



Track 2: *Community Engagement Task Force*

August 15 2007 Meeting #7 Minutes

(Approved - August 22, 2007)

4:00 p.m. - Room 319 City Hall

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

Task Force attendees absent: Russ Adams, Mohamed Ali, Don Fraser, Justin Huenemann, Repa Mekha, David Rubedor

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

City staff absent: Barb Lickness

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

Administration

- **Minutes** – The minutes were approved with a request to double check attendance.
- **Work plan** - Co-chair Perry reviewed the work plan. He noted that we have heard that Professor Fung may be available on August 29th. He said that at this meeting we will be having a vote on part of the report by voting with dots (dotmocracy) and that there will be time to talk about the meeting at the end of the meeting.

Facilitator Hall – said that the group has voted to work in a large group so we will be doing that today. On the walls are principles of community engagement, recommendations and characteristics of community organizations. You can vote and later we will talk about the things that are yellow (green=approve, red=do not approve, yellow=tentative). We had 16 people voting. We will look at the items that have at least 50% yellow or red votes. She said she has heard from people that they are distracted by side conversations, so please avoid this.

Amundson noted that the information on the walls matches the voting worksheets that everyone got in advance.
- **Outreach plan** – Perry noted that we will need to do an outreach plan. He has offered to lead that activity. We will try to form a subcommittee. He is open to someone else leading it if anyone wants to volunteer. Anyone who wants to participate can contact Jennifer Amundson or one of the chairs. (Jennifer will be gone for the rest of this week and next week). We will have to deal with the community outreach plan aggressively and he would like as many people to participate as possible.
- **Comparison Points** – Letofsky reviewed a new matrix that was handed out “Comparison Points of Community Engagement.” This matrix compares Minneapolis with St. Paul, Seattle, Portland, Atlanta and Los Angeles. She noted that support for neighborhood organizations is all over the board. Some have different funding levels and different expectations.

Other comments about comparison points:

- Someone brought up Portland and that they are doing a review and said he has been researching this city on the Web. (Letofsky noted - I did find it and it was fascinating. She noted that Portland’s report was written after their task force had finished meeting and was not approved by the group. It was also interesting that their report included principles, and that a lot of what they came up with is similar to what we have in our report.
- I’m interested in what other cities of those in the comparison matrix have weak mayor systems.
- Facilitator Hall asked if anyone noticed anything in the comparisons that we can utilize?
- My concern with the matrix is that it is based on neighborhood groups. (Letofsky noted that we did put a section in about other community-based groups. No other cities do it that well so we might have to set the precedent.)

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- **Organizations matrix** – Bernstein handed out a matrix that he made about level of engagement and requirements of organizations. He proposes this as a way to attack Charge #1 (identify types of community organizations). When you get to a level with resources, it's a different level of engagement.

Other comments:

- I like the idea and appreciate the work. We're living in an age with tight resources. The TIF (tax-increment financing) stream might be going away. If everyone gets money to run a program, the reality is you're not going to have much of a system.
- Just because you meet the qualifications to get resources doesn't necessarily mean you get them.
- Council Member Gordon - Thanks for doing this. In the "inform" category, does it mean to inform or to get information. If it means to give information, the city should provide a way for people to provide information. Maybe a "send in your views." If giving information, then contact information shouldn't be a requirement—that would create a barrier.
- If you're not willing to give contact information then it's hard to give information.
- Gordon - I meant no contact information if you're saying "you're doing a bad job."
- This is something we should be using to help guide us. I think it's a good start. It may turn out that we can marry it in the characteristics list. People can think about – is this a better way than the characteristics list?

Review of items with 50% or more yellow/red

A task force member noted that many of her yellow votes were about wordsmithing.

Line's that were identified for review: 4, 24, 32, 37, 40, 41, 46, 47, 52, 53 and 57.

Line #4 – Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision. (6 green, 1 red, 8 yellow)

Comments about this line:

- I don't like the word influence. I interpret it as change. I like "thoughtfully considered."
- There can be very vocal comment that doesn't fit with policy. But it should be valued and heard.
- I wasn't comfortable with "influence" either. For me it's not strong enough. People need to have power. Do we want to say that it has to fit with city policy. It's more about empowering?
- I think empower is much too strong. For the good of the whole, sometimes you have to disappoint the smaller group.
- If you have six different sides not all of them can have influence.
- Even if you only have two sides, it shouldn't be whoever turns out the most.
- This is a principle. It should be stronger.
- Staff member Scott noted that "thoughtfully considered" is used in one of the qualities of the principle and that suggested that maybe the change that is needed is changing the word "will" to "may".
- "May" sounds weak.
- Someone also noted that it "may" might not translate well.

Line #24 – There should be a systematic way to regulate community engagement—a clear understanding of what will be communicated and how. (5 green, 11 yellow)

Comments about this line:

- I understand what the intention is, and I don't disagree with that, but the language makes my skin crawl. Maybe "a system of how to communicate with people."
- I think we could lose this one altogether.
- Council Member Gordon - From the perspective of a council member, what I think staff wants is a clear system. I don't know if it will come out anywhere else. Some people are hoping there will be a systematic process that we can do on automatic.
- Your concerns should be taken up in recommendations, not in the principle section.
- I think the problem is the word "regulate".
- What about a systematic delivery system for community engagement.
- A consistent and predictable system of community engagement.

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- My concern is that the principles have to be long-term. I also don't like "what will be communicated and how." It's too restricting. Maybe "a systematic way to guide community engagement."
- Gordon - It has to be flexible but formal stuff lacks consistency.

