

## **United Growth for Kent County, Inc. Minutes of Coalition Meeting September 17, 2007**

Present: Brad Garmon of Michigan Environmental Council; Christine Helms-Maletic, Midtown Neighborhood Association; Cynthia Price, Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council; Paul Haan, Healthy Homes Coalition; Bonnie Blackledge, Cannon Twp.; Russ Lewis, Market Manager for the West Side Market; Linda Frey, U.S. Green Building Council; Marsha Wilcox, Vergennes Twp.; Mike Cary, interested citizen; Herb Ranta, interested citizen; Carol Townsend, Kent/MSU Extension; Kendra Wills, Kent/MSU-Extension; Chris Kordis, urban planning graduate and Kent/MSU Extension intern; Betty Blase, Kent/MSU Extension; Mike Williams, Aquinas College.

A brief meeting was held after the Land Use Networking Luncheon, where Peter Wege was given the second annual Land Use Stewardship award. Chair Paul Haan called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

**MICHIGAN ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL (MEC) PRESS CONFERENCE:** Brad Garmon explained that, in addition to wanting to attend the luncheon, he wanted to ask for UGKC participation in an upcoming press conference. The purpose for the press conference is to make the point that designing communities so they are less auto-dependent is a key tactic in the fight against climate change. Though the invitation was last-minute, having only recently been decided upon by MEC, a few UGKC members said they would attend. There will also be 2 other press conferences around the state, including Lansing. Paul Haan said he would say a few words on UGKC's behalf.

**COMMENTS ON LAND USE NETWORKING LUNCHEON:** Amid many favorable comments the following points were brought up in rapid succession: 1) There should have been more commissioners there and we should work on that; 2) It would be useful to add the affiliation of the 3-minute updaters to the program; 3) The elected officials present should be recognized; 4) We might need a bigger room; 5) The 3-minute limit seemed perfect this year; 6) The participation, especially in the updates, showed the breadth of UGKC participation; 7) Only about 8 of those attending were not members; 8) The time and venue for the networking was perfect; 9) Make sure the caterers don't take the dessert away while the speakers are on, since people may be waiting for them to finish to get dessert; 10) Peter Wege seemed pleased; and 11) There should be a very brief update given by someone, probably the chair, about UGKC itself.

**CLEAN KENT COUNTY CAMPAIGN OF WMEAC AND CLEAN WATER FUND:** We considered our response to the presentation at the last meeting. Several people said that the way they saw it, no response is absolutely necessary. The report is aimed at the Kent County Commission, to ask them to create a work group on septic systems, so UGKC is not really called on to make a decision.

The organizations had already presented to Kent County, and someone said they had talked to a commissioner who was not impressed. The commissioner said there would have to be a compelling reason to spend the amount of money sufficient to run a regulatory program, and he did not feel the case was made. There was the sense that fees might be assessed, or even individual homeowners might be willing to pay for some kind of community-based treatment systems.

People also wondered what the actual impact to surface water and groundwater would be, and how much of an improvement the initiative could be expected to achieve. This was not in the report, though there were statistics about the amount of untreated water being discharged.

Those present decided to take a wait-and-see attitude, and reconsider it if WMEAC and Clean Water Fund asked us to. The consensus was that we were generally supportive, but unless there was a specific ask would not take any action.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cynthia Price