

Meeting Minutes: Steering Committee

Location: Environmental Services Department, Training Room

Date: February 15, 2017

Time: 6pm to 8pm

Steering Committee Members of Attendance: David Schmidt, Alene Egol, Yulia Konovnitsyna, Steve Mackey, Jeff Meiselman, Kelley Johnson, Andy Katz, Rebecca Loveless, Jim Chard, Yvonne Odom and John Miller

City Staff in Attendance: Timothy Stillings, Mark Stivers, Joan Goodrich, Janet Meeks and Jasmin Allen

This meeting was called to order at 6:00pm.

Mark Stivers welcomed the Board members and staff in attendance and stated that going forward, one of the early agenda items will be reporting back after the Sub-group meetings as we want to have regular feedback on our committee groups.

PLAY

Mark Stivers stated that the PLAY group did meet and inquired if anyone wanted to discuss what happened?

Andy Katz reported on the PLAY meeting and indicated that:

- ❖ The public comments were divided into the three elements (Parks & Recreation, Coastal Management, and Conservation)
- ❖ Each Elements would be reviewed and that the group reviewed one Element in the current Comprehensive Plan and suggested changes and that at the next meeting they will cover the other two Elements.

Andy Katz mentioned rescheduling the next PLAY meeting date.

Alene Egol stated that she wanted to share with the PLAY group that she attended a (Planning and Zoning) presentation at Old School Square (OSS) that talked about their plan for future, and she had a package that talks about expanding OSS into an art and entertainment park. They will be closing the Cornell Museum after the Delray Affair and it is going to go under complete renovation.

Mark Stivers suggested that the members sit together in the theme groups so that if they need to have a discussion with their group they could.

Mark Stivers informed the Steering Committee that the consultant could not make it to the meeting.

Mark Stivers introduced the Subject Matter Experts who presented at the January Community Meeting (WORK):

- ❖ Joan Goodrich for Economic Development
- Janet Meeks for Education
- Jeff Costello, from the CRA

Jim Chard arrived at 6:15pm

Mark Stivers suggested that the review should focus on each element and the experts are available for discussions. The meeting will hit on the broad topics and further discussion or topics requiring more details could be handled at the subgroups.

The group decided to review the three topics from the January Community Meeting (WORK) in alphabetical order.

WORK

EDUCATION

Rebecca Loveless stated she was excited that GED classes are available and utilize the schools for night school.

Yvonne Odom stated that we need to have a conversation with respect to where the schools are going and their development in the room:

- ❖ Public VS Private
- ❖ Black VS White
- ❖ We don't have many schools and the ones we do have a segregated for the most part
- ❖ People buy homes based on where the school system is
- ❖ If we want to become a community for families and not just retirees, that's a conversation we need to have

John Miller questioned how do we change that perception in Delray? Because he attended a private middle school and a public high school in Delray.

Yvonne Odom stated that that's the pattern. Kids will meet people in kindergarten and won't reconnect until high school. Ms. Odom stated that she has taught in Delray for 45 years that's been the perception –that the public schools are not good and questioned how to change the perception that public schools are not good?

Kelly Johnson stated that residents are taking their kids out of private school and sending them to Banyan Creek because of the programs they provide

Yvonne Odom stated that she agreed, but what happens is, the more black kids that go to those schools, less white kids will go to those schools. That's what happened with Pine Grove, Carver, and Atlantic High School and questioned?

- ❖ How do we stop the white flight?

- ❖ We need to have this discussion and ask some white families –Why did you stop sending your child to this school?
- ❖ Also, some affluent black families are not sending their kids to the public schools either.

Rebecca Loveless suggested that night school could be a possible solution that can help the schools. The more people going to those schools shine a light on the school and gives money for possible repairs. Even a community garden would be an amazing gift. These are solutions we should look at.

Jim Chard stated that he knows Plumosa is a D-rated school – why is it? Maybe it is an issue of marketing?. Whether it is a C or D school it doesn't matter –it should be an A school. If you walk around and meet the teachers and students and know what the parents have done in raising money, why is it so bad?

Janet Meeks stated that one of the policies should be that we create a strategic plan for Carver Middle School. We have been trying since 2000 to get a middle school of the arts. That is finally going to happen. If we can get one voice for the community and say we are tired of this, we just got a \$3 million stem grant, and Ms. Meeks questioned how can we pull our community together and bring businesses in?

