International Research and Global Exchange Committee (IRGE)
March 14, 2015 Meeting
Washington, DC
Minutes

Approval of Minutes
Motion to approve minutes of the Oct. 2014 meeting as submitted by Don Bibbs; seconded by Branna Lindell. Motion carried.

IRGE Work Plan
Vice Chair Brewen observed that we are on track or slightly behind schedule on most tasks. She urged subcommittees, while in convening during this meeting, to examine their tasks: determine status, ascertain what tasks are doable during the remainder of the term and what tasks should carry over to the next term. Subcommittee chairs should send their status reports to the IRGE leadership within the next 30 days.

Standing Committee Liaison
Chair Glenn spoke to the need to have liaisons between other committees and IRGE. Liaisons would be tasked with finding out committees’ key priorities and reporting back to IRGE at each of its meetings. This will ensure that IRGE is addressing the research interests of other committees and thus ensure that IRGE deliverables demonstrate their value to the general membership on matters of importance to them in terms of the domestic agenda. Additionally, this information will give IRGE content in terms of exchange activity, research and how IRGE members interact and interface with our global partners.

Stella Madrid offered to serve as a liaison and suggested a conversation to discuss how best to do this. Julie, who had volunteered during the Feb. teleconference, offered to facilitate a teleconference where the group could develop a statement of purpose.

Research Subcommittee Report
David Baldwin reported in the absence of Chair Betsey Martens. The subcommittee will undertake a research analysis of the impact of restructuring and converting public housing program from a traditionally publicly funded, owned and managed program to a more privatized system, with special focus on the impact of regionalization.

Specific questions that the subcommittee will examine include: what is the value, outcome and unintended consequences of transferring publicly owned housing assets to private ownership (real estate stock transfer)? What is the value, outcome and unintended consequences of PHA mergers, consolidation and regionalization?

The subcommittee will review existing literature about experiences in UK, the Netherlands and Canada in search for answers. The UK has a long history in the social housing program, and they are 20 years ahead of the U.S. in their experience with RAD. In the UK and the Netherlands, housing associations are the main providers of social housing and often combine traditional landlord activities with social investments and community development. In Canada, as existing operating agreements end, with no other funding in place, up to two-thirds of all social housing projects will not generate sufficient revenues to cover their operating costs. The social housing operating agreements started to expire in 1999 in Manitoba. By 2014,
the agreements governing about 5000 units had expired, including about half the rural and Urban Native housing in Manitoba.

Betsey is writing a white paper to summarize current information and to serve as an educational piece for NAHRO membership.

**Questions/comments from committee members:** NAHRO members may be interested in having conversations about the economic viability threshold below which it does not make sense to run an organization. Should we encourage and facilitate consolidation of small agencies? What happens to people when agencies merge or consolidate? What is the ultimate impact on residents? Where do they go? What is the right sizing for efficiency? What is the right sizing for effectiveness? How do we transform the thinking of agency staff? What skill sets will agencies need in the future in order to effect innovative change? What should agencies look like in the future? How can agencies use their assets more appropriately? What do stakeholders think agencies should look like?

Reflecting on dialogue at this meeting, members were asked what they want the subcommittee to “hone in” on as they continue to research.

**Suggestions:** impact of state statutes for the change; restrictiveness of state statutes that hinder timeliness and moving toward activity; impact of homelessness and special needs population; the out-migration of localities happens when the rent burden is borne by those least able to afford and they migrate out of the jurisdiction as regional housing authorities are being formed; pros and cons of consolidation and aggregation, i.e., loss of political commitment by proponents. Should agencies consider sharing of services in order to realize economies of scale?

NAHRO should add a sixth item to its list of priorities—facilitating conversations about consolidation/regionalization. Conversations at both regional and national levels should include: why RAD and the impact of RAD; IRGE sponsor sessions at national conferences; the IRGE white paper will provide platform for regional and national conference sessions and JOHCD articles.

Kerron offered several ways that IRGE could raise awareness of its work: IRGE committee members present at meetings of standing committees; prepare a one-page IRGE news bulletin and distribute throughout regions and chapters; submit articles for the *NAHRO Monitor* and *Associates Advantage*.

**President’s Remarks**
Participated in Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) SE Chapter conference in Brighton earlier this month and met with industry leaders in Belfast afterwards. CIH mostly focuses on professional development. In Belfast he met with major homeless providers. Belfast, like Fresno, has a population of approximately 500,000 people. In Belfast the number of homeless is about 20; in Fresno 2,500 are on the streets, mostly unsheltered. There was conversation about housing first, which has not been embraced. Preston also met with CEOs of five social housing organizations, who asked him what percent of U.S. housing is social housing. He enjoyed a question and answer session with staff who work at a hostel. The Q&A session is something that we should embrace—staff asking probing questions of leadership, said Preston.

