



## **Approved Minutes Met Council Task Force**

Thursday, November 5, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, Room 2610  
451 Lexington Parkway North - Saint Paul, MN 55104

**Members present:** Susan Arntz (**Co-chair**), John Adams, Steve Dornfeld, Acooa Ellis, Jim Erkel, Carol Flynn, Michele Foster, Peter Bell, Scott Neal, Chris Gerlach, Bill Hargis, Dan McElroy, Shannon Watson, Adeel Lari, and Jim Solem

**Members not present:** John Knapp (**Co-chair**), Elizabeth Kautz, Ravi Norman, Sharon Sayles-Belton,

**Staff & staff support present:** Jan Unstad, Pahoua Yang Hoffman, Sean Kershaw, Larry Dowell, and Ellen Watters

**Citizens League members and special guests present:** Bright Dornblaser, Robert Tholkes, Susan Hammel, Patricia Nauman, Susan Brower, Megan Dayton, and Gabriel Flaa.

### **Proposed outcomes for meeting**

- Approve minutes from previous meeting.
- Debrief last meeting.
- Review project charge and timeline.
- Review critical questions.
- Discuss and confirm individuals to bring in for interviews.
- Listen to demographic trends and conduct Q&A.
- Agree on next steps.
- Evaluate meeting.

### **Minutes**

Co-Chair Susan Arntz called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m.

#### **1. Welcome, Introductions, Approval of Minutes and Agenda, Debrief of Previous Meeting**

##### *Introductions*

Co-chair Susan Arntz started the meeting by asking guests to introduce themselves. After introductions, co-chair Arntz went through the proposed meeting outcomes.

##### *Approval of Minutes*

Co-chair Arntz asked if there were any questions or feedback on the minutes from the October 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. Member Shannon Watson moved to approve the minutes. Jim Erkel seconded the motion. A unanimous verbal 16-0 aye vote passed the motion to approve the minutes.

##### *Debrief of Previous Meeting*

Co-chair Arntz asked if there were any additional comments from the previous meeting's discussion. Hearing none, she introduced Larry Dowell of Dowell Management who is providing staff support to the project to go over the project charge and description.

## 2. Review Project Charge and Timeline

Larry Dowell introduced himself and referred to the Strategic Process Chart that was shared with the group at the last meeting by his colleague, Ellen Watters. He explained that the group currently is in the critical questions phase. Based on the discussion at the last meeting, Dowell summarized that a number of pathways are beginning to emerge including: Mission/Purpose, Governance/Structure, Role, and Scope/Authority. He explained that one of the goals for today's meeting is to prioritize the critical questions that were discussed so that the group could discuss and agree on the individuals to bring in as part of the Gathering Information phase. Moving forward, Dowell mentioned a 1/3 format for the meetings that would include 1/3 housekeeping business, 1/3 education (presentations, testimony, etc.), and 1/3 discussion to get to the decision-making phase.

## 3. Review of Critical Questions and Discuss Survey Results

In between the meetings, a brief survey was sent to all Task Force members, asking them to prioritize the critical questions that were discussed at the last meeting on October 15<sup>th</sup>. Citizens League staff member Pahoua Hoffman was asked to explain the brief report she sent out by email summarizing the survey results. She explained that 16 of the 19 members completed the survey. Since the first of two questions in the survey asked members to rank the critical questions from 1-12, she explained that she wanted to capture how members were ranking the 12 questions including which questions were ranked as members' #1 and so forth down to #12. She referred to the report and explained how she presented the top rankings and the bottom rankings. She also explained how she inserted the more qualitative information from the second survey question that asked members to indicate which questions were "critical" to the project, "maybe, if time permits," and no longer a priority. Lastly, she mentioned that she also included the suggested language changes that were offered via the survey. She highlighted what seemed like the top six questions in blue.

Hoffman also shared a comment she received from a member by email concerning the survey results. The member had expressed that the results appeared to skew towards issues of governance, but the member's recollection was that questions related to specific subject issues garnered the lion share at the last discussion. As such, the member wanted to know how these rankings would influence the work moving forward. Hoffman added that she, too, remembered the longer discussion on the issue-specific questions but that could have been attributed to the fact that there were more of issues-specific questions.

A member raised a different comment concerning the question: *How should the authority for governance, coordinating, planning, operations, and funding of transportation be distributed among state, regional, and local governments?* He recalled that when this question was discussed at the previous meeting, it was in the context of transportation. However, in the survey, the word "transportation" was omitted and he wondered if the ranking would have been different had this word been kept in. The member went on to explain that the fragmentation of planning, coordination, funding, and operations around transportation is one of the most critical questions and did not want this to get lost. Staff responded that the word was taken out so that the question would be broader, but agreed to re-insert the word.

Larry Dowell asked members if they thought we were on the right track as far as the prioritization of the critical questions. Members generally agreed that the top ranked questions were the right ones, however there were comments.

A member referred to the critical questions chart that was also included in the meeting packet. The visual chart presented the critical questions in a tree diagram to show their connections to one another. The member found the chart to be very helpful but thought there was one very important and central question missing: *To whom should the Council be accountable to?* He suggested that it come before the box with the question: *Do the mission and powers of the Met Council have the appropriate measures that hold it accountable?* There was agreement by the group to add this to the tree diagram.

A couple of members expressed concern about whether the group was supposed to focus on issues of governance or specific topical issues like sewers, housing, and transportation and connected to these questions, whether there would be enough time. The member clarified that when he wanted the word transportation re-inserted, it was not so we could discuss specific transit lines and where they should be but rather what the governance structure should be to plan, coordinate, fund, and operate transportation in the region. He thought this issue may have gotten worse since the mid-90s.

