

## Washtenaw Council of Chambers Meeting Minutes

Date: April 22, 2008, 6:00 PM  
Dan's River Grill, Manchester

Attendees: Ann Arbor – Jesse Bernstein, Ray Rabidoux  
Ypsilanti – Diane Keller, Trish Riley  
Milan – Christine Mann  
Chelsea – Steve Olsen  
Manchester – Ray Berg, Janet Larson, Kathy Roberts, Chris Kanta, Chris Fegan,  
Karl Racenis, Sharon Curtis, Kari Newman, Pat Vaillencourt  
Ann Arbor SPARK – Michael Finney  
Washtenaw County – Mark Roby

The meeting was called to order by Ray Berg on behalf of the hosting chamber, Manchester. The agenda was approved and introductions were made.

Manchester Village President Pat Vaillencourt welcomed the attendees, and summarized the challenges and successes Manchester has experienced in the last few years.



*Pat Vaillencourt*



*Michael Finney*

Our program consisted of two guest speakers to address issues brought up at our February meeting in Milan – regional branding of Ann Arbor, and the value of joint regional growth planning.

### **Michael Finney, President and CEO, Ann Arbor SPARK**

Mr. Finney was asked to speak on ongoing programs and efforts by Ann Arbor SPARK to identify and “brand” Ann Arbor as a distinct region for commercial and industrial growth, and the associated regional planning that occurs with local communities.

Mike began with the uniqueness of “Ann Arbor” as a Googled item, compared to Manchester (which may produce results for England) or Rochester (similarly, New York). “Ann Arbor USA”, not Michigan, is the representation of all of Washtenaw County to the world. Michigan, in a “one state recession” for the last few years, and Detroit, which needs to figure itself out and do it (no reason it could not be another Chicago), are challenged by their image in the outside world.

Ann Arbor SPARK has been around for three years, after the merger of the Washtenaw Development Council and the Ann Arbor IT Zone. SPARK’s role includes academic, business and government involvement. The University of Michigan connection is particularly strong.

The guiding principles for Ann Arbor SPARK are:

1. Always sell the region as “Ann Arbor USA”.
2. Focus on high value, knowledge intensive workers and opportunities.
3. Focus on innovation in products, services, and how they are delivered.
4. Strive to be proactive rather than reactive.

In general, SPARK thinks long term, but is aggressive with short term opportunities. A key factor in Google’s placement here is that they understood that we are a center for high value, knowledge intensive talent.

Ann Arbor is recognized as one of nation’s best regions for innovative business, as an innovation hub with funding for startup entrepreneurship. We want to be an internationally recognized “brand”. So SPARK management works to get on the short list of decision makers, primarily through an extensive set of UM alumni contacts.

At the present time, Ann Arbor SPARK limits its focus to certain industries. It does not have resources to go after restaurants, retail or manufacturing (e.g., tool and die shops). It is pursuing:

- Advance automotive technologies.
- Aerospace (e.g., Aeronova)
- Energy, particularly green.

SPARK has a staff of 13. Specialist areas at SPARK include:

- Business retention and expansion.
- Business attraction.
- Business startups.
- Talent - runs career change “bootcamps” for displaced workers that are popular.
- Marketing.
- Business incubators: Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and wetlab (biosciences).

Current success stories (over the last 1-5 year period):

- \$675M new investment in Washtenaw County in past 3 years.
- 4500 new jobs committed.

- 143 startups running in community.

Their \$2.7M budget has been leveraged up to \$19M. They view their responsibility as lessening the burden on local government. They received a total \$158,000 from government, other than Washtenaw County. The new tax revenue to all jurisdictions is \$7.5M from businesses.

Several questions and answers followed with specific examples in different communities.

Visit Ann Arbor Spark at [www.annarborspark.org](http://www.annarborspark.org).

**Mark Roby, Principal Planner, Washtenaw County Dept. of Planning & Environment**

Mr. Roby was asked to speak on the Joint Municipal Planning Act of 2003 (PA 226), and its implementation through the Manchester Community Joint Planning Commission (MCJPC) to accomplish regional growth planning.

Mr. Roby introduced the background of the Southwest Washtenaw Council of Governments (SWWCOG) from 1998-2003, and the creation of the JMP Act of 2003. A Land Information Access Association (LIAA) grant to SWWCOG funded a study during 2006-07 to look at how to preserve agricultural land in the Manchester area, which led to the creation of the Manchester Community Joint Planning Commission. Other communities, such as Frankenmuth and Frankenmuth Township, were viewed as an example of successful joint municipal planning activity. The involved jurisdictions (Manchester Village, Manchester Township, Freedom Township, and Bridgewater Township) want to pursue a managed growth strategy, but are still debating whether to implement joint zoning. Mark displayed and described the “Draft Map for Discussion”, currently being developed as a Future Land Use Plan. He discussed some of the challenges of joint planning (e.g., Freedom Township concerns are different than the Village in some respects).