Preston will attend the CHRA conference in April where he will present on *Neighborhood Revitalization and Comprehensive Answers to Neighborhoods.*
Preston shared that because of his international experiences he is a better CEO and that the knowledge he has gained and exchange of ideas/perspectives have caused him to reflect intentionally on “race and class.”

**CEO Remarks**

Saul talked about Habitat III. As previously announced, NAHRO has a seat on the national planning committee and on two of three subcommittees for Habitat III. He and IRGE chair Liz Glenn represent NAHRO on these committees. As events unfold, there will be opportunities for IRGE members to provide input on the work of the subcommittees.

Saul reported that Lawrence Ramashamole, CEO of the Housing Association East London (HAEL), contacted NAHRO at the request of the Deputy Minister to discuss the possibility of engaging NAHRO in conversation regarding the establishment of a professional body in South Africa. Initial conversations with Lawrence will begin at this conference. Saul said that NAHRO may want to consider an MOU with HAEL because he recently learned the Southern African Housing Foundation had closed its doors. Any MOU would require input from IRGE.

Helen asked if NAHRO could market its advocacy services to international organizations, having observed that there are 16-like organizations in South Africa that do not speak with a united voice. In response, Saul shared that NAHRO had been approached by the head of an eight-nation coalition to explore the possibility of working with NAHRO on advocacy. Saul will update the IRGE on this initiative as events unfold.

**Guests**

**Don Mencer Edwards**, CEO and Founder, Justice and Sustainability Assoc., LLC. (Former Director of the U.S. Network for Habitat II) and Ushma Parikh (his colleague).

Don has an incredible understanding of justice and sustainability and is skilled at engaging civil society around these issues. He has worked to help educate and engage communities around big land use projects as well. He led the civil society engagement process in Habitat II, which included working with local coalitions in Baltimore and engaging 13 major cities and towns. The work of Don’s engagement impacted the national planning documents that were submitted to the United Nations and was the basis of U.S. negotiations. Today, Don continues his work around sustainability and civic engagement.

IRGE Chair Glenn invited Don and his colleague Ushma to talk about civic engagement and civil society and the impact of Habitat II and how Habitat III might have a more profound impact on global civic society and the sustainability and viability of human settlements.

Don spoke about the structure of the United Nations and the role that Habitat plays in affecting the U.N.’s sustainability goals. He talked about the importance of the Post 15 Agenda and how the goals will impact future policy recommendations and decisions. Don stated that the Habitat III conference will not only affect policies during the next 20 years, but in actuality could have an impact on the next 100 years. He stressed the importance of the civic engagement process as a vehicle to not only inform the U.S position on human settlements and urban sustainability, but to also act as a steward of that position to ensure accountability and implementation of key policies. Don applauded NAHRO for engaging its members in the U.S. planning efforts but also advised that we should be purposeful in our efforts to engage our members before, during, and after Habitat III.
Subcommittee Reports

Study Exchanges: Pat Gustafson reported.
The subcommittee reviewed its tasks in the committee’s work plan and concluded they are on track on all work items.

The subcommittee discussed the need to encourage regions to have active international committees and a full slate of regional representatives on the national IRGE committee. Pat suggested presentations at meetings of regional-chapter-state association presidents would be appropriate.

Saeed shared with the group plans for Vancouver and Seattle agencies to host a delegation from South Africa in May. The delegation also will attend the region’s conference in Seattle.

Pat commented on the subcommittee’s discussion relative to venues for study exchanges this year and next year. After discussion, the committee recommended a resolution for consideration by the Board of Governors at its meeting on March 18. Vice Chair Brewen confirmed that study exchange locations align with IRGE’s research agenda.

With respect to the study exchange in Canada, it was suggested that the group may want to confine its reach to communities around Winnipeg because of its distance from Toronto and Montreal.

Julie agreed to reach out to Subcommittee Chair Evette to determine next steps and inquire what assistance Evette needs.

Action: On motion by Pat Gustafson; seconded by Stella Madrid, approval of the Subcommittee’s resolution on Study Exchanges, which will be presented to the Board of Governors for action at its March 18, 2015, meeting. Motion carried.

WHEREAS, the mission of the IRGE Committee is “to promote and share global exchanges of information and develop relationships to assist the NAHRO membership and all those engaged in the development and operation of housing and community development programs;”

WHEREAS, The IRGE Committee has undertaken research regarding the restructuring of public housing and publicly funded housing in Canada, Netherlands and the UK, where we have relationships or MOUs with groups; and

WHEREAS, consistent with the IRGE adopted research agenda and the white paper being prepared, the IRGE Committee recommends Study Exchanges be undertaken as follows:

    Canada/ CHRA: April 2015; Netherlands: August 2015; UK: November 2015
    Australia: January 2016

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, The IRGE Committee hereby seeks the Board of Governors’ support in undertaking the study exchanges as proposed, consistent with the IRGE research agenda, MOUs and relationships and potential future relationship with Australia.

