

Track 2: Community Engagement Task Force

July 25, 2007 Meeting #4 Minutes

Approved August 8, 2007 4:00 p.m. - Room 319 City Hall

Task Force attendees: Diann Anders, Kathleen Anderson, John Bernstein, Mark Fox, Don Fraser, Elena Gaarder, Jeremy Iggers, Mary Keefe, Chris Morris, Matt Perry (co-chair), Jessie Saavedra, Jeffrey Strand, Long Yang, Joyce Wisdom, Shirley Yeoman

Task Force attendees absent: Russ Adams, Mohamed Ali, Diana Hawkins, Justin Huenemann, Anne McCandless, Repa Mekha, David Rubedor

City staff in attendance: Jennifer Amundson, Bob Cooper, Council Member Cam Gordon, Erik Hansen, Council Member Diane Hofstede, Cara Letofsky, Barb Lickness, Council Member Robert Lilligren (co-chair), Greg Simbeck, Alicia Scott

City staff absent: Luther Krueger

Facilitators in attendance: GrayHall - Nora Hall, Karen Gray, Megan Gomez

Minutes

Introduction

Task Force co-chair Matt Perry

- Welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that cell phones be turned off or set to vibrate.
- Noted that the tape recorder is missing (a recorder was found and started).
- Copies of the 75-page summary report are still available. A member requested time for the group to look at the
 report noting that 300 people collected surveys and the information could be very useful and valuable. Perry said
 that he collected surveys, thinks it's interesting and wants it to be part of our toolkit. We can talk about allotting
 time, but we'd have to set priorities. There are a lot of materials we could review. He encourages people to look at
 it on their own.

Administration and organization

Materials and definition

- Amundson said she has copies of material so if anyone needs anything let her know.
- One handout she wanted to bring to everyone's attention is "What is Community Engagement." This is a definition that's on the city's Web site. It's another tool. Something to consider and look at. The definition is different from the one the group was given. Perry noted that, as a task force, we may end up coming up with our own definition.
- There is another handout from a member that talks about the school district.

Outreach

- Amundson noted that we are going to be doing outreach after this group comes up with recommendations and requested the group members let her know thoughts on how to bring this out to the community.
- Council Member Gordon said it is appropriate that the report that is developed is subject to the approval of the group. Amundson and Lickness noted that this will happen.

Meeting Locations

Perry noted that he doesn't think rotating meeting locations is practical at this point. We are representing
constituencies and I would like to ask you to push the information out. Also, people can go online to get
information. For example, in neighborhood group newsletters.

Minute Approval

• The minutes were approved with one change - On page two at the top of the second column it says "Could be open to no neighborhood organizations" and it should be "non-neighborhood organizations" (there were no objections to the change and the minutes were approved)

Meeting format and topics

- There was discussion about whether or not the group should stay together or break up into small groups to discuss some of the charges. With preferences for both, a vote was taken (the show of hands six votes for small groups and four for one group).
- Several members requested not addressing charge #4 until more information is available about models and best practices. Some members requested a presentation on community engagement models.
- Council Member Gordon requested information about the current structure of community engagement for the group to use for reference.
- Speakers A task force member noted that Professor Achon Fung from Harvard (Professor of Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government) has researched community engagement models for 10 years and has agreed to come and present for an hour. He asked if the group is interested in hearing the speaker either during a meeting or extending a meeting. There was no discussion of the speaker but it was noted that information on models does need to be available.

Definition of City

One task force member requested clarification of "city" in charge #3. Council members Gordon and Lilligren noted
that for this reference it means departments of the city and city administration and does not include school, parks,
libraries, etc.

Small Group Discussions

These are the comments each group recorded on flip chart pages.

Task Force Charge 2. Develop a clear set of expectations about what (community) organizations should expect from the City and the City should expect from the (community) organizations as participants in the city's community engagement system.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) is fostering cooperation.

If you have an individual who is in leadership can change how viewed.

Should be people at city who are conduits for contact.

Clear expectation from leadership.

Services by districts are single-contact person with open communication.

Changes to how departments are structured just happened. Should be discussed.

Follow-up. Have expectations been met?

Regarding a development - Just happened to find a whole other step in the process on the Web site. Didn't have all the info.

Service and communication shouldn't depend on who you know – it should be a value.

Can't mandate how City Council communicates with constituents but can mandate expectations of city staff.

Development happening - no notification to people who lived in area.

Some informal notifications need to be formalized.

