

REPORT TO THE CITY OF RALEIGH

RE: CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

By

John P. Kretzmann and Henry Moore

April, 2004

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Re: Citizen Involvement**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Engaging our Citizenry”: that was the challenge Raleigh’s Community Services Director Hardy Watkins wanted to explore. So in January of this year he wrote to John Kretzmann, Ph.D., Director of the Asset Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University, to invite an assessment of the Community Services Department’s “programming and services.”

Following that mandate, Kretzmann and a colleague, former Savannah Assistant City Manager Henry Moore, an expert in citizen engagement, reviewed Raleigh’s current approaches and recommended strategies to strengthen resident participation.

Overall, it is very clear that the City of Raleigh is strongly committed to the idea that the meaningful engagement of large numbers of community residents is an important ingredient for a strong and vital Raleigh. The assessment team focused on the workings of the Community Services Department, and especially its Neighborhood Services, Division.

Based on analysis of Raleigh’s community-based vehicles for citizen engagement, the assessment confirms the central importance of the Citizen Advisory Councils, particularly when they are strongly connected to the hundreds of neighborhood groups, clubs and associations that lie at the heart of neighborhood life in Raleigh.

The assessment team identified seven recommendations for strengthening citizen engagement in Raleigh. These include strategies which would

- Strengthen the Citizens Advisory Councils;
- Enhance the Neighborhood Association Registry;

- Build on the success of the Neighborhood College;
- Revitalize the Neighborhood Improvement Matching Grant Program;
- Expand the numbers of CAC's, and provide appropriate staff;
- Coordinate City Departments' work at the Neighborhood level;
- Explore the establishment of a quasi-independent "Neighborhood Resource Center," controlled largely by community residents.

The assessment team found there is significant energy both in Raleigh's City Government and in Raleigh's neighborhoods for an enhanced role for citizens. Together, Raleigh's neighborhoods and leaders can build a powerful new partnership which will serve as a model for the nation.

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BACKGROUND

"Engaging our Citizenry": that was the challenge Raleigh's Community Services Director Hardy Watkins wanted to explore. So in January of this year he wrote to John Kretzmann, Ph.D., Director of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University, to invite an assessment of the Community Services Department's "programming and services." Mr. Watkins invited a "broad based evaluation inclusive of meeting with staff, meeting with a focus group of citizens, possibly attending one of our Citizen Advisory Council meetings and comparison with similar sized jurisdictions across the country that have compatible objectives in terms of citizen involvement."

The Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute works with communities and municipalities across the United States to develop successful citizen engagement strategies. One of the Institute's leaders in working with city governments is Henry Moore who, as Assistant City

Manager in Savannah, employed a series of strategies to successfully engage local residents in civic and community affairs. Kretzmann and Moore, both of whom have worked with city governments and neighborhood leaders throughout the United States, agreed to examine and evaluate Raleigh's community engagement efforts. Following is a summary of the interviews and focus groups conducted, meetings attended, analyses of those discussions, and recommendations for possible strategies to increase citizen engagement in Raleigh.

METHODS

The assessment team employed four standard research methods: document reviews, individual and group interviews, focus group and participant/observation. We reviewed a range of current and past descriptions of Community Services programs. We interviewed Mr. Watkins twice, City Manager J. Russell Allen, and Mr. Dwayne Patterson, Community Specialist Supervisor. In addition, we interviewed the six Community Specialists. We observed a meeting of the Central Citizens Advisory Commission. And we conducted a focus group composed mostly of CAC leaders. Finally, we followed up with three telephone interviews of former Community Services staff. Summaries of these inquiries are

recounted in the appendix of this report. Following are summaries of our analyses and recommendations.

