



## White River Vision Plan Transition Team | Meeting 4 Notes

Videoconference

Thursday June 4 2:30-4pm

### Attendance

#### Team Members

Matt Cohoat, Co-Chair  
Sam Odle, Co-Chair  
Betsy McCaw  
Brian Payne  
Aaron Smith  
Julie Thompson  
Amy Warner

#### Panelists

Phyllis Boyd  
Mark Fisher  
Rev. David Greene  
Anna Gremling  
Tom Killian  
Rob Vesprille  
Olgen Williams

#### Staff

Brad Beaubien  
Sarah Buckner  
Matt Carter  
Carmen Lethig  
Emily Mack  
Andrea Miller  
Brenda Myers

### Q&A:

**BRENDA Q: A CONSISTENT THEME HAS BEEN A CONCERN OF REDUNDANCY, WHETHER YOU'RE AN ORGANIZATION OR AN INDIVIDUAL. CAN ANYONE HERE SPEAK TO THEIR THOUGHTS ON CONCERNS OF REDUNDANCY AND OVERLAP.**

**Rob:** Well currently, since we don't try to do anything but farm it, we're not really doing development. But we do deal with things like runoff... As far as working with govt entities, again, I don't really have a lot of issues. My biggest issues would be that flood plains haven't been protected like they should be. When HC bought Koteewi park, they built up that roadway, that area used to flood, and now it doesn't flood as quickly - that's hundreds of acres that can't flood. I would never be able to do it as a private landowner. But now there are draining issues where the water backs up.... And it just hasn't been maintained. No one is taking responsibility for things like dredging. There's no money for one, and no consensus on who should take ownership.

**BRAD: RELATED TO THAT ROB, HAVE YOU SEEN INCREASED FLOODING IN YOUR FLOODPLAIN?**

**Rob:** yes, we've seen increased floodplain. Regardless of where you sit on the climate change, we get bigger rains now, more flooding. All the parking lots are also a big concern.

**Brad:** any estimates on economic impact?

**Rob:** People say you have crop insurance, but it's like car insurance. You get to a point where the premiums just won't be worth it. The water levels are rising. We can only sustain so many days of flooding over crops before you're going to be replanting.

**BETSY: WHERE SHOULD INITIAL FOCUS BE.**

**Tom:** need to address the health of the river system before we do anything else. And while that may be less exciting than other topics, it has got to be addressed.

**Rev Greene:** Gentrification, existing homeowners being pushed out, bought out, removed. No strategy for where they're going. Equity has to be an important lens. Can start with environmental piece, as long as minorities are part of all aspects of the conversation and have access to the economic opportunity. Must mitigate speculative acquisition/development.

**Phyllis:** Green infrastructure. Made huge investment in tunnel, but know that's not enough. Workforce development for green infrastructure.

**EMILYK: RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENSURE DIVERSITY OF VOICES ARE HEARD.**

**BRENDA: I'M GOING TO PIGGYBACK ON THAT QUESTION. ONE OF THE STRUGGLES OF THIS COMMITTEE, IS THE NEED TO HAVE TEETH, GOVT. TEETH, BUT ALSO HAVE PHILANTHROPIC ARM WHERE THEY'RE ABLE TO SECURE MORE FUNDING. SO WHO SHOULD SIT ON THIS TEAM, WITHOUT THIS BEING 30 PEOPLE? HOW DO YOU MAKE SURE A DIVERSITY OF VOICES ARE BEING HEARD WITHOUT HAVING AN ENORMOUS ORGANIZATION?**

**Tom:** one thing that has been made clear is the need for POC to be part of the leadership, part of the decision making team, b/c otherwise action will be very difficult. Whether it's 5 or 30, it has to be representative, and POC need to be part of the leadership.

**Olgen:** Also have to look at the economic diversity. Gentrification is a fear...people on the river don't necessarily have a history with the river, or look like the neighborhood. South part of river wants to be treated same as north, same voice, same time, same opportunity. Have concerns about environmental justice, not being aware of whats coming down the river. We have to have an input. Our future is here.

**BRAD: ANNA, HOW DO YOU BALANCE REPRESENTING AN ORGANIZATION THAT COVERS SO MANY AREAS?**

**Anna:** It's hard. It's oftentimes v difficult for people to take off their municipal hat or jurisdiction hat, and think of the good for the wider community. Some are better than others, but it is very difficult. On the regional level, our board lacks diversity, and that's because our board is required to be elected officials. That's something the group should think about.

