



Approved Minutes Met Council Task Force

Thursday, January 21, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, Auditorium A – 1st Floor
451 Lexington Parkway North - Saint Paul, MN 55104

Members present: Susan Arntz (**Co-chair**), John Knapp (**Co-chair**), Steve Dornfeld, Jim Erkel, Carol Flynn, Michele Foster, Sharon Sayles-Belton (by phone), Scott Neal, Chris Gerlach, Bill Hargis, Shannon Watson, Ravi Norman, John Adams, Dan McElroy, and Acooa Ellis.

Members not present: Peter Bell, Adeel Lari, Elizabeth Kautz, and Jim Solem.

Staff & staff support present: Pahoua Yang Hoffman and Sean Kershaw (on phone)

Citizens League members and special guests present: Citizens League board member Heidi Larson, Gabriel Flaa, Kate Weyenberg, Bright Dornblaser, Paul Taylor, and Ray Schoch.

Proposed outcomes for this meeting

- Approve minutes from previous meeting.
- Debrief last meeting.
- Review project status.
- Discuss Findings and Conclusion.
- Agree on next steps.
- Evaluate meeting.

Minutes

Co-Chair John Knapp called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

1. **Welcome, Introductions, Approval of Minutes, Debrief of Previous Meeting, Review Project Status**

Introductions

Co-chair John Knapp started the meeting by introducing Citizens League members and board member, Heidi Larson. Knapp went over the proposed meeting outcomes.

Approval of Minutes

Co-chair Knapp asked if there were any questions or feedback on the minutes from the January 7th meeting. Scott Neal moved to approve the minutes. Acooa Ellis seconded the motion. A unanimous verbal 15-0 aye vote passed the motion to approve the minutes.

Debrief of Previous Meeting

In the last meeting, a panel member made references to local officials being afraid of the Met Council. A member noted that over the last four decades, the Met Council has reviewed 2,099 local comprehensive plans and plan amendments and has required plan modifications in just 25 cases, with the last one being the Lake Elmo case in the early 2000s. Given this, the member did not think the Met Council has been heavy handed in using its authority. Another member thought it was unfortunate that Kim Crockett used the word “fear” because it detracted from some real concerns.

Had Crockett nuanced it and said something like, “there is no question that local government officials have some concerns and that some do weigh the potential consequences of disagreeing with Met Council policy statements, etc.,” he thought Task Force members would have taken her point more seriously. The member believed this concern was real and that it does influence local official’s decision-making about whether to openly disagree with the Met Council or not because of its power and authority in so many areas. It’s not quite as simple as “being afraid of the Met Council,” which to some sounds absurd.

Another member recalled a time when there were discussions about whether to expand the Met Council’s jurisdiction to include collar or neighboring counties because local officials in these areas were concerned about impact. A working group in 2002 brought an idea to the legislature to have observer members from collar counties, but this was viewed as dangerous. He did not know whether it actually required legislation, but legislation did not make it out of committee.

A member commented that she lived in a neighboring county and the fear was that it was “a communist takeover.” It had nothing do with reality.

Review project status & share plans for upcoming meetings

Co-chair provided a brief overview of the project status. He reminded members about the Citizens League process, to first embark on fact-finding, which the group has done by inviting external speakers to come in an present. The next step is for the group to agree on findings and conclusions based on what the group learned from the presentations. From the findings and conclusions, he hopes the group will come to some recommendations. The task for today is to come to agreement on the findings and conclusions. With lots of work to still complete, the next meeting on February 4th has been extended and will start at 2:30 p.m. instead of 4:00 p.m. but will end at the usual time of 6:00 p.m. At the meeting on the 4th, the group will be using a tool called the Implications Wheel to educate the group on the potential consequences from some of the recommendations. Staff member Pahoua Hoffman informed the Task Force that the Citizens League has used this tool for internal decision-making and found it useful. Hoffman mentioned that she would be sending members more information that would prep them for the exercise.

