

MnAPA Annual Legislative Committee Retreat & Goals Session

1:00 – 4:00 pm

Cross Lake - Conzemius Cabin

Present: Co-chairs-Andrew Mack and Bob Patton, Alex Conzemius, Suzanne Rhees, and Jean Coleman, Peg Schmidt, MnAPA Administrator

By Phone: Jason Jordan, APA; Michael Noonan, Ethan Fawley, Michael Wozniak

Guest: State Rep. Dennis McNamara

Agenda was approved

Chapter Board Liaison Report – Jean Coleman

- Jean and Alex are preparing Legislative Update session for the September mini-conference-- Send Alex any comments on draft
- Legislative Committee needs its work plan and budget approved by end of August – suggestion that we work on it today

Discussion of Work Plan – current objectives include:

1. Increase partnerships with associations with similar memberships – have invited to meetings, etc.
2. Planners Day at Capitol – same funding, scope of program for 2010 to be reviewed
3. Craft platform positions – No initial budget identified. Committee volunteer effort w/districts input for 2009. A 2010 budget for elevated organization awareness at legislature is needed.
4. Legislative education coordinator - \$2,500 – consider increasing this amount
5. Keep membership informed
 - Continue all activities – add more partnering organizations
 - Do we increase our involvement with the legislature?
 - Need to develop a strategy for each item

Michael asked whether we can increase our involvement with the Legislature. Jason stated that any concerns which may arise regarding legal authority of APA are not well-founded – we do have the ability to lobby directly and indirectly within certain restrictions. Determine your goals and objectives first – then decide on what restrictions apply.

Discussion followed on the extent of our involvement at the Capitol. Does our work plan “move the ball forward?” Are we ready to hire a lobbyist? The sense of the committee is no, not at this time.

Denny McNamara comments: The group is having the right discussion – if you want to be effective at the Legislature, you need to become active. At some point you have to decide whether to lobby – think about affiliated groups who have lobbyists you might use. You’ll have competing interests – outstate, suburban, urban, etc. (He was active with landscaping association, which went through a similar transition and now has a contract lobbyist.) Another option is for MnAPA Board to adopt positions, i.e. on Green Acres – what part of each issue can you reach agreement on? (For example – merging Metro Ag Preserves into Green Acres.) You can also work individually through individual legislators and personal involvement. The most effective lobbyist is a constituent. Some issues will only affect a few planners. Commends us for getting involved – even though the legislative process is often comical or embarrassing!

Andrew – introduces chapter’s role, membership numbers and thanks Rep. McNamara – MnAPA members have broad areas of expertise, and would like to be known as a resource for Legislature. We

have made a commitment as an organization to set up a collaborative process to reform state planning enabling laws, drawing on good examples from other states.

Rep. McNamara reiterates that personal involvement is more effective than lobbying – offer to testify, etc. Continue outreach to legislators. Gain credibility. Land use issues are of great importance to the legislature. If MnAPA can step to the plate to offer effective solutions, the legislature will listen.

How can we get asked to testify on planning issues? See example of nursery and landscape association, which has developed a presence at Capitol. Work with authors of legislation. Position papers to legislators would be most helpful. Present both sides of issue if no consensus. These are important issues – smart growth, transportation, congestion, etc.

Agreed to add to work plan the goal of elevating profile of planners at Legislature, introducing Legislature to MnAPA and introducing chapter members as resources.

Discussion regarding Committee's role; are we organized and ready enough? This activity is an extension of Planners Day at the Capitol, and the Legislative Committee is the natural lead on this.

Motion by Bob to adopt work plan from '08 with the above addition – activities that make MnAPA more well-known – before next legislative session, group should meet with chairs of Local Govt. Comm. Second by Andrew. Approved unanimously.

Policy Platform Discussion

We reviewed several examples of policy platforms of other organizations, including APA's national legislative policy platform, MACPZA and CGMC. Jason commented that APA's handout is part of a larger project – a handbook is being prepared for chapters on legislative and policy advocacy at state levels. Different chapters use different methods. APA-National has a series of documents that guide its policy efforts – its Legislative and Policy Committee forwards a list of broad policy areas – staff then creates an action agenda for Congress; produce factsheets, white papers, etc. Many chapters take a similar approach by identifying their legislative priorities or agenda. Often involves a formal ratification process, with member participation.

(Mike Wozniak joined the conference call)

Discussion of MnAPA's proposed "funnel" policy process?

- Jason notes that different documents serve different purposes – internal vs. external – for allies, media, legislators, etc. Sometimes need separate documents for each.

Discussion of what a "platform" looks like:

- statement of intent
- discussion
- time frame for action
- does issue involve others?

