

Black Hawk Futures Forum
1:30 pm, November 27, 2007

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Facilitators LaDene Bowen, Don Chaplain and Bill Wood of the Institute for Decision Making (IDM), UNI; Waterloo Mayor Tim Hurley, Co-chairs Frank Magsamen and David McCalley, citizen members Floyd Winter, Donna Harvey, Sharon Juon, Ann Olsson, Patricia Sass, Janice Hanish, Jeffrey Kutz, Kathy Flynn, Kathy Young, Tom Jennings, Brian Schoon, Shaffer Ridgeway, Eileen Daley, Billie Bailey, Aric Schroeder and Tom Eachus, County Attorney Tom Ferguson, County IT Director Kim Veeder, County Auditor Grant Veeder

Also attending: County Supervisor John Miller, Geraldine Thornsberry

The Black Hawk County Futures Planning Team heard presentations from representatives of various community sectors on trends in those sectors that may affect county government in the next twenty years.

DEMOGRAPHICS: BRIAN SCHOON, IOWA NORTHLAND REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (INRCOG). Mr. Schoon said population in the county is decreasing, and the median age is increasing. The over-65 age group is increasing in numbers and in the percent of total population. The county is becoming more diverse racially and ethnically. The Hispanic population has increased from 1990 to 0.6% of the county population to about 3%. Housing units are increasing, as are their cost and valuation, but family size is shrinking, from four in 1980 to 2.4 today and 2.37 in the near future. Commuters are coming to work in Black Hawk County from surrounding counties. In agriculture, there are fewer farmers, and fewer but larger farms. The number of cultivated acres is about the same, but the yields have grown. Incomes have risen and poverty was in decline, but projections show it is beginning to increase again. More residents have high school educations and bachelor's degrees than in the past. Quality of life (measured in schools, roads, churches, culture, etc.) is needed to retain young people. With our aging population, workforce is already an issue and will continue to be. He recommended investment in our quality of life, aggressive marketing of our strengths, investing in technology, and increasing the skilled labor force.

LAND USE AND PLANNING: BRIAN SCHOON, IOWA NORTHLAND REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (INRCOG). Mr. Schoon said we will continue to see an emphasis on green and sustainable development, and less clearing of environmentally sensitive areas. Mixed uses and compact development are becoming more popular. Transportation is inextricably tied to land use. Windmills are becoming more popular. The county is to be thanked for investing in GIS technology, which is used all the time by INRCOG, realtors, developers, etc., because the ability to layer information on a map makes it easier to analyze a site. Agricultural changes and advances are impacting land use (farm size, equipment size, wind farms, animals, technology, ethanol). Planning is becoming more prominent in relation to zoning. There is a focus on quality of life, and generational changes are coming into play. There will

continue to be conflict at the edges of urban areas. There are legislative shortcomings: The county zoning chapter in Iowa law was principally authored in 1947. Farms are exempt from county zoning. More zoning transactions will be done online in the future, and people may be able to attend meetings electronically, but policy makers will still have to make the decisions. The costs of staff, administration and technology will continue to rise, and citizen resistance of one sort or another will always be present. Costs for services will rise, which can be addressed by more county/city cooperation. More consistent enforcement will reduce the chance of legal challenges. Policy makers should understand the Open Meetings Law and should practice leading a meeting where people get upset rather than learning in a trial by fire.

MASS TRANSPORTATION: KEVIN BLANSHAN, IOWA NORTHLAND REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (INRCOG). Mr. Blanshan said that there is a looming emergency in transportation. One cannot overstate the importance of the airport as an economic development tool both for passengers and the movement of freight. The Waterloo Airport is an underdeveloped resource. Smaller general aviation airports in the region have an important relationship to the Waterloo Airport. There has been much railroad abandonment in the area, hurting our economy, but the railroads are showing a comeback. There are fewer miles of road but more freight being moved. This puts more stress on infrastructure, much of which dates from the 19th century. Passenger trains are coming back, and a study is being done about a Chicago-Dubuque link. MET Transit is projected to increase from 419,000 riders in 2009 to 570,000 in 2025. The Paratransit projection for that period is an increase from 79,000 to 92,000. Transit riders are getting older, and there is a negative attitude toward bus riding. Attitudes need to change. People getting older want to retain their independence and demand more personalized service from transit providers. A shortfall in federal funds of \$5 billion is expected by FY09. The fuel tax hasn't been raised since 1993 on the federal level. There would be a \$27 billion shortfall if all the roads in the state were to be fixed. Moving freight by truck will nearly double by 2035. Older drivers (and their frequency of accidents) have become so significant that traffic signs are designed with them in mind. Bicycle accommodation needs to be considered when designed roadway improvements.

Vacating roads has been discussed but it is a difficult political decision. He applauded Black Hawk County for taking steps at the local level to upgrade roads.

HIGHWAYS: ROD LARSEN, IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.