A member raised some concerns that while the group has heard from a number of external individuals; he did not feel there has been enough time to discuss among the members about what they have heard. He did not feel comfortable talking about possible recommendations without doing this since people’s minds might change if there were such discussions. Co-chair Knapp responded that this was the goal for today’s meeting and future meetings and that the entire time would be devoted to discussion today. He also mentioned that an appropriate recommendation could be that an issue needs further study since the committee could only do so much in the six-month timeline it had.

2. Discussion on Findings & Conclusions

Prior to the meeting, the Task Force received a number of findings and conclusions through an online survey where members were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement as well as offer up new ones. Many of the findings and conclusions were sourced from meeting notes and previous exercises including the decision matrix chart. This pre-work served as the starting place for the discussion today. A member noted that there were a couple findings that were unclear and she hoped that after they get clarified in the discussion, the group could take the survey again. This would also address the previous member’s comment about people’s opinions could change after discussion. A suggestion was made that the Citizens League clickers could be used, if not the survey again. Co-chair Knapp agreed.

After a decision was made to first discuss the findings and conclusions that had the most agreement, Knapp referred to the survey result handout that was in the meeting packet. Of the findings/conclusions included in the survey, the one that received 100% agreement was:

Water supply is a regional asset with regional implications for local decision-making, and should be governed regionally.

A member mentioned that five or six years ago, the legislature directed the Met Council to do a regional water supply master study and make some recommendations. This included an advisory committee of local officials. He believed there were developments since the study. He did not think the Task Force has done enough fact-finding in the area of water. A brief discussion took place on who has the authority over water. Several state agencies were mentioned: the Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, and all the watershed districts. It was also mentioned that to drill a well, one needs to get a permit to drill it and then a permit to connect it. It is an already layered process and the member was concerned about adding yet another layer of governance. Another member noted that this issue could be a good one to use the Implication Wheel since the “what happens after that” can affect so many areas. Another member added that while there are many entities involved in water governance, she did not think there was one entity that had a regional perspective and that the issue of water requires coordination.

A member took issue with the clause, “...and it should be governed regionally.” This was not a finding but a recommendation. She believed the group could draw the conclusions that water is a regional asset with regional implications and it should be planned regionally, but did not agree the group should state that it ought to be governed regionally – at least not until more discussion and research was done on this issue.

Another member commented that when he reviewed this statement, he had in his mind the success the Met Council has had with waste water. It was his thought that perhaps water in general could be managed in the same way. Another member added that water deserved more attention and wished we had brought someone in to talk about water management, planning, and governance. Given the discussion, the group re-vised the statement to now read:

Water supply and storm water are regional assets with regional implications for local decision-making and should be planned regionally, with which agencies to have jurisdiction to be further studied and determined.

Co-chair Knapp read the second statement under the “Other” category from the survey results document:

The needs of an aging population, which includes housing and transportation, may likely be a new regional issue.

Co-Chair Knapp added that 2/3 of members agreed with this statement. Another member commented that there used to be a council on aging to the Met Council. There was also a hospital board, a health board, and even one on criminal justice within the Met Council. These were in place because there was money from the Federal government.

Another member commented that in the context of the above statement, both housing and transportation are already within the wheelhouse of the Met Council. As the Met Council looks at population trends, the changing demographics, and an aging population, the question is really can or should the Met Council make certain assumptions that a portion of the population is going to need multi-unit dwellings rather than single-family detached homes spread out through the region. If that is the case, this immediately gets into population projections and the amount of land that is required. This would fit within the planning authority the Council already has. Although people can choose to disagree with the changing demographics, they are coming. The question is whether they can be

translated into work that the Met Council is already doing in terms of looking at land use consumption.

3. Next Steps & Evaluation

Co-chair Knapp closed the meeting by restating the Citizens League process of findings, conclusions, and recommendations; she wanted to start the conversation on the 21st with what are our findings and start creating conclusions. It was asked and members agreed it would be good to start some of that work before the meeting.

The members evaluated the meeting as follows: 5, 5, 5, 4, 4, 4, 5, 5, 4.5, 5, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, and 4 for an average 4.4.

4. Adjourn

Co-Chair Knapp adjourned the meeting at 6:08 p.m.