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## Track 2: *Community Engagement Task Force*

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**July 18, 2007 Meeting #3 Minutes**

**Approved July 25, 2007**

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

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

**Task Force attendees absent:** Don Fraser, Diana Hawkins, Repa Mekha,

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

**Facilitators in attendance:** GrayHall - Nora Hall, Karen Gray

## Minutes

### Introduction

Task Force co-chair Council Member Lilligren

- Welcomed everyone to the meeting and encouraged staff at the table to be part of the conversation.
- Asked that approval of minutes be added to today's agenda.
- We have institutionalized a steering meeting with the consultants between our group meetings to help organize the work.
- We in this room are forming a kind of community. There is a large scope of feelings and beliefs. We will advance as a community. Our progress will be based on how well we gel as a community and how well we work together to move forward.

Task Force co-chair Matt Perry

- After the last meeting we could see people were frustrated with the linear fashion of the meeting so we decided to try breaking out into small groups today. Trying new things is a sign of the healthy community, which is what is developing here.
- Thank you to those of you who have submitted ideas and information through email. The information is good starting material that we can use.

**Minute approval** – The minutes were approved with one change – a clarification about what should or should not be attributed to Jeff Strand as it relates to the 4<sup>th</sup> bullet in administrative.

## Small Group Discussions & Reports

- Voting task force members (community members) counted off by fours and formed four small groups
- City staff joined the groups and task force chairs floated between groups.
- The goal of each small group was to discuss charges 2, 3 and 4 and come back to the larger group with their top few ideas.
- Detailed written comments were captured on flip chart pages and each group highlighted their main points in a presentation to the full group.

## *Detailed written comments from all four groups*

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.**

### City

"Both the community and the City should expect two-way timely communication."

"Community stakeholders need to feel the City values their opinions with sincere acknowledgement that ideas were considered thoughtfully even if the outcome is different than the group expected."

"Community stakeholders need to know their input will impact the decision made by the city."

"Should be collaborative and consultative allowing participants to help define their roles."

"The City has asked us how to do better when there is still no clear definition of what community engagement is."

"City should set-up a timeline for each issue the community is involved in."

"City needs to convey a willingness to listen."

"City needs to develop a formal policy relationship between community and city for zoning and planning issues."

"Organizations should expect timely feedback from City on outcome of pending decisions."

"Clear channels of communication and ease of access - eliminate dog legs."

"Community should expect broad notification and clearly stated legal requirements for notice."

"Communicate potential projects early for proactive communication."

"City needs to develop trust and foster relationships."

"Communication needs to go beyond neighborhood organizations."

"City needs to establish clear expectations, level of communication required, diversity, etc."

"City needs to provide resources for community groups to do community engagement better."

"City needs to provide opportunities for input at convenient times."

"There needs to be equitable funding to do community engagement if this is an assigned responsibility. Right now not very much money."

"Could be opened to non-neighborhood organizations."

"City needs to establish clear expectations for the roles of the varying groups."

"City needs to find ways to provide clear information to the residents of the city."

### Community

"Community needs to be willing to listen."

"City should expect clear outcomes and accountabilities from groups it provides resources to."

"City should expect consistency from community groups in the dissemination of information to the community stakeholders."

"City should expect timely feedback on pending decisions from community groups."

"Community groups need to learn to understand legal requirements."

"Community groups need to communicate to stakeholders about projects as early as possible. When a developer comes in everyone might not know about it in the very early research stage."

"Community groups need to develop trust among their stakeholders."

"Community groups have an obligation to pay attention to notifications."

"Community groups need to strengthen accountability and compliance with contract reporting."

"Community groups need to know input is part of a large pool of information to consider - not necessarily veto power."

"Community groups should also represent feedback that may represent minority opinions on an issue."

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.

City

"City should provide community engagement representatives from the City that are modeled like NRP staff."

"City needs to expose themselves to more groups and "grassroots" connecting."

"City needs to expand its definition of connection points."

"City needs to define who is allowed to share information. How do you share information (e-mail, meetings, etc.)? Passive: postcards/Active: door knocking."

"City needs to ID situations that require affirmative outreach."

"City needs to conduct more "field" hearings such as liquor license hearings in the neighborhood etc."

"City needs to establish two-way push/pull connection points with clear and accessible pathways."

"City should survey organizations."

"City should use political organizations more."

City continued

"City needs to define goals with measurable outcomes and timelines."

"City needs to deliver the message in different manners." (using internet)

"Community should have adequate resources to carry out their responsibilities."

"City should define who will be affected."

"City should identify geographical and non-geographical connection points and determine what groups should be contacted about what and when."

"City should connect with the approved NRP Neighborhood Action Plans when establishing Citywide plans."

Community

"Community organizations need to think creatively about how they connect with the City."

"Communities need to define their goals with measurable outcomes and timelines."

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Task Force Charge 4. **Develop alternatives for an improved organizational structure that supports the connection points and identifies responsibility for action.**

a. Consider strengths and weaknesses of current structure  
b. Consider local and national models and best practices.

"Current sites and time schedules for public input need to be expanded to accommodate those affected."

"City should use safety centers more for disseminating information."

"System should mean good communication happens regardless of who the council member is."

"Avoid information gatekeepers."

"Model Corridor Housing Initiative."