ANALYSIS

Overall, it is very clear that the City of Raleigh is strongly committed to the idea that the meaningful engagement of large numbers of community residents is an important ingredient for a strong and vital Raleigh. The assessment team focused on the workings of the Community Services Department, and especially its Neighborhood Services Division. But we heard about the citizen engagement activities of a number of other City Departments as well, especially Police, Planning and Community Development, Fire and Solid Waste. It is important that the City of Raleigh plan for more robust citizen involvement in ways which involve all of the relevant departments, not only Community Services.

In Raleigh's Neighborhoods: Three Vehicles for Citizen Engagement

In addition to looking at the City's neighborhood oriented programs, the assessment team felt it was important to understand the shape of Raleigh's communities, and the organizational vehicles for citizen engagement which were already in place. We believe it is important to recognize that Raleigh's

neighborhoods express their realities on three distinct levels, through three different kinds of organizations:

- At the core of the neighborhood's capacity to effectively express its opinions is, of course, the Citizens Advisory Council. The Councils represent a long and honorable history of community involvement in Raleigh. Recognizing and strengthening their role is critically important. We will return to the CAC's later in this report.
- "Under" the CACs are literally hundreds of smaller groups, networks and organizations. These local "associations" are the most powerful expressions of residents' interests and views. They include block clubs and watches; religious organizations; sports and recreation groups; youth, women's, men's and seniors' groups; issue advocacy organizations; cultural groups, etc., etc. The Community Services Department has begun to inventory these groups in their Neighborhood Association Registry. Locating, celebrating and involving these groups will be very important if local residents are to be meaningfully engaged. Connecting these groups more meaningfully to the CAC's is also critical.

- "Over" the CACs, of course, is the Raleigh Citizens Advisory Council. This group, which many describe as minimally effective, could be a very powerful forum for inter-neighborhood discussions as well as a powerful voice for neighborhood interests. (See "Figure A")

Given these analyses of Raleigh's community based organizational capacity, we can turn next to an analysis of the Community Services Department.

Raleigh's Community Services Department

Ten programs make up the Neighborhood Services Division of the Community Services Department. The assessment team concentrated on analyzing four of these: the Citizen Advisory Councils, the Neighborhood Association Registry, the Neighborhood College and the Neighborhood Improvement Matching Grant Program. Before offering brief assessments of these four, as well as recommendations for strengthening them, we want to note a few of the others: The Hispanic/Latino American Services effort represents a very important acknowledgment of a significant new population, and deserves strong support. So does the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities, particularly when its strategies attempt to

connect people with disabilities as contributors to the larger community. Though we did not focus on them, the objectives which inform three other initiatives are critical-the Neighborhood Improvement Program/Next Step; the Neighborhood Quality Initiative; and the Block Captain Incentive Program. The goals of these three programs deserve strong support.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Engaging citizens is clearly the objective of the Citizens Advisory Councils, the Neighborhood Association Registry, the Neighborhood College and the Neighborhood Improvement Matching Grant Program. Each of these initiatives seeks to mobilize significant numbers of local residents to define their own priorities, develop their own skills and provide leadership for the solution of neighborhood challenges. The assessment team gathered information on the current effectiveness and future possibilities of each of these efforts.

- The **Citizen Advisory Councils** are critically important vehicles for the expression of resident engagement in Raleigh. Every interview underlined that perspective. But almost every respondent also felt that the CACs could

be much more significant, particularly if more residents were involved.

Engaging more citizens in the CAC's will involve at least these two steps:

- 1) Getting the word out. We were informed time and again that most residents didn't know about the CAC's existence or functions. CAC's should communicate regularly with residents where they are-in churches, in parent groups, in cultural or sports groups, in block clubs; wherever people gather, the CAC should be visible.

- 2) Creating meaningful opportunities for participation. For many residents, attending monthly meetings will remain a chore for others to endure. It is important to make those meetings as productive as possible. But other avenues for participation might be attractive for other residents—for example, working in the community garden, working on neighborhood celebrations or fairs, contributing to the neighborhood newsletter, cooking for community gatherings, joining the block watch, etc. CAC's should take full advantage of the skills, interests, and passions of local residents, and find ways to mobilize them.