**AARON: HOW DO YOU BALANCE ELECTED OFFICIALS WITH RESIDENTS/OTHER STAKEHOLDERS:**

**Anna:** Would include elected officials, as well as at large stakeholders. Maybe those stakeholders are residents from along the river or... Maybe the elected officials are there for the accountability, and the stakeholders are there for the representation. Elected bring the funding and authority and match, stakeholders provide the balance.

**BETSY: THE DESIRE FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS IS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY - IS THERE ANOTHER WAY TO CREATE ACCOUNTABILITY?**

**Anna:** Hoosier Heritage Port Authority...each community had seats, highest elected official got to put people there.

**Mark:** IndyGo Board has different appointing authorities. Capital Improvement Board, Airport Authority similar. Municipal Corporations are independent boards, but the, budget still has to be approved by city-county council...appointing authority and budgetary approval authority not the same.

**BETSY: HOW DO YOU AVOID CYCLES? ONE OF MY BIGGEST CONCERNS, IS THAT WHEN ELECTED OFFICIALS ARE INVOLVED YOU ARE MOVING WITH A PARTY NOT A COMMUNITY. AND WHEN CHANGE, LOSE HISTORY, TRUST, UNDERSTANDING.**

**Mark:** Party mix requirements, terms that outlast administrative terms. Central Indiana, have strongly advocated for direct involvement/appointing for boards. Do not see scenario without having elected officials. Transit discussion big on regional gov...how power balanced between counties. Marion County fearful of not having proportional representation.

**Anna.** Alternating turnover so don't have complete turnover all at once.

**BRAD: WHAT'S YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON WHO SHOULD BE ON THE BOARD?**

**Mark.** You have to be v careful with an all appointee board, because then it is not representative.

You will have more buy-in if you have electeds.

**Sam:** You also have to have a certain level of expertise when you talk about managing the river. That's prob the reason for its current condition - not having the level of expertise necessary. How do you make sure the expertise is in the room, as well as the rep?

**BRAD: HOW DOES THE BALANCE OF POWER WORK WITH ALL YOUR DIFFERENT BOARDS? (TO ANNA)**

**Anna:** Technical committee is engineers/planners. They help come up with clear technical objectives on how to distribute funds. That's how we score projects....staff recommendations then go to technical and then policy.

**BETSY: HOW MANY TECH COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE APPROVED VS REMOVED.**

**Anna:** Recommendations are almost always followed. They may not like it, but they have bought into the process, which they spent a lot of time building that process.

**BRENDA: HOW DO YOU TRANSLATE REGIONAL PLANS TO GRANULAR PROPERTY LEVEL.**

**Anna:** Really incentivize projects to have public input prior to bringing project to the region. Not the role of regional person to be talking about an individual member's path. Use scoring process to encourage them to do that engagement.

**SAM: HOW DO YOU SCORE FOR DIVERSITY AND EQUITY.**

**Anna:** Has been a challenge. Good example is 38th St. Residents there want us to slow down traffic near the fairground. But then east of that, they don't want us to put in a bus lane. There's no one response as to what a community thinks. We try to drive those convos to happen at the local level, not regional.

**Phyllis:** Experts in infrastructure aren't experts in equity - so technical committees can't just be technical. It needs to include equity, and other types of professionals.

**Anna:** we rely on a number of firms to help us with conversations, we have a lot of different tools, it just depends on the project.

**BETSY: WHAT EXPERTISE IS NEEDED ON THE GOVERNANCE ENTITY VS THE OPERATING:**

**Phyllis:** I'm not sure what individuals you need to select to ensure equity. Just saying "you need to have people of color" does not mean that those persons will have the know how to embed equity in the process. You can't take it for granted that any people of color will enable equity.

**Matt:** Need to define what expertise in equity means

**Phyllis:** Ask them what they've done, and how they've accomplished it. Don't just assume.

**BRAD: THE SAME FEAR THAT MC HAS ABOUT GENTRIFICATION, IS THE SAME THING THAT MANY OF OUR RURAL NEIGHBORS ARE FEARING IN HC. ROB, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT REPRESENTATION?**

**Rob:** Love what we have, love the rural life. Not just a lifestyle, its our labor, its what we've done for hundreds of years. Happy to share the river with everyone, but never support use of eminent domain for recreational facilities. Want to have a seat at the table, a valid seat. Other way to get expertise is non-voting people, appointed. Have to have people who are vested in the river corridor. Can see how this could evolve into a corporate structure over time...may start off ok but gradually lose touch with community.

