

Neighborhood Task Force

February 22, 2007
Meeting Notes

Member Attendance:

Chuck Bennett	Jay Howe	Thomas Smith
Dan Clem	John Lattimer	Rick Stucky
Dan Dorn	Dave MacMillan	Kate Tarter
Levi Herrera	Brad Nanke	Laura Tesler
Don Homuth	Pamela Schmidling	Frank Walker

Staff Attendance:

Jan Calvin, Acting Community Resources Manager
Debbie Kees, Staff Assistant

Guests Present:

Roz Shirack

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

Nanke reviewed the agenda, indicating that, since few of the Agreements Worksheets had been returned to the Dept of Community Services, that item would be removed from the agenda and rescheduled for a later meeting.

2. Appearance of Interested Citizens

None.

3. Approval of Minutes

As there was not a quorum of members present, the minutes of February 15 were not approved.

4. City Support of Neighborhood Associations as Advisors and as Civic Groups

Calvin had previously emailed to the Task Force members three options of the roles and functions of neighborhood associations, as a starting point for discussion. At the meeting, she referred to the options as noted below:

Option A - Advisors

Update Chapter 64 to be more explicit:

- Advisory responsibilities of NAs (to Planning Commission, City staff, other boards, etc.)
- Specific City services intended to support that function

Homuth noted that advisory responsibilities work both ways: the City requests NAs to give input, and the NAs request the City to include their input in decision-making. Lattimer commented that there are times when citizens perceive that they are not being taken seriously by the City, as their input seems to have no weight. Perhaps we need to further define what "advisory" means, as well as clarify what the City will do with advice from NAs.

Define:

1. When
2. Where
3. How

4. What difference
5. What will the City do when an NA advises

Homuth said that Option A should include the requirement that written input gets a written response. Schmidling demurred, noting that citizens have a responsibility to follow up on their own, to see how an issue was decided. Those who give testimony shouldn't have to rely on the City to tell them what happened. Calvin said the City has agreed to provide a dialogue with NAs and keep them informed.

Lattimer noted that land issues in particular are complex and follow formal proceedings. Input needs to be addresses as such--formally and in writing. Those who submit input in such matters should also be responded to in like manner.

Regarding giving feedback to those advising a City body, both Nanke and Dorn agreed that City Council and the Planning Commission need to respond to associations, discuss the NA's position, talk about staff recommendations particularly in regard to concerns an NA may have voiced. This way, associations know they have been heard and they have a response to their concerns. Dorn noted that the Planning Commission has already implemented some procedural changes aimed to improve communication in this way.

After discussion among the group members, Calvin summarized that Option A aims to impact and provoke increases in public trust, communication between the City and the NAs, public understanding of City government, and public input.

Option B - Advisors and Ambassadors

Do Option A and:

- Specify a role for NAs to help increase public awareness and education about City opportunities and services.
- Identify specific City support for this function.

This is more of a partnership role of the NA, in helping the City to reach the public. Lattimer stated that most people don't know about neighborhood associations nor what they do; adopting this role would help to alleviate that, as long as there was support from the City as their part of the partnership.

Homuth stated that sometimes it is the right thing for the City to refer callers to the NA for assistance on a specific issue. Nanke said that some City processes already have this feature built in. For example, if a community wants to have speed humps installed, they must work through their neighborhood association, which works with the City directly.

After discussion among the group members, Calvin summarized that Option B's primary focus is to provoke increased public awareness of City government, the opportunities for citizen input/influence, and neighborhood association activities.

Option C - Advisors, Ambassadors, and Action Team Leaders

Do Options A and B, and:

- Acknowledge the NA's role as a civic group that works to improve conditions in their neighborhood.
- Identify specific City support for this function.

Guest Roz Shirack noted that SRC Chapter 64 already includes language about the NA's role being to improve the quality of life and build community. Calvin affirmed what had been noted earlier by another Task Force member, that NAs may set their own agendas and engage in whatever activities they choose. The City is currently required to support only those activities required by Code for recognition of neighborhood associations. She referred to the actual wording in Chapter 64, which asks NAs to "consider" improving the quality of life in their neighborhoods.