- The **Neighborhood Association Registry** is a potentially important initiative for identifying and mobilizing groups which already exist in Raleigh's neighborhoods, but currently lacks the resources to fulfill its promise. The Registry could provide a thorough "map" to the groups, clubs and organizations which make up the heart of the neighborhood life. Such a map would help the CAC's recruit more participants, and would underscore the ways in which residents were already involved in the community.

- The **Neighborhood College** is an unqualified success, with positive reviews from all involved. Residents learn everything they want and need to know about City government and its workings. Building on this success, are there other leadership development agendas which the College might address? For example, some might want to build their organizational leadership skills, or learn more about community development. "Graduates" of the Neighborhood College could be surveyed to learn what other topics they would like to pursue.

- The **Neighborhood Improvement Matching Grant Program** represents a bold attempt to support resident initiatives to build community. The fact that this opportunity is not being fully utilized points to some challenges in

communicating and implementing the program to local residents. One remedial strategy might involve the CAC's, which could act as a focal point for publicizing the Grant opportunities, for getting out accurate information (e.g., that volunteer hours can count as the "match"), and for soliciting applications. This role would also strengthen the relationships between the CAC's and neighborhood groups and associations.

In addition to enhancing these four approaches, the assessment team recommends three additional strategies to enhance meaningful citizen engagement in Raleigh:

- **Provide extra support for the Citizen Advisory Councils.** Increase their number from 18 to 24, with 2 more staff to provide critical support. This extra support is important if the CAC's are to thrive, and to connect with neighborhood groups through the Registry.
- At the neighborhood level, **coordinate the work of critical City Departments**—especially Community Services, Police, Planning and Community Development, Fire and Solid Waste. From the neighborhood resident's perspective, exactly which City department is

responsible for what matters less than a sense that the City is responsive to resident views and is effective as a problem-solver.

Again, a strengthened CAC could help with the coordination efforts.

- Finally, the City could explore ways to support an independent (or quasi-independent) entity which can enhance neighborhood development-perhaps a "**Neighborhood Resource Center.**" At present, citizen leaders told us that they had no "independent platform" from which to formulate and present their views. Such a center, governed by the neighborhoods (the RCAC?) could serve as a convener, an incubator for good ideas, a place where citizens might gather to formulate their agendas. Its independent character could be guaranteed if it were supported not only by the City, but by groups of civic partners-this "Neighborhood Support Group" could include, for example, the United Way, the Community Foundations, the Chamber of Commerce, local Universities, etc. (Note: The City of Indianapolis currently supports such a center, and it is an effective addition to neighborhood life there.)

In summary, the assessment team found that there is significant energy both in Raleigh's City Government and in Raleigh's neighborhoods for an enhanced role for citizens. Together, Raleigh's neighborhoods and leaders can build a powerful new partnership which will serve as a model for the nation.