These minutes include an attachment which details more of the activities of the MCJPC.



*Mark Roby*



*Part of the Audience*

Questions were raised about such efforts gaining traction in the rest of Washtenaw County. The Chelsea area is currently considering applying for a LIAA Grant. There are also preliminary ef-

forts in the Saline area. The Washtenaw Metro Alliance still exists and was mentioned as a similar effort.

Pat Vaillencourt said it can be difficult at times to build trust among individual units of government, and to set aside differences and plan our future together when you address long-term joint planning and possible joint zoning.

Learn more about the Manchester Community Joint Planning Commission at:

[www.swwcog.org](http://www.swwcog.org), then click on “Manchester JPC”.

#### IMPACT! 2008 – Jesse Bernstein

Jesse spoke of this Ann Arbor Chamber public policy program. Its goals are to enhance and promote cooperation between governments and businesses, particularly on the issues, and to look at these issues county-wide. The next IMPACT program is September 10, at 7:30 AM. He is hoping to make this effort countywide attendance. Please let him know ideas for planning or presentations. He wants this to be a positive impact and emphasized the successes so far. He also mentioned the May 19 Golf Outing for the Ann Arbor Chamber - flyers available at the meeting.

#### Draft Mission Statement – Ray Berg

Ray passed out the compiled input received so far for the mission statement (also attached to these minutes). This will be discussed at the next meeting.

Roundtable: Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Chelsea, Milan and Manchester all summarized upcoming events.

Next meeting: Chelsea volunteered to hold the next meeting, in about 3 months.

Adjourned at 9:00 PM

***Our thanks to Karl Racenis of Manchester for taking notes and photos!***

WASHTENAW COUNCIL OF CHAMBERS QUARTERLY MEETING  
“Why is the Manchester Area Engaged in Joint Regional Planning?”  
April 22, 2008 – Mark Roby

Background:

- 1997, Southwest Washtenaw Council of Governments (SWWCOG) formed
- Members: Village of Manchester, Townships of Bridgewater, Freedom, Manchester and Sharon, plus Manchester Community Schools
- Growth pressures and uncoordinated development threatening quality of life
- 1999, SWWCOG requests support from Washtenaw County for assistance
- May 2003, “Southwest Washtenaw Council of Governments Regional Plan” endorsed

2003 Regional Plan Goals:

- Common future land use districts; local master plans consistent with Regional Plan
- Coordinated strategy for land uses, Coordinated zoning ordinances, Legally defensible
- Functional and scenic integrity of major traffic corridors
- Sharing resources; future public amenities & public service expansion

2006 – 2007:

- Enabling legislation: PA 226 of 2003, “Joint Municipal Planning Act”
- Michigan Townships Association; Land Information Access Association, “Partnerships for Change” technical assistance grant
- Preserving “The Manchester Experience”
- City of Frankenmuth and Frankenmuth Township example; shared history, family and community ties, common and complementary goals
- October 2007, Manchester Community Joint Planning Commission (MCJPC) formed
- Members: Village of Manchester and Townships of Bridgewater, Freedom & Manchester
- Largest joint planning commission in State of Michigan (most local jurisdictions), to date

Goals & Benefits for Manchester Community:

- Promote economic vitality and economic opportunities
- Regional vision for the Manchester community
- Market “The Manchester Experience”
- Protect Manchester’s agricultural, historic and cultural heritage, natural resources and open spaces
- Maintain small town and rural character of the region; sense of place, community identity
- Commercial and industrial uses where infrastructure exists
- Housing strategies for “Aging in Place”
- Minimize sprawl
- Form-emphasized zoning; maintain the Village’s quaint downtown image while accommodating growth

Next Steps:

- Joint master planning process underway; communication with local planning commissions
- First public workshop, estimate in June
- Approval of final draft by local governing bodies, December
- Implementation

## **Input on Mission Statement for Washtenaw Council of Chambers**

April 22, 2008

- Collaborative sharing of best practices and success stories, to both grow the individual chambers and the commercial vitality of their members
- Reacting in a common and cohesive manner to problems and their solutions affecting all of the county's chambers (e.g., county-wide millages or proposals affecting commerce, county-wide initiatives such as Wireless Washtenaw)
- Achieving cost-saving for chamber members by negotiating better group rates for insurance programs, etc. for all county chambers and their members
- Achieving a better knowledge and understanding of each other's "territories" for our mutual benefit
- Cross-referencing each others' festivals and major events
- Creating a major forum and setting for speakers and workshops on substantive issues

Compiled by Ray Berg