Suggestion that we pick a platform 'plank' for action that is likely to be approved by membership – many will be controversial.

Mike Wozniak suggests the issue of comprehensive planning in greater MN – what is the level of detail that the policy platform needs?

Andrew: Called for submittals of policy issues from District Directors – not provided yet

- If members don't respond, means committee needs to keep moving forward
- Many members are involved with other organizations. More visibility of chapter = more input

- Mark – hard to get arms around how we develop constituent-neutral policy positions – all legislation has pro and con positions.
- Bob – higher level of generality = Need more acceptance among membership. Don't have to work out all details of everything.
- Jason – APA's policies are fairly broad, but are intended to help sharpen focus of advocacy on specific legislation, i.e. Transportation Reform. Start at a general level and work down. Most chapters have committees like ours.

Select 1 or 2 areas of greatest importance to membership that seem to have greatest momentum, and then pursue. Develop a campaign plan for something like statutory reform.

Potential Policy Statements: (initials in parentheses indicate who will develop statements)

- Comprehensive plans – can we agree to MACPZA's policy encouraging comp plans?
 - Yes, but what should content of comp plan be? Not well-defined?
 - Initial statement: "Content of comprehensive plans in greater MN should be more well-defined" (Suzanne Rhees)
 - Questions – should planning be required prior to zoning?
- Intergovernmental coordination – more is coordination is happening on environmental and transportation issues than on land use.
 - Position: enabling statutes should encourage coordination for transportation natural resources and land use planning. (Andrew Mack)
- Planning enabling statutes – statutes need reform; are outdated – more of a "watch" and "research" issue. State that we'd like to work towards it, understanding that we don't have solutions yet. Begin coalition-building effort. (Suzanne Rhees, Michael Wozniak)
 - Does "umbrella" concept of statutory reform improve or weaken chances of getting platform adopted? Treat as own issue; others might be separately addressed.
 - Make it clear that we could address all, or none, jointly or separately.
 - Outcome doesn't have to be legislation – could be study – similar to what Province of Ontario did. Action step might be to advocate for formation of a legislative task force.

Mike Wozniak indicated that a task force is not the only option for statutory reform. Jean Coleman felt that we can't ask legislators to take it out of our control. Could be a MnAPA task force scenario prior to proposing one be formed by the legislature. Are there resources that APA National could provide for this type of effort? Jason: National staff could put us in touch with other states. Minnesota may be able to use Chapter Presidents' Council peer-to-peer advocacy grants to bring in outside expert or conduct a program. Limited funding for items like printing, etc, as part of campaign. More pro bono technical assistance available than financial aid. Mike Wozniak agreed to look into this for the Legislative Committee and an action plan or authorization to proceed with a grant application will be presented to the Chapter Board.

"Sensible" or wise land use (Mark Ostgarden)

High-speed rail as transportation Issue Federal transportation investment position. Chapter could accept APA National's policy statement. APA can work with us on reinforcing national positions or vice versa. State-level advocacy helps APA National. Don't encourage contrary positions or move into uncharted areas. (Michael Noonan interested in drafting statement on high-speed rail. Will work with others.)

Agricultural land preservation policy. Great likelihood of legislation next session. Discussion on motivations for legislation, agribusiness interests, etc. Also include water resources, forest and shoreland resources (Bob Patton).

- Economic development tools – can we be proactive about it? (Jean Coleman)
 - TIF reform, eminent domain – (Jason - see APA policy guide on redevelopment)
- Housing: affordable, rental vs. ownership? Encourage rental housing investment? (Alex Conzemius Jason Jordan can assist)

Peg – focus on broad topics in front of Board; maybe one more specific

Jason Jordan will get us enabling reform information from other chapters (MI). There is also a social network web site for legislative leadership – message board, listserv. Will post something. Happy to join calls in future. Have a resources clearinghouse. The Growing Smart effort leaders are still around. Leverage grass roots, create champions.

- Problems with “identifying champions” strategy in past – identified with wrong people. Jason states that at some point you’ll need to get some legislator to advance your agenda – delicate calculus. Need some political clout eventually, but maybe not at beginning. Try to be bipartisan.

Need to have statements by June 19 for 6/24 cutoff for conference program

Should include:

- policy statement
- rationale
- existing related statutes
- type of action and timeline if possible

1 page length; send to Andrew and Bob

Mike Wozniak will work with Blair Tremere to look into Chapter Presidents’ Council peer-to-peer grant – Chapter Board needs to approve submittal

Need budget in August – Jean will amend last year’s and circulate it.

Consider purchasing phone for conference calls in budget. Bob to research toll free call services & costs.

Adjourned 4:00 pm