Another member explained that their #1 ranked question was “*How should the Council better balance immediate needs vs. future needs of the region*” because they thought this group’s work should be broader than specific issues.

A different member indicated he was torn because he’s not sure whether we should go back to revisit historical decisions made concerning the Council or work to answer more concrete questions about transportation governance. He did not think we had enough time to go back to revisit the past, but thought that if we could accept the Council for what it is and work on the issues that have risen up politically, he thought that was a better place for the group’s work.

A member added clarification to a previous comment that was reported. She was concerned that only those questions ranked high would influence the work of the group when it was her impression that the discussions around specific issues garnered the most discussion time at the last meeting. She said she would rather spend more time discussing specific issues than issues of governance. Another member added that she thought more time was spent discussing the specific issue topics under scope and authority because the members gave themselves permission to do this but have “kept a cork in their mouth” and holding back on discussing governance questions, which she explained was her preference.

A member commented that in terms of allocation of time, he thought there were two major issues: 1) Governance: how are members selected, who they are accountable to, etc. and 2) Scope and Authority. Because he did not think the group had time to take on both, he commented that he’d rather the group take time to discuss and debate these two rather than spend time asking external people to come present. He thinks the members have a lot of ideas about governance and scope and authority but have not had a chance to fully discuss them.

Another member agreed with the two items but added that she felt the group needed to first get through governance and hear from other outside people in order to meaningfully contribute to scope and authority discussion. A different member suggested flipping the order, starting first with scope and policy and then discussing how to govern it. This was supported by other members who did not think you could decide how to govern it before you know what it is: how do you know its form before you know its function? A member commented that in the Citizens League 1967 report, it did recommend a particular governance structure given the specific scope and authority – one was tied to the other and one could not simply pick and choose.

Larry Dowell began to wrap up the discussion by summarizing that there seemed to be agreement among the members that these are the two areas of focus: governance and scope/authority. He asked if anyone disagreed. A member chimed in that he’d rather not have two focus areas and would rather have the group make a decision on which one to tackle first. Another member said he agreed but that we should do that through the lens of an agreed-upon mission.

Dowell proposed that since everyone agreed to take on the first question of what should the purpose and mission be, he asked member to participate in a non-binding vote with a show of hands on what should be the second item the group should take on. Governance/Structure garnered three votes. Scope and Authority received the majority of the votes.

#### **4. Confirm List of Interviewees**

Larry Dowell opened up the discussion by asking if people had thoughts on whom we should bring in given the previous discussion and the agreement that the group would first focus on purpose and mission. Suggestions were made to ask Michael Langley from GreaterMSP, Gary Cunningham, Bruce Katz from the Brookings Institute who has studied other regional arrangements, and if possible, get other outside perspectives from Denver, San Diego, and other examples from around the country. It was also suggested that there are many good thinkers within the Regional Council of Mayors who are adept at articulating how each city is part of a larger whole. One member pointed out that there were natural groupings to some of the names on the list and suggested grouping them and creating a panel of speakers as a way to get several speakers to come through. Curt Johnson was suggested by several members as he has studied and written about every metropolitan area in the country. Ethan Seltzer, a Minnesota native but now professor of urban studies and planning in Portland was also suggested. Katherine Kersten was suggested since the views she holds are held by others. Myron Orfield was also suggested to provide a historical perspective.

Co-chair Arntz explained that the next four meetings would be focused on bringing in guest speakers and that by the second meeting in January, the group would then focus where it should go given the information gathering. It may be decided at that time that we can't take on everything discussed today. Larry Dowell closed the discussion by indicating that the intent is not to have two hours of solid presentations. Instead, staff and leadership would figure out a process and a format that would allow time for presentations and discussion.

#### **5. Presentation: Demographic Trends in Minnesota**

Executive Director, Sean Kershaw introduced Susan Brower, the state demographer. Kershaw explained that he asked her to come present on the big trends that are impacting the state and the region. In a future meeting, Todd Graham, the demographer for the Met Council will present more regional and detailed trends. Brower's PowerPoint presentation covered three major trends: population aging, increasing diversity, and labor force growth. She also provided data on projected growth. Some highlights included:

- More people are migrating out of Minnesota than we are gaining. The gap is currently being filled by international migration. International migration is the big wild card.
- The growing younger population is more diverse.
- The state demographer's projected growth for the region has consistently been lower than the Met Council's projections by about 12,000 a year – a difference of about 300,000 people by 2040.

A member asked Brower if her office would be cutting population growth numbers from household type, something the office has not done since 2007. He explained how important it was to see the data cut this way to see housing trends and housing planning.

A member was surprised to see the slower growth in exurban counties and wondered if this decline would continue. Another member commented how technology might change growth patterns.

#### **6. Next Steps & Evaluation**

Co-chair Arntz summarized next steps by explaining that at the next meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup>, the discussion will focus on purpose and mission. She explained that staff and the Co-chairs would put an agenda together to reflect this. After purpose and mission, the group could then shift towards scope and authority then finally to governance and role. Co-chair Arntz suggested the critical questions tree be rearranged to reflect this order. After Co-chair Arntz explained the Citizens League

meeting evaluation process of evaluating the meeting on a scale of 1-5, 1 being poor and 5 being exceptional, the members evaluated the meeting as follows: 5, 5, 5, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, and 5. Average 4.3 Co-chair Arntz polled members on the next meeting dates to see who would not be present.

**7. Adjourn**

Co-Chair Arntz adjourned the meeting at 6:05 p.m.