

Report to the NRP Policy Board

FROM: Howard Blin, Community Engagement Manager

DATE: June 18, 2012

SUBJECT: Newsletter Policy

Action Requested:

The Policy Board is requested to revise the existing policy on Support for Neighborhood Publications by eliminating the prohibition on placement of display advertising in neighborhood newsletters.

Background

In 1994 the NRP Policy Board adopted a Support for Neighborhood Publications which created requirements for use of NRP funding in preparing neighborhood newsletters. One of the requirements is that in order to receive NRP funding for the newsletter,

no display ads of any type from a local business or institution are placed in the publication

Although NRP funds could not be used for newsletters with advertising, this was an allowable expense under the Community Participation Program and the former Citizen Participation Program.

Review Period

At the March 2012 Policy Board meeting the Board discussed whether to eliminate this prohibition from accepting advertising in newsletters. The Board directed staff to conduct a 45-day review of the policy.

In April, notices were sent to all ___ neighborhood organizations and ___ community newspapers on the proposed change. Neighborhood organizations and newspapers were invited to provide comments on the policy. By the end of the review period on June 11th, comments were received from nine neighborhood organizations and one newspaper, the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*. These comments are attached.

Of the comments received, eight favored eliminating the prohibitions on advertising and two recommended retaining that part of the policy. The one newspaper which responded supported retaining the current policy.

Recommendation

For many neighborhood organizations, the newsletters have become a key vehicle for engaging residents. Based on the comments received, advertising is important source of revenue for producing the newsletters. It should also be noted that public funding for neighborhood publications was allowed under other programs. To continue this means of neighborhood communication, it is recommended that the policy be amended to eliminate the prohibition on advertising and also to allow NRP funds to be used for these publications after Neighborhood Action Plans (NAP) are implemented. The remaining requirements of the policy are recommended to remain in place.

These proposed revisions to the policy are shown below

Policy

Neighborhoods may request that the costs of preparing, printing and distributing a regular publication on their neighborhood NRP activities be included in their administrative budget for plan development and implementation if:

- 1) ~~no display ads of any type from a local business or institution are placed in the publication;~~
- 2) efforts are made to work cooperatively with neighborhood papers already serving the community;
- 3) the circulation area for the publication coincides with the boundaries for the neighborhood;
- 4) ~~NRP support of the publication will cease with conclusion of NAP implementation activities;~~
and
- 5) Other alternatives available to the neighborhood for disseminating information have been explored and are not satisfactory.

It is not the purpose of NRP to create subsidized competitors for existing press organizations trying to serve the needs of the neighborhoods of the city. NRP support for a regular neighborhood publication will be considered only if all five of the conditions indicated above are present.