

City of Lawrence

Peak Oil Task Force

April 23, 2009 (4:00 PM) Meeting notes

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

Housekeeping Notes

Paul Dietz has resigned from the task force. At a future meeting the group should discuss options relating to filling this vacancy.

A suggestion was made to hold future meetings in the City Commission meeting room. Assistant City Manager Cynthia Boecker explained that the only conference room available on Thursdays is the fourth floor conference room.

A revised draft of the March 26, 2009 meeting summary was submitted for discussion. As time did not allow review and approve them, they will be reviewed at the May 28 meeting.

After a discussion, the task force decided, that from now on, we will follow the S.A.B. meeting notes protocol – staff will prepare a draft and e-mail them to Task Force members for comment; any revisions will be ratified at the next meeting; the notes will then be posted to the POTF web page.

At the 26 March meeting, staff had been requested to report on POTF e-mail protocol options that comply with the Kansas Open Meetings Law guidelines. Options are: blog ([Blog - what is it?](#)), e-mails to undisclosed recipients (BCC), e-mails to less than POTF majority, WIKI ([Wiki - what is it?](#)). There were no report details, nor was there time to discuss, so we will take it up at the 28 May meeting.

Conference Calls with Other Peak Oil Groups

The group conducted conference calls with representatives from the Austin, Texas Peak Oil Task Force and Transition Boulder County regarding their Peak Oil efforts.

Austin Peak Oil Task Force

Task force members participated in a conference call with Shems Duval, Staff Coordinator of Austin Peak Oil Task Force and Esther Matthews, Climate Protection Program Director for the City of Austin. The task force in Austin was appointed by the City Manager, based on a City Commission Resolution and was comprised of members from within the city and outside agencies. Ms. Duval will send a list of all participants, which included representatives from Crude Awakening Austin, Texas Gas Service, Austin Energy, The City of Austin, the Austin Police Force, and more. The group met two to three times per month for the first several months to brainstorm process and then met less frequently as a work plan developed.

The group focused on studying four sectors and had subgroups which studied each of the following sectors: transportation and land use; agriculture and water; business, economy and jobs; and low income populations and public service.

Their planning process began with interviews of selected stakeholders to establish the extent of energy risk factors and the level of awareness in the community. The list included the Housing Authority, food banks, groceries, the Chamber of Commerce, and more (Ms. Duval will provide the list of stakeholders and interview

questions). Then they compiled their findings, from which they wrote their report recommendations. The report categories included electric energy efficiency, social impacts, land use, agriculture, transportation, etc.

For electric conservation, Austin Energy is the City owned utility, generating with 400MW coal, 400MW nuclear, 700MW natural gas, and 100MW renewable energy. Austin Energy plans to be carbon neutral by 2020, using 30% renewables, nuclear, and achieving 700MW of efficiency, up from the current 400MW.

For social impacts and transportation impacts of Peak Oil, they are recommending greater use of electric vehicles, buses and transit, greater use of light rail, and bicycle facilities including a bicycle share program.

For land use considerations, they have not proposed any regulatory changes. Instead, they are encouraging practices of open space preservation, community gardens, clothes line provisos, solar lot orientation, etc.

There is no integration into a statewide plan as Texas does not currently have a state-wide response to the Peak Oil issue.

The callers indicated that public engagement was minimal and that there was little public participation outside of the members of the task force. When asked about lessons learned, they noted that they failed to link more closely with the local emergency management group and that group should have been brought in to the process as a stakeholder earlier. The sustainable food group – Austin Sustainable Food Center – should have been brought to the process earlier as well.

The Peak Oil Plan was not written by the task force, but by the City staff. It consists mostly of a goal driven strategy rather than a data driven strategy that would be quantifiable. They say the Plan should have more quantifiable goals and clear direction. They indicated that activists would have liked to have seen stronger recommendations.

The plan should be presented to the City Manager by mid-May and should be public by the end of May.

Following the call, Mayor Rob Chestnut highlighted the theme of two-tier emergency planning – short and long term. The group suggested that we want to bring in the Douglas County Emergency Management Department so that they are aware of energy depletion risks, and can help with our planning. Ms. Boecker was asked to contact Teri Smith with Douglas County EMS to invite her participation in the process.

Mayor Chestnut said that in a sudden energy crisis, City provided services would need to shrink to core services. He said that public services like water, sewer and trash are not subject to curtailment without serious consequences, and the private sector activities have more flexibility to adapt. One element of our peak oil plan will be to build elasticity into City programs.

While recognizing the importance of consistent public services in an emergency, Mr. Almon pointed out that flexibility in the private sector is highly income-dependent. The less well off have no economic cushion against the shock of a crisis (energy or economic). They have little or no discretionary income, and they live paycheck to paycheck when paying for basic needs of food, fuel, medical, and shelter. Our peak oil plan cannot simply rely on market forces to allocate resources, but it will need a community support element.

The group recognized that Austin as a larger city struggled with the issue of community involvement and awareness.

Sarah Hill Nelson with Bowersock was identified as an additional possible future speaker.

Conference call with Transition Boulder County

The task force held a conference call with Michael Brownlee, the co-founder of Transition Boulder County, a consulting organization that began in 2005 to address the “trifecta” response to peak oil, climate destabilization, and economic collapse. Their focus is threefold: greatly increase energy resilience, decrease

greenhouse gas emissions, and strengthen the local economy. In particular, they emphasize buying local, growing food locally, local energy production, and local currencies. They work as a catalyst for communities in transition to a post-carbon economy, and recently became part of the Post Carbon Institute.

Transition Boulder County began as a local initiative, but have since branched out. While the City of Boulder has not responded particularly well, Boulder County government has, and is taking measures to prepare for peak oil and educate county municipalities. A partnership of government and community organizations is critical for transition, because initiatives from citizenry are best achieved if government engages the entire community with levers of incentives and regulations and funding. Boulder County has purchased 40,000 acres of open space that can be made available for food production.

A main principal of transition to sustainability is that it needs to go beyond individual actions, on to effective actions being taken by entire communities. A community wide plan will be an "energy descent plan", and have short term and long term components. Such a plan will best emphasize sustainable ways of living rather than alternative fuels, with an ultimate goal of reducing energy use. And it will include a local food system as a key vehicle for energy reduction and local economic strength. Local food will entail things like backyard chickens, conversion of global commodity agriculture to local specialty crop production, training programs to teach farming skills (ie. Univ. of Colorado Extension), and financing mechanisms for small parcel purchases. In England, local governments are providing funding for their transition initiatives.

He stressed that a local transition initiative will set community wide goals for energy conservation and greenhouse gas reductions. A good educational effort would be a "carbon neutral campaign", but it must go beyond simple education, and set quantifiable targets and methodologies. He said they have found good receptivity in emergency preparedness departments.

Agenda for May 28 meeting

It was suggested that at our next meeting we determine how we want to structure our sub-committees, and what those categories will be.