

Meeting Summary
RI Economic Monitoring Collaborative
February 7, 2007
3:00 to 5:00 pm
RI Economic Policy Council

Attendees: Austin Becker, Kip Bergstrom, Ames Colt, Tracey Dalton, David DePetrillo, Michael Doherty, John Gates, Geoff Grout, Kevin Hively, Beth Laney, Howard McVay, Ariana McBride, Marisa Paul, Don Pryor, Curt Spalding, Tiffany Smythe, Rob Thompson, and Bruce Vild.

1. Meeting Summaries

Kip Bergstrom presented the meeting summaries from December and January for the Collaborative's approval. Curt Spalding motioned for a vote on their approval and Geoff Grout seconded. All members present voted to approve the summaries.

2. Scorecard Review

Kevin Hively presented the updated Scorecard; he talked through the data collected to date as well as some of the remaining questions before the findings are finalized for the report (see PowerPoint presentation). Mr. Hively noted that in addition to the Scorecard summary, he will provide the industry detail. Mr. Hively also spoke to the need to consider these industries/activities within the types of policy that may impact them – whether it is coastal policy or watershed policy. He also noted that although the Bay and its waterfront's social value may be spread evenly, its economic value is not. He emphasized the possibility of the “facts” (data) in discounting tribal knowledge about marine industries and coastal areas (e.g. how Newport's housing prices relative to other New England vacation areas are still low).

Key Notes/Questions:

- Collaborative members discussed the inclusion of the defense industry given its changing relationship to the bay. They discussed whether policy decisions have any impact on whether this industry remains in the state and how to present the data.
- Mr. Becker noted one study on transient slips that may be of use in determining slips and moorings data.
- Mr. Bergstrom questioned whether we should consider benchmarking the data against other places when appropriate. Mr. Hively responded that this would be possible for some measures.
- Collaborative members thought it would be helpful to flip some measures in their presentation, such as slips and moorings to registered boats, registered boats to cargo transits and industrial piers to vessel calls.
- Mr. Spalding noted the changing value of the waterfront due to improvements to water quality and questioned whether we should be tracking this change. Mr. Becker responded that CRMC is looking into this issue via the Metro Bay SAMP.
- Members also discussed the location of the energy infrastructure in the upper bay.

Collaborative members discussed next steps in the monitoring effort; a draft report will be provided to the CT and the Collaborative for review by the end of the month with a final report following by the end of March. Mr. Hively noted the value in ultimately linking the economic and environmental monitoring efforts more closely to see the interplay between them. Mr. Bergstrom spoke to how this round of monitoring will focus the FY08 plan.

3. Bayscape

Drs. Robert Thompson and Tracey Dalton presented their findings from the first summer of research on the Bayscape project. Bayscape is a two-year effort aimed at better understanding the activities on the water and waterfront, in which researchers survey bay activities in the upper bay (Seekonk River tidewater) and the Greenwich Bay. This study provides a new level of detail on activities by conducting direct observation and linking that information to a GIS, where researchers can analyze the frequency, location and types of activities.

Key Notes/Questions:

- Mr. Spalding noted that this kind of data could provide us with a better understanding of the similarities and differences between the upper and lower bay activity. He added that the time of day for observations is critical and that future study should include activity later in the day.
- Mr. Becker noted the possibility to add CSO information to the study.
- Collaborative members were interested in the cost for this type of study. Dr. Thompson responded that it would become more cost effective over time.
- Mr. Hively questioned whether they might consider overlaying activity with the population density of the surrounding area.
- Mr. Bergstrom spoke to the potential to better link/combine efforts in these areas of monitoring.

4. Other Business

Ames Colt provided the Collaborative with an update on FY08 funding. According to Dr. Colt, the Governor included funding in the budget for FY08 drawing from the OSPAR fund as well as a plan to raise certain fees over time to fund the Team in a more sustainable manner. The Economic Monitoring Collaborative was allocated its full request, which will be funded by OSPAR and the new funding source.