Raleigh Neighborhoods' Citizen Engagement Vehicles

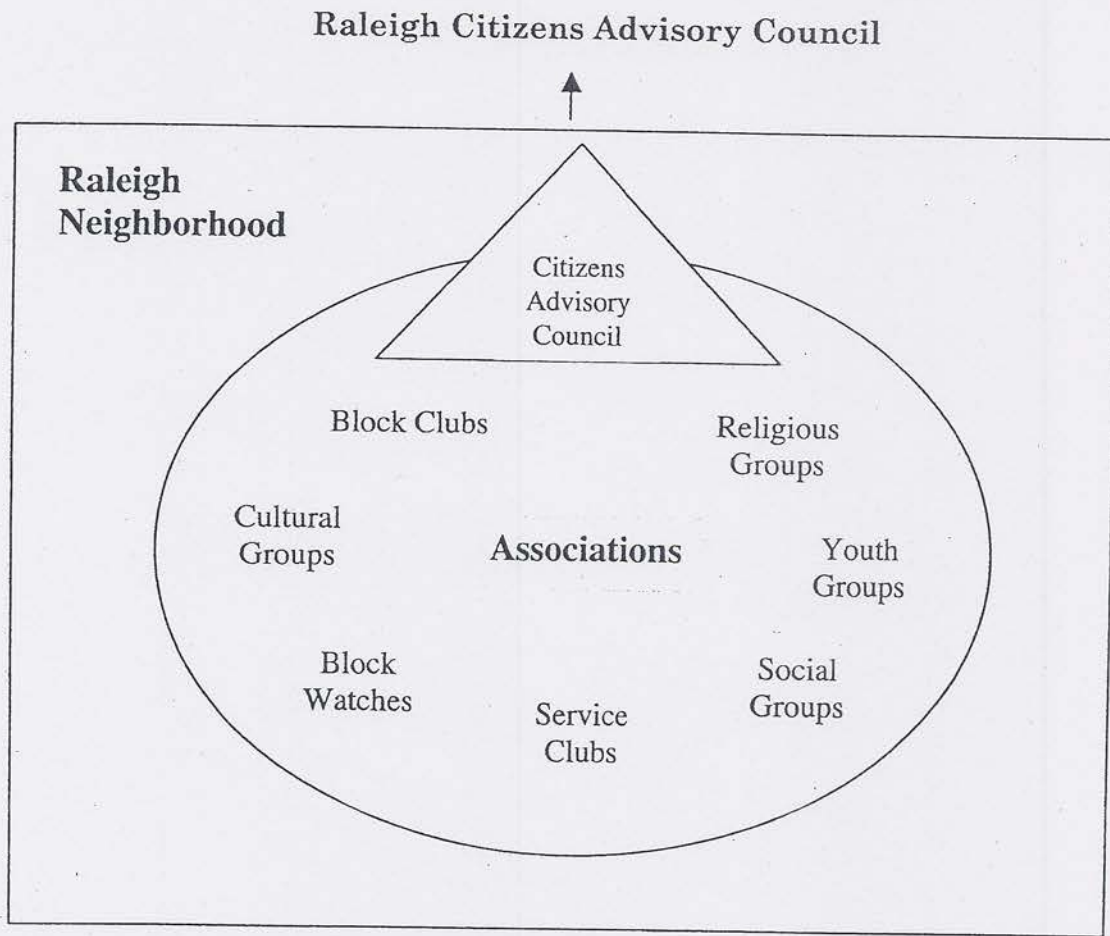


Figure A

APPENDIX I

Citizens' Ideas for Stronger Engagement*

- Get information out to the people using multiple methods
- Seniors love to do gardens—take advantage of this
- Develop citizen directed workshops
- Use the matching grants money with existing initiatives
- People don't know what "community watch" means—help people understand their role as neighborhood observers and block captains
- Offer newsletters in the neighborhoods
- Place advertisements in newspapers about community initiatives
- Use bulk mailing to make a call to action to citizens
- Make a widespread effort to reach people, especially uninvolved citizens using money and resources available
- Place stories about neighborhoods in the real estate section of the newspaper
- Advertise CAC and activities in the city's water bill to inform the general community
- Use funeral homes to reach the senior population. There are funerals weekly in some communities
- Prepare information for people before meetings to educate them and their communities
- Ask CAC members to discuss CAC efforts at local churches and use this opportunity to recruit new members
- Ensure that every CAC has a strong staff representative supporting their work
- Develop a uniform format for notices and information to citizens
- Create a policy that says, the city will not work on anything without CAC input
- Address the disconnect between Community Services and us. Community Services and city government should come to us and ask questions about what we need, what do we want.

* Source: Focus group of Raleigh citizens, Tuesday, April 6th, 2004

APPENDIX II

HIGHLIGHTS OF MEETINGS

Hardy Watkins, Director of Community Services Talks with Henry Moore

Setting

Meeting in Hardy Watkin's office at 3pm, April 5th.