Neighborhood notification - there is some difference of opinion in what that means. City staff needs to understand what and how to communicate - some staff wants clarity and mandates.

Very clear expectations - stronger reporting or outcome measures.

It's the neighborhood groups' job to police its structure - it's the city's job to get you the information - neighborhood group's job to do the citizen participation.

City shouldn't police but there should be stronger accountability for those with contracts with the city.

Neighborhood groups need to represent diversity and include everyone and treat everyone fairly.

In the past, we used to sit down and say you're going identify X# of block clubs - but if we're going to require groups, need to make sure there are resources.

City must be able to enforce expectations - finding that line is huge.

If neighborhood organization is "dysfunctional" it is hard for residents to "take-on".

We need to think about the role of block clubs.

There's no clear defined process of what a block club is they aren't necessarily all CCP/SAFE blocks clubs. There are independent ones too.

Block clubs often focus on crime - important for them to focus on other things - city pushes that they are for crime - that needs to change.

Neighborhoods do a lot of work for the city as a courtesy and don't get paid for it.

Is the amount of participation we are getting enough?

We have a representative democracy.

What participation should you expect?

Do you want direct democracy where every person in the city votes?

Citizen participation doesn't work without the facts and information. People have to understand the facts.

Different neighborhoods respond to different things.

It really depends on people who are in charge at the city.

The purpose of NRP was to redesign how municipal services were delivered.

We need a culture change - Don't think the city has embraced NRP.

If the community had loud, clear voice in shaping a department it could make the system work more effectively - City has to value the community voice.

After a decision is made there needs to be follow-up and communication about decision.

City moving toward electronic citations - could determine if satisfactorily resolved.

Culture and value about community experiences. Shouldn't matter who our rep. is.

Expectations - Can they be mandated? Can mandate expectations of staff.

Informal matters should get similar consideration (communication) as formal (continuum.)

City staff needs to know what constitutes neighborhood approval.

Stronger outcome measures.

Staff stretched - it's the neighborhood organizations job to get you information.

There's a responsibility for neighborhood groups to be accountable for diverse opinions and input.

Not adequate resources for unfunded mandates.

Where do block clubs play a role? City needs to consider block clubs = European model. No clearly defined process for block clubs.

What's the issue with the City setting up timelines? Too short on one-side, time is money on the other.

Need clarity about specific timelines - some are legislated (i.e. zoning issues).

Limitation on staff resources to reach out.

CE should foster grass roots involvement.

Help form alliances on larger issues.

Responsibility for relating to CE is very diffuse - would have to change the system for more accountability.

Major challenge for community is getting people to understand legal requirements.

If community groups have more accountability for out reach etc. there has to be funding available.

If there is a strong neighborhood organization or business association they will get input to the city but if the groups aren't strong it won't happen.

Maybe where there is not a strong organization the city should help - but not where there is a strong organization.

Cultural differences need to be acknowledged.

Child Care is important.

Translation

Need to look at barriers and then at what capacity is needed to address those.

Sometimes when NRP group has strong staff the volunteers get weaker. Need balance.

In a lot of neighborhoods, few people are making decisions for a few.

Many people don't identify with their neighborhood.

Have to "codify" that small groups are representative.

From a community perspective - don't know who to go to for challenge - how to handle situations etc.

Concern - We are strengthening the silos and not addressing biggest issue, which are the schools.

This process is not leading us in the direction of bringing people together to address major issues.

There is lack of leadership on both sides.

Task Force Charge 3. Describe the connection points between the City and these community organizations that would be needed to meet these expectations and support more effective participation.

a. Consider both systems and practices.

Connection Points: **City -** Councilmember's office, Mayors office, 311, City Departments and staff (i.e. Public Works, Inspections) On-line, Events (e.g. parades, social)

Community - Newsletters, Social/Cultural groups, On-line forums, community meetings, events, business associations

Characteristics of ideal connection points. Accessible (language, culture, medium, easy to identify)

Functionality

Connectivity (City ↔ Community, Community ↔ City, City ↔ City)

e.g. block clubs disconnected from neighborhood groups

Early in decision-making process

Integrate block clubs

Communication - City website, existing community media,

push & pull

Interactive → blogs

Clear communication to other jurisdictions e.g. Park Board

Approved NRP Plans are a connection point

Connection points need to happen much sooner

It should be one call gets you what you want

Strengthening communication

Individual - 311

When decision is pending or it is a staff priority

Neighborhood organization hires their own planner to develop small area plan that will eventually come before

city

Currently, a "City-driven" model

If 1/2 the people don't participate should you do it? What

level of participation is expected?