Line #32 - Informally connect with the County, schools, parks, and libraries by inviting them to community organization meetings. (6 green, 1 red, 9 yellow)

Comments about this line:

- I agree with connecting, but I don't like informally.
- I saw it as in conflict with line #31 (Develop more formal ways to include independent government boards in the community engagement process). Many are invited time after time. I think it softens the impact.
- Eliminate #32.
- Why can't you have both—formal and informal?
- Council Member Hofstede noted that sometimes the City Council isn't invited.
- There's nothing wrong with formal and informal but we need more formal.
- I would like the Council added to #31.
- I agree to add the City Council and the Mayor.
- That seems to me to be more of an internal communicate problem.
- Co-Chair Perry asked the group to continue working on identified lines.

A motion to strike #32 passed.

Line #37 - Approve "Characteristics of community organizations that can receive funding to engage the community." (7 green, 3 red, 6 yellow)

Comments about this line:

- Staff Scott noted that since we are also voting on this characteristics piece of the report, line #37 is kind of a placeholder right now.
- Council Member Gordon – Under Principle #4 (Public participation seeks out the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision), I don't see anything about the disenfranchised. We should work harder to get to the disenfranchised.
- The way we talk, it sounds like supporting an organization. What we're doing it supporting the work that is done. We have to know what work is being done.
- I want to talk about resources, not just funding.
- There might be different standards.
- If you get resources, it should not be reaching in and determining board structure, etc.

Line #40 - Formally integrate block clubs into the community engagement process and consider an outreach plan to new block club residents – welcome packets, welcome teams/committees. (4 green, 2 red, 10 yellow)

Comments about this line:

- I think it's sad that we would try to tell block clubs how to be block clubs. The second part is patronizing.
- Some block clubs are affiliated with police, some are just social groups. To mandate or dictate how a group of people who live by each other do that, doesn't work.
- I'm a block club leader and I agree.
- Why are we identifying these groups and not others?
- Formally recognizing block clubs is a step above recognizing every single person.
- Maybe not formally, but for many, block clubs are a point of contact – I see potential.
- I didn't like this one– I'd like somewhere the idea of using block clubs for pounding the pavement and support.
- Staff Krueger noted that there is a state law and were having a dispute about sharing block club lists. Most CPSs (Crime Prevention Specialists) are uncomfortable with that. The reason it is so popular is it's one of few city lists of "can doers."
- My experience with block clubs is that some are very functioning and some not. It's kind of European. Many white homeowners. We need to be aware of that. If community organization are formally recognized by having certain characteristics, then if we're including block clubs those things need to be defined for them too.

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- Maybe we should say acknowledge the engagement opportunities presented by spontaneous informal groups of people
- Council Member Gordon - I think there's a sense that block clubs are underused. Maybe develop better ways to integrate block clubs into our community engagement system.
- Staff Amundson – Block clubs are organized in different ways. Maybe reinvent block clubs that want to participate in another way. If they're not interested, they could opt out.
- Staff Letofsky – Block clubs are the most grass root, awesome way for people to be involved and know their neighbors. How can the city support the creation of block clubs? Some kind of message to City Hall that we need to support them.
- What is it about block clubs that means they should get special mention?
- Block clubs don't get the recognition due to them. I would hope the recommendation would give them support without explicitly saying block clubs.
- Block clubs are going to work specifically with the safe officers.

Line #41 - Host an annual or biennial gathering/celebration of the community that includes community organizations, city departments, libraries, schools and parks. (4 green, 2 red, 9 yellow)

Comments about this line:

- I feel like there are so many different things that go on, rather than create another thing, if we're really talking about community engagement, it would be better to incorporate things the city wants community engagement about at existing events. Event organizers can invite the city.
- Staff Letofsky – I thought this was more about best practices.
- It's too restrictive. This isn't something you mandate.

Motion to strike #41 passed.

Closing

➤ **Citizen Participation Guidelines - Staff Cooper** noted that a number of the questions that are coming up have to do with a document (Citizen Participation Guidelines) that he administers. I will be gone next week so are there any questions now?

- **Co-Chair Lilligren** – The idea was to take the citizen participation guidelines and generalize them.
- **Bernstein** noted that lines 52-60 relate to the matrix that he made. He noted that he is open to help and suggestions to continue working on the matrix.
- I get the characteristics, but how do you hold them accountable? (Cooper – The city use to be quite active in monitoring and now it's a complaint-driven system.)
- When you have a complaint how do you held them accountable? (Cooper – It depends on the complaint. There is a grievance process, but it gets back to--there are limits to how far the City can go to direct and regulate those groups.)
- There is a distinction between citizen participation and NRP. (Cooper – NRP only deals with grievances on NRP, everything else kicks over to this.)

➤ **Comments about dotmocracy**

Facilitator Hall asked how people feel about the dotmocracy?

- I'm just wondering about the folks who used red. Will we get to hear from all of them? If you are still having strong feelings, maybe you could change someone's mind.
- Is there a way to comment on the other parts of the report—the intro? (Lilligren – yes, email those, Amundson – We did hear some of those comments about the other parts and so far have been working on the parts we're discussing at meetings.)
- Yes, the dotmocracy is very helpful and yes we should do it again.
- I don't want to do any more meetings, but you can send information out paragraph by paragraph.

Co-Chair Perry reminded task force members that they are representing groups and communities and to please share what is happening and get input.

Adjourn.