

Neighborhood Task Force

February 1, 2007

Meeting Notes

Member Attendance:

Chuck Bennett
Dan Clem
Dan Dorn
Levi Herrera
Don Homuth

Jay Howe
John Lattimer
Dave MacMillan
Brad Nanke
Pamela Schmidling

Thomas Smith
Rick Stucky
Kate Tarter
Laura Tesler
Frank Walker

Staff Attendance:

Jan Calvin
Debbie Kees

Guests Present:

Dan Day
Justin Day

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

For the benefit of guests present, Chair Nanke asked members and staff to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of Minutes

Motion: Accept minutes of January 18, 2007, meeting as written.

Moved By: Schmidling

Seconded By: Lattimer

Discussion: None

Action: Approved

3. Appearance of Interested Citizens

None present.

4. Other Models and Programs

Calvin distributed to members a report of responses to their questions from the previous meeting. This information is also available on the Task Force webpage at cityofsalem.net/neighbor/taskforce.htm.

The group then divided into three teams to review one of the following:

- a. City of Portland's website (and other cities'), particularly their neighborhood programs
- b. Response to requests for information from the Task Forces January 18 meeting

- c. Summary of other cities' models; a staff report for Council's 6/5/06 work session
Each team was charged with discussing the information before them and summarizing any significant findings to the larger group. They were also asked to come up with at least one policy-level question for the Task Force to consider.

Summaries presented by teams:

- a. Websites of Other Cities

The team reviewed several cities' websites and noticed lots of similarities between them in regard to supporting a neighborhood program. One difference noted was that of Vancouver, BC, which assigns a planner to each neighborhood association. It was opined that this was one way to foster a more intergovernmental approach to supporting neighbors. That led to the team's question:

Should the City assign a land use planner to each neighborhood association?

- b. Response to Requests for Information

Team members noted that geographical configuration of a neighborhood may indicate the degree and flavor of involvement in that part of Salem. The example given was Grant, a neighborhood that works well in partnering with Grant School to address the community's needs. This gives the neighborhood a sense of identity, of belonging to an area. Other neighborhoods which are not so oriented sometimes struggle with their avenues of involvement. For example, NEN has a strong complement of older adults involved in the association. It's possible that integrating or focusing on a school in the neighborhood would broaden the population involved in the association's activities as well as the type of activity in which they take part. The team asked the question:

Should Salem's neighborhood associations adopt a geographical focus to their activities, for example that of a school/school park?

- c. Summary of Other Cities' Models

In their discussion, the team quickly came to the question:

Should the City develop a strategic communication plan that raises community awareness of neighborhood associations?

Many different avenues of communication could be included, such as notices in water/sewer bills, listservs, websites, and other marketing and awareness-building activities. Team members noted that traditional forms of communication, such as NA newsletters, are limited and, used alone, not very effective.

The team also examined the question of why people volunteer in the first place. They noted that, if people believe they can make a difference, they'll get involved. Calvin referred to the citizen involvement chart contained in the May 2006 staff report to Council (which all members received in their initial packet of background

information). This chart outlines a number of mechanisms for citizen involvement, including notes on the circumstance in which they are best applied. The intent of the chart is to encourage City staff to choose the best approach for each project or issue they bring to the citizens. Calvin noted this model could also be used by the City to incorporate neighborhood associations as partners. The team posed the questions:

Should the City's citizen involvement plans for major projects incorporate neighborhood associations?

Should the City's major projects include a clear statement to citizens of when and where citizen input is needed and what impact it will have?

This team also concentrated on city support to NAs, either as staff support (e.g. researching issues, communication such as webpages and listservs) or through partnerships (e.g. the Neighborhood Response Efforts in Highland and SESNA). They proposed the question:

Should the City increase funding for the neighborhood association program?

5. Issues and Discussion

Calvin reviewed the handout for the meeting--responses to questions from the previous meeting--and asked the members to spend some time on the information on group dynamics. This section also includes tables intended to help members analyze specific functions or roles (desired or actual) of NAs for optimum effectiveness and inclusiveness.

Nanke asked for questions, input, and comments from the group, including requests for more information from the City to aid the Task force in completing its charge.

Stucky asked the current NA chairs present how much interaction they have with the Neighborhood Liaison assigned to their group, and how much with the Neighborhood Services Counselor. The general consensus was that, if the topic of discussion coincided with the Liaison's area of expertise, the NA was more likely to rely on the Liaison to provide solutions, advice, and connections for them. However, when it comes to figuring out how to get things done or whom in the City to contact, most NAs tend to rely on their Neighborhood Services Counselor rather than their Liaison. Smith opined that the Liaison position is a great opportunity to support the association and perhaps needs to have its role clarified or altered in order to optimize its effectiveness.

Nanke asked that City Councilors be notified of and invited to the Quarterly Neighborhood Liaison meetings.

Calvin noted that some NAs with newer executive board members tend to rely on City staff for help more than those NAs with older, more experienced members. The current two-level structure of support (Liaisons and Counselors) was designed purposely with this phenomenon in mind.

Lattimer also suggested that the City assign Liaisons to neighborhood associations according to the specific needs of that group. For example, Croisan-Illahe would most

benefit from a Liaison with land use planning skills. He proposed to make it a standard to ask NAs what they need when assigning new Liaisons.

Bennett asked for information from West Salem about their practice of breaking into smaller groups in order to manage projects. Homuth stated he would provide information on this.

Smith asked for more information on the role of Salem's neighborhood associations: community-building versus advisory. Can they co-exist? Do NAs have to be one or the other? Nanke asked whether the City supports one over the other.

Tesler asked what kinds of grants the City has applied for in order to support the neighborhood association program, and what has been the success rate of those applications.

In regard to using funds for community building, Tarter wondered if the work of SNI (Salem Neighborhoods Inc) didn't sometimes overlap that of NAs. She asked for more information on SNI's role and function, and how they are supported by the City.

Howe recalled the earlier discussion on associations being centered around a geographical focus (e.g. school, park). He asked for more information on the possibility.

MacMillan asked how large in the City's Information Technology staff? In particular, he wondered if there were enough staff to help NAs redesign their webpages.

6. Agenda for Next Meeting

Focus: Salem's Model

Nanke charged the Task Force to come prepared to discuss Salem's model--not just the way things are currently, but what needs to be changed in order to make it more effective.

Next Meeting
Thursday, February 15
6:30-8:30 p.m.
Library - Anderson Rm B