



Track 2: *Community Engagement Task Force* ***Post-meeting #1***

Follow-up Reflections and Comments

I didn't get the opening to comment that our charge is to work on better connecting people with government. Connecting people to other people or to service organizations is valuable and important, but outside the scope as I understand it.

Here are some questions I would like to hear more discussion around:

- Whose voice counts in community engagement? Are some people "more equal" than others?
- How do we know when a voice was heard?
- What inspires people to speak, to participate?

I heard what seemed like the beginning of excuses and justifications for not engaging people. "They're busy", "they don't want to", "they are engaged, but you just can't see it" are part of an attitude which troubles me. Our goal must be to engage everyone, not just the activists. If the issue is important enough, people will participate despite their personal circumstances.

Many people talked of less-formal engagement and a vague collection of benefits that presently-recognized organizations provide. I would like to see more detail on these benefits, but I fear my asking other participants will come across as a hostile challenge (which might be partially true).

In a sense, I want the dedicated community organizers to defend their preconceptions, but wish there was a way to have it seem more like a brainstorm than a debate. For all the concern we have about the definition of engagement, there should be similar energy spent defining what our existing orgs do, or think they do.

A couple thoughts that may not have been included in comments from the community engagement regarding community engagement:

- Process must be fair. That doesn't mean everyone gets what they want, but it means everything gets out on the table.
- Effective community engagement should result in community pride of results

What I see, particularly in terms of community meetings regarding variances or other commercial development issues, is that neighborhood associations and/or the city contact only those nearby residents. What then occurs is that the meeting is stacked with people who seem to only have their personal needs in mind and little understanding of the greater neighborhood or city good.