

**Community Collaboration Work Group**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, January 12, 2012; 4:00 p.m.  
Room 311 - County Administration Building

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair Dan Koorndyk; County Commissioners Carol Hennessy, Jim Saalfeld and Mike Wawee Jr., City Commissioners Rosalynn Bliss and Jim White, Attorney Jim Brown, Walker City Manager Cathy Vander Meulen, President – Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce Rick Baker, Grand Rapids Township Supervisor Mike DeVries, President & CEO of The Right Place Inc. Birgit Klohs, Professor of Economics Paul Isely and President & CEO of the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan Maria Gonzalez-Cortes.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Administrator/Controller Daryl Delabbio; Assistant Administrators Wayman Britt and Mary Swanson; Fiscal Services Director Stephen Duarte, Executive Assistant to the Board Jamie Groom; Corporate Counsel Dan Ophoff; Scott Atchison, Human Resources Director Don Clack, Management Analyst Jen DeHaan, Commissioners Harold Voorhees and Shana Shroll, City Manager Greg Sundstrom and Deputy City Manager Eric DeLong.

**NEWS MEDIA:** Jim Harger Grand Rapids Press, David Czurak Grand Rapids Business Journal.

Mr. Koorndyk welcomed the work group members and gave an overview of the structure of the work group and explained how its work will take place. He also stated that meetings will be subject to the Open Meetings Act and posted accordingly.

Mr. Koorndyk nominated Jim Saalfeld to Chair the work group and City Commissioner Rosalynn Bliss to Vice-Chair. The work group unanimously agreed.

Mr. Saalfeld reviewed the charge of the committee and noted that it is purposely broad to give the work group room to operate with minimal constraints. The end of the process will result in a written report identifying opportunities for collaboration/cooperation and possibly even consolidation. If the work group feels it is appropriate, it may even make recommendations.

Mr. Saalfeld suggested that the work group meet for approximately one hour on the first Wednesday of each month at 7:30 am. The work group will try this for a couple of months; there is room for change. The next meeting will be 7:30 am – February 1, 2012. It is anticipated that the work group will finish its work by the end of 2012 – or earlier if possible.

Mr. Saalfeld noted that the work group will not use a facilitator for its meetings at this time, though if the group feels it needs one, it can be considered at that time.

Mr. Saalfeld asked for a directory of e-mails/phone numbers for the work group members. Kent County staff will compile this and distribute it.

Mr. Saalfeld reviewed the outline for the progress of the work group.

Ms. Klohs stated that a one-hour meeting will not be enough time to explain the functions of local governments to all the individuals in the work group who may not be familiar with government functions.

Ms. Bliss added that it is important to understand revenue streams and taxation for the different jurisdictions. She suggested that she could bring her materials from the One Kent study group last summer; the materials may be helpful and contain information about bond ratings, taxation, enabling legislation, mandates, charters, etc.

Mr. Saalfeld suggested the work group look at a continuum of cooperation to take a look at things that are already working in our communities. The local governments in Kent County are leaders of collaboration initiatives within the state.

Ms. Swanson briefly reviewed the work that is under way with the Upjohn Institute. The County contracted with Upjohn to perform two activities. The first is to identify successful intergovernmental collaborations that have taken place in West Michigan area; identify what are the salient common characteristics of those; and identify why they were successful and what elements might be evident in these projects. Upjohn has already identified 15 major projects. Results are expected by the end of February.

The second part of the study will begin in March with results expected at the end of the summer. Here, the Upjohn Institute will look at the economic development and impacts of some of the consolidations that have taken place as well as the geographical coverage and what has happened as a result of those consolidations. Can any of those be replicated in West Michigan – and what benefits could be gained?

Mr. Saalfeld solicited suggestions from the members as to additional areas on which the work group could focus.

Mr. Sundstrom offered the City of Grand Rapids' assistance to assemble the revenue stream information for the county, cities and townships.

Mr. Baker requested to know if State law will impact what is viable for the work group to suggest, it should be aware of that so efforts are not wasted.

Mayor Heartwell requested a copy of PA 258 of 2011 be given to each of the members.

Mr. Brown said that state laws affect everything that governmental bodies are able to do. There are excellent opportunities for collaboration that are not available to us today.

Mr. Sundstrom added that many things being done today were not available a year ago.

Mr. White asked if the work group should consider giving recommendations to the State via a report or other formal communication.

Ms. Klohs suggested that the work group invite a representative from the NEC as its guest; the governor is very interested in these types of discussions.

Mr. DeVries suggested that the work group study real and perceived obstacles to collaboration and make this information available to our partners to make it a more cohesive program for business development and communication.

Mr. Saalfeld commented that perception very often becomes a reality when it is not truly an obstacle.

Mr. White asked if the work group should consider some mechanism of communicating its work with the public in an ongoing way.

Mr. Sundstrom suggested that the work group could post minutes on a web page – to create a website for the Community Collaboration Work Group that stands alone and contains all the information and links.

Ms. Gonzalez-Cortes added that she hopes the work group takes into account current unmet needs; especially those that might surface as urgent unmet needs.

Mr. DeLong suggested that the work group read the City's report by the Transformation Advisors which provided a good guide for the City Commission. He will share the link with the work group.

Mr. Saalfeld reiterated that the second meeting will be held on February 1, 2012, at 7:30 am in the Board of Commissioners chambers. The third meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 7, 2012. After that, or sometime in advance of that, the work group can revisit its schedule to see if the first Wednesday of each month at 7:30 am is acceptable to the group and make adjustments if needed.

Mr. Saalfeld adjourned the meeting at 4:46 pm.