

City of Lawrence
Peak Oil Task Force
January 20, 2009 (4:30 PM) Meeting notes

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Vice Mayor Rob Chestnut, Scott Allegrucci, Michael Almon, Rex Buchanan, Tom Kern, Joe King, Dean Palos, Dan Wildcat, Scott Zaremba, Charles March, Paula Phillips, Nancy Thellman
MEMBERS ABSENT:	Paul Dietz
STAFF PRESENT:	Cynthia Boecker
PUBLIC PRESENT:	
GUESTS:	

Vice Mayor Rob Chestnut welcomed members of the task force and thanked them for their service on this group.

Following introductions, Vice Mayor Chestnut outlined the agenda for this meeting, to include a discussion of the issues relating to peak oil at a higher level and an overview of the Resolution creating this task force, including task force objectives.

Michael Almon presented an overview of the peak oil issue. Peak oil is the term for energy resource depletion, specifically, the peak in global oil extraction and relates to three areas: the rate of oil extraction, the rate of new discovery of oil and the rate of increase in global demand. The rate of oil extraction has grown almost every year of the last century. The use curve of oil has surpassed the discovery curve since about 1980. In a nutshell, demand is outstripping supply, leading to price inflation.

Peak oil is as much an economic issue as it is an environmental issue. The costs and consequences are felt anywhere oil plays a role – essentially everywhere. The Mayor's Climate Protection Task Force, which was established last year and will be making recommendations to the City Commission soon, has had an emphasis on climate and energy use, the focus of this group should be on energy use and its affect on an oil dependant economy.

In the United States, we are almost 100% dependant on oil in the transportation sector. The price of oil drops when demand drops and has an effect on other sectors of the economy. Oil-linked price inflation in food, commuting, construction, health care, consumer goods and the like will have the greatest impact locally. With oil central to our economy, disruptions could be severe and emergency planning is most effective when done locally. Federal solutions take longer to implement, so near term local mitigation is necessary.

The City of Portland, Oregon has developed a plan for mitigation of the peak oil issue and might be a good model for our review.

In review of the resolution creating the task force, the group discussed some of the objectives and what the city needs to do to operationally address the issue of peak oil. The group also discussed how we communicate to the public as we investigate issues and how emergency planning should be executed.

The group discussed what is meant when we talk about Lawrence: do we mean city government or the community as a whole? It was decided that the definition may be context-dependent. It

was general consensus that it is the responsibility of the city to identify exposure issues, but the whole community should be involved in developing a response plan.

Education is also a key to the situation, with lower oil prices, the economic impact is not as immediate. The need to tie to the issue to economics in order to help people be more engaged, and interested in the issue was discussed.

The group also discussed the scope of review, and determined that the focus should be looking at the big picture and longer term in ways that people can understand and relate to: particularly quality of life and liveability of the community issues. While we will look at the big picture and longer term, we should use this as a context by which to evaluate what we can do locally.

The final product of the group should compliment rather than contradict any recommendations of the Climate Protection Task Force.

The group discussed the possibility of bringing in speakers to assist in our review of the issues and in development of a plan. Such resources could be subject area experts or individuals from communities which have adopted peak oil responses.

The group asked Cynthia Boecker to identify other communities which have addressed the issue so that we may evaluate bringing someone in to provide some guidance.

The group discussed utilization of the term peak oil and the fact that it might be confusing and not widely accepted or understood. The group also decided it was important not to argue the science of the issue and try not to focus on the timeline of when oil reserves may be depleted but recognize that something needs to be done at the local level and sooner only helps the situation.

The group identified possible next steps, to include:

- Receiving draft of the Climate Protection Task Force draft plan
- Checking with other communities in determining how to approach the issue
- Determine what data is available regarding the national impact
- Identification of subgroups

Vice Mayor Chestnut will work with staff to identify future meeting dates, times and locations and provide that information to the group. Group consensus was to focus on Thursdays at 4:00 as possible.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.