Not always about the # of people voting - "why disagree with the experts" (i.e. whether to replace a bridge, etc.)

Large Group Discussion

The three small groups each reported on the main points of what their group discussed.

Group report on main points

- There are two groups people who are engaged, and they're the easy ones to get to, and the other group, whether it's cultural or disinterest, etc. We need to make the path to get engaged simpler to see.
- What are the characteristics? If you've got a very specific concern, you want results.
- Connectivity city departments, block clubs, etc., and broken connections such as between block clubs and neighborhood groups.
- Some recommendations were:
 - Integrate block clubs
 - o Use the city Web site to integrate
 - o Use existing media
 - o An interactive piece, such as a blog
- We talked about having clear connections to other jurisdictions such as the park board.

Questions/comments for this group?

- I was thinking of connection points differently that it was where in the process of city work does there need to be
 engagement? Answer: there are different ways to think of it but there was agreement in our group that it needs to
 happen early.
- There was a consensus of the people surveyed in Jan. that it should be early.
- Regarding the single point of contact is anyone at the city working with the other jurisdictions to find out about their
 community engagement processes? Answer: We can't tell the park or library board what to do, but there is a desire to
 be better integrated. Council Member Hodges and the Intergovernmental Relations Committee are doing work on this.

Group report on main points

- For expectations, we discussed that it should be on both sides. We should know what they should be and strengthen those. There should be a clear understanding of what the communication will look like.
- There should be a culture that community engagement is valued regardless of who's in power. It can change depending on the council person, mayor, city staff involved. Fostering collaborations should be a fundamental value.
- There should be stronger outcome measures around contracts.
- There's a communication gap we don't close the communication process for personal things, like orders to paint your garage, or on bigger community projects.
- There should be systematic ways to regulate community engagement formal mandates instead of informal mandates.
- Connection points the connections points should happen sooner. The notification time has gotten shorter and shorter.

Questions/comments for this group?

On the closure piece are you talking about closure on controversial issues at City Council, for example – notifying supporters and non-supporters? Answer: On both sides – just knowing what the decision was.

If you change a policy, it would be nice to know 3 to 6 months later what the affect of the change was.

On closure, did you talk about validation, that that's a big part of this?

The community wants the city to write back and say "we got it," etc.

I guess typically no response is construed as a good response.

Group report on main points

- We talked about the difference in neighborhood organization capacity the mechanism to give support to organizations that need that.
 - We need to look at barriers and what is needed to address that
 - o What do we hold neighborhoods groups accountable for?
 - Sometimes when there's strong staff, there's not as much neighborhood input.
 - They should be able to say how they represent the neighborhood.
- A big gap if you're a strong group you will get input to the city. It goes back to what does strong mean?
- Bigger issues we discussed that if you're strengthening the silos you're not addressing the bigger issues. Schools are an example of that.
- · A gap is the lack of leadership on both sides.

Questions/comments for this group?

Can you elaborate on your last comment about leadership? Answer: The community has to demand it – libraries, parks, schools have to come together and break barriers.

And if you look to the roots, it was more about reshaping – looking at the community as a holistic group—schools, parks, libraries—it was about fostering cooperation rather than working in silos.

When talking about capacity and resources keep in mind unfunded mandates.

We have to consider - what do we want groups to do?

It's not very effective when city staff goes to a neighborhood organization and says "you don't have the capacity."

Did you talk about who makes the decisions? Answer: I think we're identifying the gaps rather than identifying the solutions.

You're talking about bringing in technical support for staff development, translations, technology, etc.

Does the city have an example of how they've offered technical assistance? Answer: There are contractors. The state law mandates a technical assistance plan for neighborhood groups – it specified what type. In the last several years, we've done that solely through providing access to the Twin Cities Training Program for Neighborhood Organizers.

We have to consider – is that the role of the city to provide independent non-profits with assistance?

I'm uncomfortable with the focus on neighborhood groups. I've seen a coup occur - 100 people elected 10 of the board members. If the focus is on neighborhood groups, we need to make sure they are representative.

I was part of a neighborhood group where there was a coup to make the group more inclusive, so it works both ways.

Closing

Co-chair Perry noted that at the next meeting we will try to look at models and best practices and asked members to send questions and topics in through email.

Adjourned