



Track 2: *Community Engagement Task Force*

July 11, 2007 Meeting #2 Minutes
4:00 p.m. - Room 132 City Hall

Adopted July 18, 2007

Task Force attendees: Russ Adams, Mohamed Ali, Diann Anders, Kathleen Anderson, John Bernstein, Mark Fox, Don Fraser, Elena Gaarder, Justin Huenemann, Jeremy Iggers, Mary Keefe, Anne McCandless, Chris Morris, Matt Perry (co-chair), David Rubedor, Jessie Saavedra, Jeffrey Strand, Joyce Wisdom, Shirley Yeoman

Task Force attendees absent: Diana Hawkins, Repa Mekha, Xang Vang

City staff in attendance: Jennifer Amundson, Council Member Cam Gordon, Council Member Diane Hofstede, Luther Krueger, Cara Letofsky, Council Member Robert Lilligren (co-chair), Alicia Scott

City staff absent: Greg Simbeck, Erik Hansen

Facilitators in attendance: GrayHall - Nora Hall, Karen Gray

Minutes

I. Introductions & Agenda Overview

- Council Member Lilligren welcomed everyone to the meeting; everyone introduced themselves and reviewed the agenda with no changes made.
- **Co-chair election** – Matt Perry was unanimously approved as co-chair of the task force. The actions that created the group directed the election of a community co-chair. Council Member Lilligren noted that the role of the co-chairs is evolving but includes handling the business part of the task force, serving as contacts and helping to disseminate information.
- **Administrative notes**
 - Names will be attributed to task force member comments shared via email unless anonymity is specifically requested.
 - As part of the process of improving the accessibility to and clarity of the City's community engagement system, navigation to the [Community Engagement page](#) on the City's Web site will be made clearer.
 - Review of [June 27, 2007 minutes](#) – there were no objections or changes to the minutes.
 - At the task force meeting of June 27 Jeffrey Strand, a task force member, requested information about who was interviewed as part of the Additional Stakeholder Interviews listed on page 13 of the Community Engagement Report.

In an email exchange Jennifer Amundson, Community Engagement Coordinator, clarified for the CETF that "the former Community Engagement Coordinator contacted the Board Chair and the principle staff person from each board or group considering them as representatives of the groups. They were both invited to participate and requested to include anyone else they wanted in the interview. There were some face-to-face interviews and others over the phone. The selected advisory boards and commissions were a sampling and not intended to be representatives for all boards and commissions. The one exception where the entire group was interviewed was in the case of the NRP Policy Board where the work group attended the full NRP Policy Board meeting in July 2006."

Additionally, a quoted segment from page 13 of the Community Engagement Report was included in the email and copied here.

Quote from the Community Engagement Report of November 2006, Page 13:

“Additional Stakeholder Interviews

In addition to reviewing the reports and actions outlined above, the staff work group identified a number of stakeholder groups whose views were not adequately represented in these previous efforts, and conducted interviews with representatives of these groups. Specifically, members of the work group interviewed representatives of other local government jurisdictions, as well as the leadership of a sampling of other advisory boards and commissions, including:

- *NRP Policy Board*
 - *Minneapolis School Board*
 - *Minneapolis Library Board*
 - *Hennepin County Board of Commissioners*
 - *Capital Long Range Improvement Committee*
 - *Civil Rights Commission*
 - *Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board*
 - *Minneapolis Planning Commission*
 - *Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors*
 - *Public Health Advisory Committee*
 - *Senior Citizen Advisory Committee*
- Representatives of the Park and Recreation Board and some of the advisory boards and commissions the work group contacted did not respond to our request for an interview.”*

At the task force meeting of July 11, Jeffrey Strand clarified that the term “interview” does not accurately reflect the interaction with the NRP Policy Board rather it was a presentation made to the full NPR Policy Board.

II. Follow-Up Discussion of Community Organizations

List of Community Organizations

- Related to Charge #1, the group picked up on the discussion from June 27 and discussed this brainstormed list of community organizations and the idea of “formal” participants.

Task Force Charge #1:

Identify types of community organizations that the City should recognize as formal participants in its community engagement system.

Consider all organizations that may participate in city improvement including both geographic (planning districts, neighborhoods, blocks) and non-geographic (business, ethnic, cultural, issue-specific) organizations.