Participants

Henry Moore & Hardy Watkins

Mr. Watkins provides background information about the Community Services Department.

- Community Services Department started a matching grant program three years ago. It worked the first year. It is not working presently. Staff cannot understand the reason citizens will not apply for funding for neighborhood improvements.
- Community Services developed an initiative to help neighbors organize themselves. Citizens can receive a stipend of \$5.15 per hour to act as an organizer. There has been a minimal response to the stipend offer.
- Community Service assists neighborhood groups by mailing out their newsletters for one year.
- The department started a neighborhood registry, which registered more than 50 associations. The staff feels that there are many more organizations that should be registered but remain uncertain how to reach out to them.
- Community Services primarily informs the community through mass mailings. The department used the same approach in an effort to reach the faith-based organizations. Of the 80 letters mailed to congregations, six pastors responded with an interest in City sponsored activities.
- City has grown from 100,000 to over 320,000 but civic activism has declined for a variety of reasons.

Highlights of the Meeting

What the City is doing well?

- Physical infrastructure is in place in these communities
- Community Services does a good job of educating the community. The Neighborhood College has been very successful.
- The City does a good job of informing the community of opportunities that exist for involvement.
- Citizen Advisory Council, founded thirty years ago, has a solid organizational structure and political history.

What could be better?

- Engage more citizens for problem solving
- Provide more opportunities for training for Community Services staff
- Increase staffing levels to support the large districts that are supported by the department.

What might we do differently?

- Design a customer care center so that one phone call would be able to answer many city issues from codes, nuisances, etc
- Community Development and Community Services should be placed in one department. Citizens have to go to several city departments to for answers to community concerns.
- Help people better maintain their properties

Lessons Learned

Mr. Watkins recognizes that the city must take a different approach to community engagement. The City Manager is encouraging staff to make appropriate adjustments in programming and outreach efforts.

Meeting with the Central CAC

Setting

Central Citizens Advisory Commission met at the Top Greene Community Center on the evening of April 5th. There had been some previous tension between the community and Shaw University regarding the development of some vacant property that had previously been designated by the neighborhood plan for affordable housing. Central CAC members expressed concern that the land for affordable housing had been sold to Shaw without involving citizens in the process. More than 40 community leaders attended the session.

Participants

- Six representatives from Shaw University
- Community Services representatives
- Approximately 20 citizens leaders from Central CAC
- Representatives of local businesses
- State Senator Malone
- Retired state personnel director
- Weed and Seed director
- South Central CAC Chairman
- Police staff representative
- Alcohol, tobacco, law enforcement agent
- City Council representative
- Community Development director
- RD Construction Company President

Highlights of the Meeting

- Citizens discussed a proposed change in the city's trash pickup policy. Citizens say the city needs one day for trash pick up rather than have three different days for garbage, bulky items, and yard waste. Neighbors expressed concern over potential loss of jobs for city employees. City staff emphasize that there will be no job loss in proposed change in sanitation pick up policy.
- Hardy Watkins introduces John Kretzmann and Henry Moore and explains the city's plans for reviewing the city's initiatives with neighborhoods. Nicole Sullivan suggested that the real question is

“what is meaningful engagement and what does it look like for citizens.”

- A senior member of the council reminded CAC members that “you can’t trust city hall—city officials will tell you one thing but not always follow through.”
- Citizens engage in a discussion with a local housing developer concerning several homes built on infill lots. Citizens suggest that the homes do not fit in with the architectural features of the community. They suggest that two homes are too low and should be raised or moved.
- Shaw University president and staff make a presentation to the community regarding a Center for Child Care Development. President admits to some missteps in communicating with the citizens but pledges to work with them in a real partnership for the development of the site and in a relationship with residents and an existing adjacent day care center. The citizens accept Shaw’s presentation and agree to work together as partners. Shaw officials offer to donate computer equipment to the community.
- Citizens present an idea that Shaw University and the community partner to form a “communi-versity.”