Update: Board action: Resolution approved unanimously by the NAHRO Board of Governors on March 18, 2015.
**Partnership Subcommittee:** Saeed Hajarizadeh reported. Saeed, Kerron, and Helen focused their discussion on partnership development resources where there are clear opportunities and where it makes sense for third party support, i.e., Habitat III, South African partnership currently under discussion, and the German Marshall Fund.

Vancouver and Seattle Housing Authorities in the state of Washington will host five staff and board members from the Tshwete Housing Association from South Africa in May 2015 for three weeks on a study exchange. The subcommittee will examine “lessons learned.”

NAHRO’s MOU with Israel ended in 2014. We are awaiting the result of elections this year and will reach out to our counterparts, when appropriate, in the hopes of renewing the MOU.

Kerron has authored an article for the Australasian Housing Institute Journal (AHI) about the American social housing market.

Contacts have been made with the Australasian Housing Institute (AHI), a member based professional association with programs similar to NAHRO serving Australia and New Zealand. The subcommittee submitted a resolution that would enable IRGE to formalize its relationship with AHI.

**Action:** On motion by Ed Talbot; seconded by Helen Sause, approval of the Subcommittee’s resolution on AHI, which will be presented to the Board of Governors for action at its March 18, 2015 meeting. Motion carried.

**Australasian Housing Institute (AHI)**

**Whereas** the mission of the IRGE Committee is "to promote and share global exchanges of information and develop relationships to assist the NAHRO membership and all those engaged in the development and operation of housing and community development;"

**Whereas** the explorations of the IRGE Committee have led to the finding that the housing and community development issues, practices and programs that the national government, states and municipalities carry out in Australia and New Zealand bear a considerable likeness to the same in the US;

**Whereas** the research of the IRGE Committee has identified and contacted The Australasian Housing Institute (AHI), a member based professional association with programs of advocacy, publications, professional training and development, conferences and a purpose similar to NAHRO; and

**Whereas** contacts with AHI brought forth an enthusiastic interest in forming a professional relationship with NAHRO, including specific items of mutual interest.

**Now, therefore**, the IRGE Committee hereby resolves that the Board of Governors considers agreement with this resolution and directs that an invitation be sent to AHI to establish an organizational relationship to include such items and activities as NAHRO specifies.

**Update:** Board action: Resolution approved unanimously by the NAHRO Board of Governors on March 18, 2015.
Research Subcommittee: David Baldwin reported in the absence of Chair Betsey Martens. The Subcommittee has drafted a session description for the NAHRO Summer Conference in Austin. It will be forwarded to subcommittee chair for review; once finalized it will be sent to the IRGE Committee chair for submission to NAHRO early next week. The concurrent session topic is: Impacts of Restructuring Public Housing Portfolios: De-funding, Mergers and Privatization.

The subcommittee has information to update its items in the committee’s work plan. This information will be submitted to Vice Chair Julie Brewen for further follow-up.

Communications Subcommittee: Alan Zais reported. The subcommittee’s work includes items to help brand, identify and educate the public about IRGE:
- Design and build a retractable banner stand for display at conferences and take-away cards for guests
- Design and produce brochure (all in collaboration with NAHRO staff)
- Update committee’s PowerPoint: present IRGE: history, relationships, Lange Awardees, using images, messages, etc.
- E-blasts: IRGE news to regions and chapters following conferences
- Business cards for IRGE members (must delineate from NAHRO staff cards)
- Write articles for the JOHCD Monitor; each article would showcase/highlight an IRGE committee’s activity, i.e., exchanges, development, Lange Award
- Archive committee’s materials by the end of 2015

Resource Development Subcommittee: John Papagni reported. Need to focus on support for:
- upcoming IRGE exchanges
- Professional development exchange with South Africa
- NAHRO representation and civic engagement at Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador in 2016

Subcommittee discussed potential leadership support from foundations including Ford and Rockefeller, and in-kind support from local partners, including universities. It was emphasized that while major support would be welcomed, more modest support could make a huge difference in supporting professional exchanges, particularly with developing countries that have the disadvantage of currency exchange rates that are not favorable to them.

The Subcommittee also discussed the importance of being proactive, given upcoming conference deadlines.

Announcements

Summer Conference: July 30-Aug. 1, Austin, TX: Deadline for submitting session proposals extended to March 25.

IRGE members who wish to remain on the committee or to serve on another committee should complete the committee volunteer form by April 15. To do so, visit http://www.nahro.org/volunteer-form.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Attendees
Chair: Liz Glenn; Vice Chair: Julie Brewen
Partner Representatives: INTA: Kerron Barnes

Guests

Members Absent

Next Meeting: In conjunction with the Summer Conference: July 30-Aug. 1: Austin, TX