The task force recognized that there are many types of decisions at different levels that impact the list of organizations that could be involved. An example was noted that public safety does its community engagement largely through block clubs whereas the subjects of zoning, housing or planning are addressed by neighborhood organizations. One member suggested that there are also decisions related to schools and perhaps it makes sense to considering organizations in terms of different functions.

The group received a chart as a beginning [framework](#) to work from that depicts different types of decisions (citywide, community, local) and gives the group an opportunity to consider types of decisions, types of organizations and expectations.

Some task force members expressed the idea that by trying to be inclusive the process can become exclusive by making narrow lists.

Formal Participants in a Community Engagement System

In regards to charge #1 asking the task force members to identify organizations to be formal participants in a City’s community engagement system, there was discussion about what it means to be *formal* participants.

It was suggested that:

- Formal could be about relationships between the organization and the City that might include contracts, expectations, it may or may not involve money, it may or may not outline requirements for representation.
- Or formal could be about how an organization conducts its business as in its representations, its meeting processes or process of gathering community input.

Some examples given at the meeting of different types of groups that receive different levels of support from the city:

- Police precinct advisory committees
- Block clubs
- Boards or Commissions of the City of Minneapolis
- Business Associations

- Citizen Participation Program
 - Neighborhood groups that are part of the Citizen Participation Program

There was general consensus (although no vote) that there is room to expand on the types of organizations that should be formal participants in the City's community engagement system.

Other comments or themes in the discussion about formal participants:

- Some members had cautionary comments about recognizing some as formal participants suggesting that this could imply exclusiveness and not allow other voices to be heard.
- If there is no clarification about what it specifically means to be recognized formally by the City, organizations do not have an opportunity to become formal participants in a City of Minneapolis community engagement system.
- Just getting contacted at election time does not constitute a formal relationship.
- It is important to allow voices to be heard from grassroots organizations that are always bubbling up.
- Some, not all, consider validating that organizations represent who they say they're representing is a part of being formal participants.
- Some members indicated that formally recognizing organizations could imply some are valued and others aren't.

The City's Current Community Engagement System

In response to a question about what started this task force process or what is thought to be "broken" there were various viewpoints expressed.

- The City enterprise has heard comments from residents about the difficulty in accessing the system or being heard, not that it is broken.
- Some expressed that we shouldn't dismantle a system because a particular organization doesn't work very well.
- There was comment that the intention is not to dismantle what we have but to build on it.
- Many members expressed thoughts and ideas that point to the need to focus more on how to make clearer pathways for individuals and organizations to come to the City, creating a predictable and accessible system and that it is not a limitation of any one particular group or program but lack of clarity about how each part works together to create more systematic community engagement.
- Citizen Participation Program – this program was brought up as an example that we have a system and that it does pretty much what the group is talking about trying to do. Other opinions included that the scope is narrow, that people identify in ways other than where they live, and that this is an opportunity to build on what we have now and respond to changing demographics, different ways that people organize.

Definition of Community Engagement

- Many task force members agree that community engagement has more elements than just government decisions and the existing definition of community engagement (community engagement always involves a city government decision) is too narrow.
- It was noted that the group is not limited to that definition but it is a starting point for the task force to focus on the [charges](#) as outlined by the City Council. There is nothing to say that more work cannot be done on the definition of community engagement or on other specific elements of community engagement.
- Some members indicated that it is difficult to consider what organizations should be formal participants of a community engagement system if there are multiple definitions of community engagement.
- Some members want to work on the definition while others want to keep it fluid and loose for the purposes of this discussion. It was pointed out that it is unlikely in context of this group and the charges to agree on a new definition.
- Community engagement has more elements than just government decisions.

Principles of Community Engagement

Some members suggested that the group develop some guiding principle of community engagement. Some thoughts that were expressed that could be incorporated into community engagement principles include:

- One-sided conversations are too common and different than relational engagement with a basis of trust.
- The process has to be fair. It does not mean each individual gets what they want but there can be pride in the process if not the results.
- The [International Association for Public Participation](#) Web site was identified as having good examples of core values.
- We want as many people as possible to be involved.
- It's about being humble and valuing people's input and truly considering what the community wants.
- Even if groups do not want to be formal participants in the system they should be recognized.
- People want different things from community engagement – some want to be valued, some want to be effective, some want to be heard.
- The City has to be transparent.
- There should be a deliberative process of weighing pros and cons.

Optional Q and A for task force members (via email)

There were no questions sent out to task force members via email this week.