"Follow-up to ensure communications are received."

"Level of communication beyond neighborhood associations."

"Strengthen accountability for those groups doing community engagement."

"Make deliberative. How does input happen and is it really a dialogue."

"More opportunities for input in the neighborhoods with field hearings."

"Should have grants to apply for community engagement for big projects."

"Neighborhood groups could partner with Hope Community and pool resources."

"Lack of organizational capacity."

"Opinions represented may not be democratic."

"Lack of democracy is off-set by fine-grained nature of hearing opinions in 84 communities."

"How can the NRP process be improved?"

## ***Highlighted Main Points***

- Establish field hearings
  - City functioning at the community level
  - Good for those who might not be able to or who are intimidated by coming to City Hall
  - Models such as mini-city halls exists in Seattle
  - City Hall is the worst place to get public input
  - Consider time and location and other options besides the formal meeting model
- Two-way communication
  - Create proactive early dialogue and deliberation before decisions (before momentum is too strong to redirect)
  - Two-way timely communication – mutual accountability – get information out early and community groups get input back to City Hall in a timely fashion
  - Community & organizations should expect timely feedback on the outcome and how their input was used
  - Need clear, well-defined channels and ease of access
  - A two-way push / pull
  - Define expectations – how will this affect the community?
  - Avoid information gate keeping
  - Encourage citywide dissemination
  - The Wireless infrastructure could be a good communication tool to connect people
- Resources for community groups
  - Adequate resources needed to do affirmative outreach
  - If neighborhood organizations are expected to turn people out there should be resources for that
  - One idea... a pool of money for proactive outreach
- NRP, a national model –
  - Has a good process
  - City should provide community engagement representatives from the City that are modeled like NRP Staff (Ombudspersons)
  - NRP Neighborhood Action Plans should be looked at by other departments
  - Most in 1 small group agree to increase the inclusiveness of NRP (although there was not consensus on including non-geographic organizations)
  - Some requested information on other models as noted in charge 4b.
- Ease of access
- Clear and collaborative process
- City needs to expose themselves to more groups and "grassroots" connecting
- City needs to develop a formal policy relationship between community and city for zoning and planning issues
- Opinions being valued – There is a difference between being heard and being listened to. Ideas should be "thoughtfully considered."
- Use existing resources, CCP/SAFE, etc.
- Community organizations need to think creatively about how they connect with the City
- Which organizations -- Survey organizations?
- Lack of democracy offset by drilling down

*NOTE: These are a compilation of written main points and notes recorded during the full group session. Similar or duplicated points were consolidated.*

## Large Group Discussion

### Wireless network (WIFI):

- A barrier -- number of households without a computer.
- Opportunity – The wireless network will know where you are in the city (i.e. neighborhood).
- A digital inclusion fund is part of the community benefits agreement
- On computer access, if we could give every student who is on free and reduced lunch a laptop, it would change those families' lives forever.
- Consider Internet information that is enabled for cell phones
- Wireless is not a substitute for true relationship building—getting a chance to hear group discussions.

### Connection points as a place in the community:

- Meetings in the community (field hearings have a lot of potential and can create amazing energy in the community)
- Instead of formal meetings go to the places such as Global Market and ask people for their input
- Outreach in parks or schools could reach non-traditional audiences.
- Many people can't take vacation in the middle of the day to go to a zoning hearing.
- Media as a point of connection – for example [NE Beat](#)
- Recalling a comment from an earlier task force meeting, people are already meeting and organizing and we need to tap into that.
- Who's the customer in the enterprise of service? The taxpayer. The task force is here to push the enterprise to serve. The role often shifts to where the government dictates and that needs to be reversed.

### Virtual block clubs:

- Internet based and very targeted.
- Ex 1: Bar owners – can get information related to owning a bar and talk about best practices.
- Ex 2: Rental property owners– they, too, can send in their own information.
- It's moderated, has freed up a lot of time for Crime Prevention Specialists and is a resource to the community.

### Community Engagement Task Force meeting locations:

- Why aren't these meetings in the community? Some members have to leave work early just because it's convenient for city employees.
- City Hall as a location for CETF meetings is an opportunity to break down the walls and barriers of City Hall. (although field hearings are also good).
- An audience member attended to watch and said it's hard to get to City Hall. Parking is terrible. The suggestion to break down City Hall walls is good, but not at 4 p.m. – maybe 6:30 p.m. in City Hall, then rotate in the communities. And consider having time on the agenda for people in the community to contribute.
- The task force will develop its initial recommendations and take them to the broader community through more meetings in the community and other methods for input.
- It was recommended that the task force as a group consider rotating locations of the remaining meetings as a way to practice the model being planned and it was also noted that meetings in the community are not called for in the task force's charge.

### Meeting format:

- It seemed that the small group discussion format worked and allowed more input although the value of sufficient time in the full group was noted also. Part of the success might have been to do with the topics not the structure.

There were no objections brought to the group to begin using these discussions to draft materials for a report

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

At the meeting, it was suggested there be a gathering of national and best practices and that task force members be given the opportunity to suggest models of community engagement/public participation/civic empowerment from their own experience or background. TF members may choose to participate by emailing Web sites, or other sources, referencing those local, national or international models they want to have considered (along with those from the steering committee or staff) when the TF looks at other models, in addition to the City's own NRP.