

Business Roundtable Meeting Notes - October 30, 2001
235 Promenade Street, Room 300, 3:30 – 5:00 Providence

Attendees: D. Moon, J. Martiesian, A. Vitale, K. Camp, T. Powers, H. Gadon, R. Vanderslice, A. Cantara, G. Ezvoski, R. Hittinger, R. Austin, B. Mendoza, R. Kleinman, R. Bibo, J Meyer and T. Aubee

DEM: J. Reitsma, G. McAvoy, F. Vincent, A. Good, T. Gray, L. Hellested, B. Ballou, R. Gagnon, B. Migliore, J. Keller, J. Tosches and T. Getz

The director began the meeting with brief introductory remarks. The June Meeting notes were accepted as written.

II. Old Business

1. Budget Update

The Director began the meeting with an update of the 2002 budget. The budget is projected to run a significant deficit and all state agencies are required to cut back expenditures. In DEM capital projects like Stillwater Dam and development of Snake Den Park were being put on hold. The DEM is in a hiring freeze and the department is going through its vacancy list and prioritizing all vacancies. The director, when questioned, said the DEM permit streamlining effort will continue and some funding would be included in our budget as part of our baseline appropriation.

2. Greenhouse Gas / Energy Policy Discussion

Janet Keller said there would be a meeting this Friday of the stakeholders group. This group will be providing suggestions for greenhouse gas emission reductions. She mentioned that additional information on greenhouse gas reductions could be found at the following web site: <http://righg.raabassociates.org/>

The goal of the group is to develop a Greenhouse Action Plan by the end of 2002. The stakeholders will help to set the state goals. This is a joint endeavor with the RI Energy Office and dovetails with the effort of the New England Governors and Canadian Premiers.

Gary Ezvoski said this is an interesting project and the business community should support DEM by actively participating in the process.

3. Permit Streamlining Update

The director gave a brief update on the DEM's permit streamlining effort. The Wetlands Report was finalized and there will be a meeting in January to review the progress of the implementation of recommendations. The Waste Site Remediation and the ISDS Task Forces have completed their work.

The ISDS Task Force identified cesspools as a problem. Replacing these devices will be a challenge and there will be a need for revolving loans to cover the cost of replacing them. The local communities will also be needed to help in the administration of this program through local ordinances or wastewater management districts.

Variances were identified as a problem. There is a current backlog of about six months to process these applications. DEM receives more variance applications and they are difficult lots to evaluate. DEM does allow Innovative / Alternative Technology to be used on these sites.

One issue that was identified with all three Task Forces was quality of application submitted by some consultants. The iterative reviews cause unnecessary delays in the process. DEM is considering staff or joint training sessions with RISEP or other organizations to work on improving application quality.

4. Dams Update

Dam safety legislation did not pass last year. Some problems noted as to why the legislation did not pass were lack of funding and the perception that DEM was infringing on the homeowner's rights. DEM will use existing authority to inspect dams. DEM is also looking to bring the Task Force together to look at other alternatives. A revised approach may eliminate some of the incentives for municipality participation including the revolving loan fund. DEM is considering revisions to the regulations that detail the responsibility of dam owners, and streamline the wetlands permit process. In some instances general permits will be used streamline the process to allow maintenance on dams.

III. New Business

1. Institute for Business Home Safety

Jerry Meyer and Linda Barron briefed the roundtable participants on the ability of small businesses to cope with losses that are caused by natural disasters such as dam failures, floods, hail etc. They mentioned that small businesses do not have the capacity to sustain a loss of income for longer than about a week. It is important that small businesses be proactive and develop mitigation plans. Gerry and Linda talked about a disaster planning toolkit that was developed by the Institute for Business Home Safety and encouraged people to plan for expected events such as hurricanes and snowstorms.

2. Rhode Island Corporate Restoration Partnership

Bob Bibo and Rich Kleinman briefed the group on the Rhode Island Corporate Wetlands Restoration Project. The purpose of the program is to leverage corporate funding with federal funds to work on habitat restoration projects. Funding from corporations could come from cash or in-kind contributions. The organization's goal in Rhode Island is to raise one million dollars for these purposes. To date one hundred thousand dollars has been raised. The partnership will work with people on restoration opportunities. Sponsors benefits include knowing they are

responsible for a restoration project, site acknowledgement of sponsors, and planned press events.

The director supported the initiative and pointed out that this is important for watershed restoration projects. There is a need for a steady stream of funding for these projects. In addition, these funds can be used to leverage additional federal funds.

3. RISEP Training

The Waste Site Remediation Permit Streamlining Task Force recommended that DEM should collaborate with the consultant community to provide training opportunities that would clarify some of the policies that were developed by the Task Force. Rich Hittinger, a representative of the RI Society of Environmental Professionals briefly talked about these proposals. To date, two opportunities for training were being planned:

- January 2002 – Review of Task Force changes focussing on the Marginal Risk Policy and Settlement Agreement
- Spring 2002 – Site Remediation 101 Course

4. Dredge Regulations Update

The Department of Environmental Management held a public hearing Thursday, September 6 on proposed amendments to regulations governing the disposal of dredge material on land. The proposed amendments will significantly update Appendix B of the Rules and Regulations for Composting Facilities and Solid Waste Management Facilities, which governs the land management and disposal of dredge materials. The amendments promote the environmentally responsible and cost-effective management of dredged materials by defining the review process and alternatives for beneficial reuse or disposal of dredged material on land. The proposed amendments do not cover the disposal of dredged materials in the water.

DEM worked with the Coastal Resources Management Council, the RI Marine Trades Association and Save the Bay to develop the proposed amendments, which promote the beneficial use of clean, safe dredged materials while ensuring that contaminated material is properly managed.

5. Toxic Free Schools Project: Corporate Stewardship Opportunity

Bob Vanderslice of the RI Health Department briefed the group on the RI Toxic Free School Program. Bob said that chemical storage in schools is a major hazard. In the 1993-1998 timeframe, schools ranked first in the number of victims affected by a chemical release event. He is working with corporations to help schools decrease this risk by reducing the amount of hazardous materials used in the labs. Lee Fisk is a contact in EPA Region 1 that could be used as a resource. Lee can be reached at (617) 918-1847.

6. Open Space / Recreation Planning Update

Fred Vincent briefed the group on DEM's open space efforts. He said that last fiscal year DEM and its partners purchased over 3,400 acres of land. Fred mentioned that \$2.7 million was leveraged with other funds to purchase property appraised at over \$18 million. The funding for this year has been exhausted. DEM has finalized the purchase of fifteen properties and approximately fifty other projects were in the works.

7. Open Forum

Tom Aubee raised the issue of distributive generation, which is the generation of electricity in de-centralized settings. He was looking for a forum to discuss gas micro-turbines and hydrogen fuel cell technology. He mentioned that there is a need for back-up power in sources that rely on controlled environments and where continuous computer access is needed. He also mentioned that he was aware of a state that was pushing the procurement of the use of alternative fuels and questioned why there was not regional incentives being proposed.

Mr. Aubee was advised that this was a good issue to discuss with the Greenhouse Gas stakeholder group. Gary Ezvoski mentioned that distributive generation was being actively discussed and said there were some difficult questions to work out, i.e., What are the contingency plans if there are disruptions in the alternative energy supply? Should there be redundancies built into the infrastructure for the alternative energy supplies? Who will fund the cost of building the infrastructure?

IV. Future Meetings

Future meeting of the Roundtable will be held on the following dates:

February 28, 2002

May 23, 2002

July 25, 2002

October 24, 2002

The group will meet in room 300, 235 Promenade Street, Providence from 3:30 to 5:00.