respect,

one of the things the planning process should show is that intensified development may cost more up front, but sprawl costs more over the long term. Mr. Plunk stated the importance of how sprawl is unlivable. He then referred to the long range land use plan and several road segments that were identified to be improved but that was reactionary to land use and land use change that is dispersing our residential uses out into Choccolocco, Pleasant Valley, Alexandria, Oxford and driving our DVM per person up driving our trip times up and increasing the burden of transportation costs on household income and that plan is currently unsustainable because we are reacting to low density land use.

The next item on the agenda was Other Business. Mr. Frost stated that part of this grant is dedicated to GIS time and at the end of the day this plan will not just be on paper, we will have some GIS mapping, layering which will include the results that we have from the consultants and the civic engagement meetings as well as uploading more of the data that we have so that we can do some scenario planning. This information will be available to the Region beyond the scope even this plan.

Ms. Myers went on to inform the consortium members about the upcoming Smaller Places Summit in Knoxville on March 5th through the 7th. Four members signed up to go, Dr. Newton from JSU, Mr. Tabengwa from Gadsden/Etowah MPO, Ms. Myers and Ms. Caler from EARPDC. She stated that 15 other small rural grantees would be convening and discussing common problems and facilitation would be provided by the Institute for Sustainable Communities.

Ms. Maddox brought to the attention of attendees an article presented in AARP regarding Complete Streets. The article said that Alabama could join the growing number of states making roadways safer for everyone if lawmakers approve “complete streets” legislation this year. The AARP of Alabama is leading a coalition to push for the bill. This is something that could dovetail with the CLEAR Plan. She then shared information on a housing seminar that the Foundation will be hosting on February 24.

Mr. Frost then stated that the CLEAR Plan would be the luncheon topic and the next EARPDC Board members meeting on February 22 and extended an invitation to all present for that board meeting.

Ms. Fenstermaker from Collaborative Solutions informed the group of one of the things that Collaborative Solutions does is serve as the Administrative agency on a low income housing coalition of Alabama and that they are trying to pass a statewide housing trust fund bill. This is the 4th year it has gone in and it passed the house last year and we have a senate sponsor this year, and it’s something to pay attention to and it would be great to get much support on this. It is a revenue neutral bill at this point (because of the economy), but they feel like if they can get the bill passed then perhaps in the future a dedicated revenue source can be established.

There being no further business items to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.