Homuth noted that Option A is very clear because advising City Council (or other City bodies) is a clear task. Option C talks about things that are specific to the neighborhood, projects or issues that may have nothing to do with the rest of the city. The example given was West Salem's recent Edgewater Project that benefited that neighborhood but nowhere else in Salem. The City may choose to support such activities or not; what matters is that the association owns the activity.

Nanke pointed out that, technically, the City shouldn't provide support to any NA activities other than advisory, since that is the current role of associations.

Howe said that at least some of the neighborhood associations already operate under Option C, regardless of what is mandated by Code. As an example, Grant neighborhood yearly tackles a neighborhood clean-up. They get help from the City, but the main impetus, the organization, and most of the resources come from the neighborhood volunteers. We need to establish the support framework that the City will provide. Howe wondered if it were possible to be specific enough in Code language, or perhaps merely narrow down possibilities (e.g. park projects, litter pick-up).

Homuth opined that the City could tell neighborhood associations what resources and options were available, so NAs could decide whether to take advantage of those resources. Support would likely differ from year to year, so NAs may not take on projects every year if they relied on City resources to accomplish them. The City would lay out pre-designed and supported projects with the steps necessary to take to accomplish them. The rest would be up to the association to initiate. Schmidling noted that this could lead to inequity across town, as some neighborhoods won't plan such large activities, while others are constantly looking for more resources to meet their needs.

Howe said leveraging resources would be key. That is, a neighborhood that merely needed a street closure or help publicizing their event would take a great deal less staff time and fewer City resources than a neighborhood that wanted the City to initiate the activity, organize key components, provide equipment and supplies, and so on. Such a large investment of City resources simply may not happen, while the highly organized and engaged neighborhood is more apt to get the help it asks for.

Calvin noted some citywide activities (past and present) that rely heavily (although not exclusively) on neighborhood association involvement:

- Fall Leaf Haul
- National Neighborhood Day
- Make a Difference Day
- Spring Clean-Up
- National Night Out

Calvin culled from the discussion other roles of neighborhood associations:

- Be a voice of the public in a particular area.
- Raise the voice of the public.
- Facilitate dialogue between the City and the citizens, citizens and developers.

She also noted that there appeared to be a fourth option revealed by the discussion: The neighborhood association as a community-based problem solver: receiving, addressing, and exploring a citizen issue. Most issues would need only a referral to Marion County or the City or Neighbor-to-Neighbor--whichever agency would best solve the problem brought to the NA. There would be relatively few issues or projects that require a great deal of time and resources from the NA itself. NAs would have varying responses depending on the issue, the resources of the NA, and, of course, the choice of the NA on how to engage.

Dorn noted that "Option D" is a unique role, but could fit into any of the other three options. You lose the advisory role if you advocate for Option D on its own.

Calvin reminded the group that, once it's decided what resources are needed for the Task Force's recommendations, the group may choose to change some recommendation specifics based on availability of resources.

Also noted was another issue to be brought forward at a future meeting: building the relationship between NAs and City Council/City government.

6. Review Task Force Calendar

Nanke sketched out the meeting focus for each of the upcoming meetings:

March 1 - Revisit Role Discussion; Summary of Agreements; Model to Maximize Participation
March 8 - Issues of Inclusion; Preliminary Recommendations; Neighborhood Response Effort
March 15 - Resources; Refine Recommendations
March 22 - Refining and Addressing "Other"
March 29 - Preparation for April 3 SNI/NTF Meeting

This schedule of topics may change, depending on the predicted availability of Task Force members. All are encouraged to respond to the Dept of Community Services with their projected attendance for the remaining meetings.

7. Agenda for Next Meeting

Thursday, March 1, 6:30-8:30pm

Library, 585 Liberty St SE, Anderson Rm B

Focus: Revisit Role Discussion
Summary of Agreements
The Model to Maximize Participation

<p>Next Meeting Thursday, March 1 6:30-8:30 p.m. Library - Anderson Rm B</p>