**AARON: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GET INFORMATION, TO BE TRANSPARENT, TO COMMUNICATE.**

**Mark:** Shortcomings of traditional public meetings. Indy DMD's orange public hearing signs impactful...."hey, something is happening right here". Has to be multiple ways.

**Tom:** Engaging has to occur before decisions are made.

**Olgen:** Neighborhoods come together thru Near West Collaborative. Communicate with the organizations, inform them early enough, and be accommodating of residents. But representation is critical. People closest to it need to be empowered to engage. Not just communicate to, but to have neighborhood power. I don't want to just talk about it, I want to have a vote. Challenge of engaging new people moving to the neighborhood. Also have to check with the groups to make sure they're doing their part.

**BETSY: TWO THEMES: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND RECREATION. WHERE RECREATION GETS PLACED MAKES DIFFERENCE ON WHO BENEFITS AND WHAT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MAY OCCUR. BY NATURE THE POTENTIAL OF GENTRIFICATION. ARE THERE MECHANISMS WE CAN USE SO EXISTING COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM BOTH HEALTH RIVER AND THE RECREATIONAL AMENITIES.**

**Olgen:** People who make that decision...those affected have to have meaningful vote, not just one seat. Can't just have the experts, the elected. If doing something in Haughville, Haughville needs to vote. Work with people in the community. You may think you are, but you need to make sure you're talking to the right people in the community.

**Mark:** In the short term, it's the predatory practices on the front end. People going in buying property under misrepresenting motivation.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

**BrianP:** People from neighborhood, people of color, have to have real power, not just representation. Otherwise we're just checking a box. If we have to have too many elected, then won't have real power. Both rural and urban. Worry about having to have too many elected officials, who are white, and committees, who are white.

**Brenda:** Also socioeconomic.....in most neighborhoods, common thread is going to be multi-generational ownership. Worry the most about elected officials who have a lot of people screaming in their ears... It needs to be an entity that advocates passionately for everyone on the river.

**Aaron:** Important elected have to be involved in some way, but support that being in a removed way, like a reporting structure.

**Betsy:** Surprised by consistency of environment being a top concern. Seems like a way we can address in a highly equitable fashion. Came into this process thinking of how transformative of project...needed power to be able to do everything all at once. After listening the conversations, why couldn't we just start with the environment. Grow other things in. Less mechanisms needed to do that.

**Brenda:** Wouldn't that just be the White River Alliance...that's what they do?

**Betsy:** Perhaps, but need to amplify and accelerate that. Maybe that's done thru Alliance, but hasn't happened yet.

**MattCa:** One of the things we've observed, is that for some people environmental was a polarizing word - but it was broadening the tent to other tenets that brought them in ...more people/perspectives realizing environment is fundamental. Want to make sure we don't lose the big tent motivations for people to care about environment.

**Brenda:** If we don't get into equity right away, more bad will happen than good. So much policy in environment. Need communication as well as policy advocacy.

**BrianP:** Environmental groups are usually on the defense in Indiana. Wins are often just preventing policymakers from doing harm. Environmental justice and social justice go hand-in-hand. We need to help be on the offense.

**Betsy:** Like LaShawnda's brief...true community organizing, not just engagement. Build trust while building organizing effort. Need more than just the typical people who show up.

**Amy:** Similarity ideas of preserving environmental, equity, fluid transactions between gov structures. When equity...we all communicate differently. Simplify the conversation so we can all talk about the same thing....there is collision between scientific env info and impacts on...neighborhoods, property owners. Need storytellers to help us. Who benefits from activities, who has power, who has opportunities to shape this....perfect timing with social justice. Feeder system for future leadership...dynamic organization that will change because community will change, how do we create knowledge and understanding of how to steward a river. Don't just turn over...people in pipeline.

**Brenda:** We saw lots of young people excited about this.

**EmilyK:** What the health of the river means....means lots of different things. Having heard from these different groups about the importance of the environment whether it's for rec, development, farming.

**Sam:** It seems like as a group you were summarizing what the entity should do.

Communication, advocacy, protecting the river, having an equity champion - whether it's rural or urban - and the developing of future leaders. And then coordinating with other groups.

**Julie:** the health of your natural resources reflects the health of your communities around it. Drawing that line for people is important.