Lessons Learned

Citizens must be engaged from the inception rather than at the end of a project or process. Citizens are paying attention to the community and issues that impact them. Neighbors are willing to be a partner and want to work with people. Citizens recognize tension surfaces when they try to evaluate the benefit and impact of community developments with partners.

Conversation with the City Manager J. Russell Allen on April 6th

Setting

The City Manager heard Jody Kretzmann speak at the North Carolina Neighborhood Conference last year. He asked Kretzmann to come to Raleigh and review the City's efforts in citizen engagement and provide some recommendations for improvements.

Participants

- Hardy Watkins
- Jody Kretzmann
- Henry Moore
- J. Russell Allen

Highlights of the Meeting

When he began work in this field, Mr. Allen assumed that all neighborhoods should all have the same level of services. Now his view has changed about this because each community is unique.

- The city has a duty and an obligation not to assume that staff always knows what priorities the community wants.
- Over the years, the city tried a variety of techniques for community engagement. Some activities worked and some failed. The city is not getting the kind of connections needed to rebuild inner city neighborhoods. The CAC structure is thirty years old. How can members of the CAC help activate more citizens?
- The city decentralized the police department into precincts. This has helped bring precinct offices into closer relationships with the community.
- The mayor and council are more patient now than before. It is a good time for political support. The city is able to now focus on:
 1. Funding special projects for neighborhoods;
 2. Continuing to support concentrated code enforcement;
 3. Continuing to support the successful neighborhood college;
 4. Teaming across departmental lines on environmental issues such as vacant lots and substandard buildings;
 5. Creating a new zoning process that requires developers to go to neighbors for input; and
 6. Using police beats to build connections with citizens.

Other Observations by Mr. Allen

- The city has the scale challenge of connecting and engaging citizens in CAC districts where there are from 4,000 to 60,000 people. Neighbors only come out when there is an urgent issue involving their community.
- The City has updated small area plans and incorporated them into the comprehensive plan.
- The City has the lowest rate of cost for services to resident per 1,000 population than any other city in the state.
- It is not unusual for City officials to get hugs from some neighbors during community wide events. It feels like the city is starting to make connections with them.

City Government Allies and Supports

- Neighborhood leaders
- Southeast Raleigh Assembly
- Excellent education system as a result of the major university in the region. (The school superintendent was named national superintendent of the year.)
- The county government
- Major elements of the business community
- Human services providers
- Chamber of Commerce

Forces that the City is up against

- Resource allocation—can't measure this as well. There are so many competing interest and needs—roads, parks, housing etc. It is more difficult to make a case for new resources for some challenges when infrastructure needs must be addressed also.
- Lack of trust from the community; some citizens feel higher income sections of the city are better served.

City Managers' Vision

- Reorganize the CAC to make them more manageable for staff and for building connections for citizens within them.

- See more citizens foster activities within CAC's to improve their districts.
- Offer more opportunities for leadership training.
- Develop more neighborhood forums.
- Get neighborhoods to become more active and act as a feeder system for CAC's.
- Share independent views to neighbors on what is working in other communities.
- Build stronger working relationships with the six universities.
- Work with university communities to address the challenges of affordable and substandard housing conditions.

Meeting with Hardy Watkins on April 6th, 2004

Setting

Mr. Watkins mailed a package of materials to Kretzmann describing Community Services Programs. Kretzmann wanted to clarify how the operations worked.

Participants

- Jody Kretzmann
- Hardy Watkins
- Henry Moore

Highlights of the Meeting

Neighbors complain about the problems of boarded up houses. The city has developed a program to demolish them. More than 50 have been demolished recently.