Mr. Larsen said there would be a continued demand on the road system, although travel in the state has decreased in recent years, even before the sharp increase in gas prices. People like to travel, here as well as in the developing world, so alternative fuels will come along. Technology will come to the fore to address reduced resources. Serious funding shortfalls exist due to political timidity. Despite privacy issues, global positioning system (GPS) sensors will probably be used to distribute revenues by road system use and impacts. Development should occur on the fringes of incorporated areas where utilities are available. The county has been good about declining developments in the rural area. People in rural subdivisions have high expectations. The county is to be praised for moving toward using local option sales tax revenue for roads like the cities

do. The bike trails here are the talk of the Midwest. DOT resources are limited, but there are some proposed projects for the area (see list in his handout). A roundabout is being constructed at Independence and Raymond Road and one has been completed in Cedar Falls.

BUSINESS: BOB JUSTIS, PRESIDENT, CEDAR VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. Mr. Justis said this area is becoming a destination and is getting a lot of exposure, but it is very important to determine how to engage our youth. People move back to the area after emigrating south because they miss the people of the Cedar Valley as well as its size and amenities. We have an advantage in our diversity, and we must celebrate, welcome, embrace, educate and employ the members of our diverse cultures. We'll see a serious upswing in educating employers on employing people with disabilities, which will help address our workforce shortage. We have failed to properly exploit our amenities because of our Iowa modesty, but that attitude is changing. People come from all over the Midwest for our bike trails. We have to invest in promoting where we live.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS: KENT HALDEN, CEDAR FALLS UTILITIES. Mr. Halden said that the information highway must grow and adapt. Television is in a big transition to digital broadcasting, which uses less broadband capacity than the current analog broadcasting. Use of high definition TV will increase, but that takes more bandwidth, as do videogames and video streaming. CFU and others are replacing copper telephone cable and hybrid fiber over coax (HFC) with fiber to meet bandwidth demands. Most rural areas, however, can't receive this service without incurring prohibitive costs. Grants and private funding may make it possible, as well as bundling services. Providers need exclusivity in new developments in order to recover their costs. CFU can operate outside of Waterloo only if it serves the public good of Cedar Falls (as with the county courthouse), but there is some opportunity to work collaboratively with the rest of the Cedar Valley.

ELECTRIC/NATURAL GAS: MIKE MASSINA, MIDAMERICAN ENERGY, SENIOR ENERGY CONSULTANT. Mr. Massina said that economic growth is the main driver in changes for MidAmerican. With Monsanto coming in, they need to study the requirements for upgrades. The current system probably can't handle the load. Sometimes change is mandated, like the requirement for underground systems. Most of Waterloo has overground systems, which are easier to take care of. MidAmerican plans to build windfarms to generate 1,000 megawatts of energy, which will power 336,000 homes. The Walter Scott Coal Energy Center in Council Bluffs reduces 50% of the carbon dioxide emission. Most technical advances are in reliability, reducing outage times. MidAmerican will install automated meter reading in Waterloo in 2009.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: STEVE DUST, CEDAR VALLEY ALLIANCE. Mr. Dust says "capital will go where it's welcome and stay where it's well-treated." The area recently rebounded from a negative trend, which should give us confidence that we can do it again if necessary. Waterloo/Cedar Falls is a magnet, but this is also shared

with Bremer and Buchanan Counties. John Deere drives excellence, and will stimulate growth in higher-skilled jobs. Broadband will move from a competitive element to an expected commodity, and will drive economic growth like railroads did in the 19th century and highways did in the 20th. Bio-products will be like plastics in the '50s and '60s, and energy efficiency will be like the clean air drive of the '70s, but it has to be done smarter. The urban redevelopment drive will be our long-term trend. Our area has a huge supply of natural fresh water, which is a big advantage over other areas. Safety is another draw for the area. After-work entrepreneurs tinkering in their basements will become more prevalent. There will be a greater expectation of county government participating in amenities, redevelopment projects, and development-related projects and initiatives.

EDUCATION: FLOYD WINTER, SEMI-RETIRED EDUCATOR; VOLUNTEER, ETC., ETC. Mr. Winter said that education has everything to do with government. Since education is a lifelong pursuit, retirement-aged people still need to learn new technology and methods. It is important to have an integrated system that will produce a capable and informed citizenry which will provide resources to governing bodies. Too few from the minority, immigrant, elderly, and disabled populations graduate from high school and earn a middle class living, which affects the county through the judicial system, welfare, and job training. Long-term projects that could impact county government are Early Childhood collaboration through Iowa Empowerment Board efforts (Cedar Valley Promise), Hawkeye Community College leadership for providing “seamless” transitions, and the Opportunity Works initiative to reduce poverty.

SOCIAL AND FAITH-BASED SERVICES: MARTHA FRAZIER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EASTSIDE MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE (EMA). Ms. Frazier said the EMA clinic is serving people from outside of town, not just the Waterloo East Side. The EMA center serves many homeless people. Government is expected to shift services to faith-based services, causing a decentralized delivery system. The EMA collaborates with other services such as Operation Threshold, Jesse Cosby Center, Lutheran Social Services and St. Vincent DePaul. As government backs away from direct provision of these services, faith-based organizations will need greater funding to fill the gap. The EMA client base is 63% African-American, with Bosnians, Hispanics and native whites also being served.

The meeting concluded at 4:36 pm.

Grant Veeder, Recording Secretary