Other concerns –

- Growing Latino population that the city has been unable to engage.
- Nuisance abatement problems in Southeast Raleigh account for 80% of all the city's nuisance calls for unkempt properties, rooming houses, and noise calls from construction sites.
- What is the role of the CAC? How do we develop for community engagement? How do we expand it so that they flourish?
- There are few block watches within the CAC system and a limited number of homeowners associations. Often nothing seems to happen in between meetings. Each CAC meeting will have between 18-40 people.
- Raleigh Citizen Advisory Council appears not to be as supportive of the city's community engagement efforts. They are comprised of 18 citizen advisory leaders from across the city.
- Each Community Services Specialist is responsible for three Citizen Advisory Councils. In addition to supporting the work of the councils, the specialists support the work of various city boards and commissions. Specialists also pursue any issue that emerges between city departments and city residents.
- What training is provided to Specialists? We give them mediation training. The department is considering a course of study at Antioch

Ministries but it has not been established yet. The neighborhoods are very diverse—staff training should also address how best to acknowledge this diversity.

- The city is proposing to increase RCAC from 18 to 24 members. The CAC districts are too large to support activism. One district has 60,000 citizens.

Dwayne Patterson Discusses Community Services

Setting

Moore and Kretzmann are meeting in Mr. Watkin's office to learn more about the work of Community Services. Dwayne Patterson joins us for a brief conversation.

Participants

Dwayne Patterson
Jody Kretzmann
Henry Moore

Highlights of the Meeting

- CAC is a non-appointed body/board. They prepare their own agenda. We support them. We do not establish their agenda.
- Community Voices will provide some training to community leaders at the end of the month.
- Some participants came to Moore's workshop several years ago.
- Staff knows that citizens must be involved in the process and that we must reach out to the youth, elderly and others to be effective.

Discussion with the Community Services Specialists

Setting

Mr. Watkin's convened the Community Services Specialist for a meeting in the staff conference room.

Participants

Sandra Carson

Charlene Willard

R. J. Brown

Luis Olivieri

Froylan Nolasco

Dan Tew

Highlights of the Meeting

What does Community Services Department do well?

- The Hispanic community needs our services. The department reaches out to connect to them. Community Services works to address citizen concerns such as pothole repairs or environmental issues. We do a good job of finding the right office to address their concerns.
- Latinos have been underserved and taken advantage of in the market place. Community Services breaks the language barrier and reaches to them on a variety of issues from labor relations to sexual harassment.
- The Neighborhood College and the Neighborhood Association Registry are working well.
- The department builds relationships with citizens and city departments around citizen concerns. Each month, 7,000 pieces of mail are sent out to residents.

What could be better?

- The Police Department built a new station but did not provide a room large enough for citizens to meet.
- The staff is spread too thin, trying to do too many things at once.
- The police districts are not coordinated with CAC districts.
- There is a challenge of meeting people where they are—many people need a job. If you can't help them get a job, don't call them for neighborhood work.
- The department's name is misleading and leads to calls from other agencies looking for the place for ex-offenders to do community services.
- The department needs better communication between the police department and staff.
- The city's community literature should be updated in Spanish annually.

Lessons Learned

Staff recognizes what they are doing well. They understand the power of partnerships with the community. There is a strong sense that stronger relationship with some city departments such as the Police Department will yield better results in community engagement.

Selected Raleigh CAC Members

Setting

Hardy Watkins invited CAC members and a few other leaders to city hall conference room for dinner discussion regarding how to strengthen the city's work with community leaders.

Participants

- Bill Padgett—Chair of Wade Avenue CAC
- Lynette Pitt—Chair of East Raleigh CAC
- Danny Coleman—Co-chair of South Central CAC
- Mary Belle Pate—Chair of Southwest CAC
- Cathey Ector—Weed and Seed Director
- Octavia Rainey—Chair North Central CAC
- Eugene Weeks—South CAC member and neighborhood association leader
- Dorothy Sanders—Former South Central CAC Chair
- Mildred Flynn—Southwest CAC member and neighborhood association
- Hardy Watkins—Director of Community Services

Participants unable to attend

- Nicole Sullivan
- Dr. Norman Camp—South CAC leader
- Susan Hollohan—Northwest CAC

Highlights of the Meeting

When was there a time when the city and citizens worked well together?

1. In 1995 the city's Republican council helped a neighborhood do a rezoning to exclude alcohol and adult entertainment from the neighborhood. The CAC leader called a meeting with the Mayor and took him to see the land where the uses were proposed. The Mayor suggested that she contact two other people for support. She made the rounds and went to every planning commission meeting. It

- resulted in approving the removal of those two use activities in her community.
2. We started working with the city parks department to develop a comprehensive plan. The CAC member asked her mother to talk to the property owner to sell a nuisance property to the city to convert it to a park. The parks chairman would listen to this CAC member at each commission meeting. They voted to buy the land and develop it into a park.
 3. Community Services Department was helpful to the RCAC. RCAC partnered with Trees Across Raleigh and North Carolina State University to plant 1,000 trees. This effort brought students, citizens, city staff and tree preservationists working in partnership for community improvement. The effort is still ongoing.
 4. For three or four years, an RCAC member tried to get information on crime for his community. He was able to build a relationship with the police department and now gets GIS maps on criminal activities in his community. This report is shared with neighbors and helps them understand neighborhood trends. The information was always there but now all residents have access to it.
 5. More than 10 years ago, neighborhoods had real stature. Citizens had some control over what happened in their communities. This collaborative process rewarded us for our involvement. The planning department worked with citizens, sought our advice and listened to our recommendations. We felt a part of the community improvement process. Sometimes, however, we feel the city is resentful of our need to be involved.
 6. A CAC member's kid was involved in a youth mentoring program in a redevelopment area. The program helped families feel at home, tutored citizens in budgeting and homeownership counseling.

Lessons Learned

Raleigh Citizens want to work closely with government as a partner. They want to create an atmosphere where their involvement is welcomed. Neighbors are willing to work with the city. There is openness about the relationship even though they are not in accord with some of the city's processes.

One on One Conversations with Three People About Citizen Engagement

Henry Moore's Telephone Discussion with Matt Andrews Former CAC Leader

He left the city five years ago so his comments could be dated.

What could be better? Good bit of the citizenry don't know the CAC exists. CAC makes it easy for many people. They have their own CAC's. CAC's convey information to the City Council. They are all volunteers and do a good job of helping people with their concerns. Better advertisement of the CAC's would help. We have to elevate the profile of the CAC's. We have a web site that announces meetings-www.raleighcitizensadvisorycouncil.org. Some three or four CAC's have a web site. But they are all underfunded. City Council takes it for granted. We should use the tax bills to get information out.

NIMBY brings people out.

Henry Moore talks with a former city official

From CAC perspective, they used to have a higher profile. The department should seek them out for advice. The department says this is the way it's got to be. We should ask the citizens what to do.

We should use CTV more. It could play a bigger role in educating citizens. The Neighborhood College could be seen on CTV.

Community Services volunteer programs are not tied tightly enough into the community.

There is a mixture of skills on the staff. There are some effective specialists and some staff that are less effective. Perhaps some clerical staff could help takeover some of the skilled duties that professionals are doing. They have the time and the ability.

The department sometimes has a hard time with focus. One week they are working on one thing and can be called off that work when Council or others intervene with a request. They should be able to focus on what we are doing for 12 months.

Hardy Watkins sometimes offers community residents meals if they come out. He is trying different approaches, and this is good.

Henry Moore's Brief Conversation with a CAC Leader

Yes, community engagement is talked about—but it is not always happening. We should build up neighborhoods and the skills of residents. We must get people involved in processes much sooner.

Too many people don't know what is going on. Access to information is critical. We get calls informing us to come to a meeting on one or two days notice. This is hard. We need a calendar of important dates. We work and have bills to pay, so time is an issue.

We should work to reach the elderly who have more time to give to community.