John Miller stated that it also has to do with the facilities. You drive by Pine Grove, and it just doesn't look good.

Janet Meeks responded that we just got a \$42 million grant to improve the schools from the sales tax.

John Miller stated that principals and the board are giving their schools a bad perception with their stats (e.g. 72% of our students have reduced lunch). It causes some people to not even consider that school.

Jim Chard responded that instead of saying there are too many black students, turn it around to say that there are too few white students and questioned how do we convince the middle class that the schools are better?

Steve Mackey suggested that if we are talking about rebranding, we should get behind some retooling and use the schools for night school. Then you can say “Carver has a great tech program.”

Tim Stillings stated that real estate application has school rating system but the source is not from the school systems. You'll see a school that is rated C because of the number of parental complaints.

Steve Mackey responded that they factor socioeconomic factors into their grading system, so it automatically puts schools in a bad area a few notches down

Yvonne Odom stated that one would be appalled at the school rating system, Atlantic High School for instance, they do not grade the whole school, they base it on a select few individuals who are tested. We need to change this system.

Jim Chard stated that for the Comprehensive Plan, there needs to be an element of marketing and communication to bring more balance and we need to advertise how great our schools are in the Comp Plan.

Janet Meeks stated that in meeting with the new principal at Pine Grove, one of the major issues is teacher retention.

- ❖ A lot of students are level 1 readers, and most of the teachers have 0-3 years of experience. So you're taking the least experienced teacher and placing them with the most vulnerable students.
- ❖ Maybe we should provide incentives for teachers who want to work and stay in Delray.
- ❖ Provide housing for teachers who make a commitment to teaching at the lower performing schools

Yvonne Odom stated that often in this area, once teachers get in, they get out. We haven't had that problem until recently. Nobody respects the teachers anymore.

Steve Mackey responded that Boca High used to have this bad reputation, but now the perception has changed 180 degrees.

Yvonne Odom stated that they got rid of the black kids from Carver. The black kids who were bused there had a reputation for bringing the school down. That was probably one of the major issues.

David Schmidt stated that we do need renovate our school facilities? The school district dumped a lot of money into Boca High and renovated it. That had something to do with it too. Also, the principal of Spanish River, Art Johnson, was an amazing principal, and he turned things around there.

Janet Meeks stated that they also have stem programs. Programs and strategic planning is needed.

Rebecca Loveless suggested to reintroduce those old school themes (e.g. Halloween parade) – that's where you're going to get your sponsors (the parents).

Yvonne Odom responded that when you are in area where the parents might have three jobs and they might not be able to attend those events.

Janet Meeks stated, Delray Beach is the only municipality that has a continuous I.B. program for elementary, middle, and high school (Morikami, Carver and Atlantic). We need to market the schools to families.

Ms. Meeks questioned how do we strengthen and connect? And further stated I do not think many parents know the benefits of I.B. program, students get tremendous scholarship opportunities, parents save money because your kid will go into college with a certain amount of already completed credits, etc. Encourage the Morikami students go to Carver. Look at afterschool activities (e.g. robotics).

Jim Chard stated that also focus on private schools like Unity so that they don't end up going to Boca Raton. We need to have a recommitment program.

Mark Stivers suggested that we need to stay focused on issues that we as a City can look at broad policies. When you get into the mechanics of how a school works –that is the school district's job. What can we as a City do in terms of education?

Also, we are not just talking about K-12. Let's keep it as wide as we can and not go too much into detail.

David Schmidt agreed with Ms. Meeks and suggested:

- ❖ Need strategic plan to bring in good teachers, provide affordable housing near the school
- ❖ Set goals: when recruiting businesses, they look at the education system
- ❖ Every student in grade school to read at grade level 3 if that's good strategic goal: how can we get there? > provide tutoring, after school programs, etc.
- ❖ Take that to the Commission and say this is what the people want, make it happen

Jim Chard: We can't completely blame the school system. Why are the schools in Boca better than the ones in Delray? There's something we can do as a City. What we need to do to change the perception, improve the recruitment, etc. and that needs to go into the Comp Plan.

Janet Meeks stated that we need to create a strong leadership program, a strong comprehensive youth facility that may not be run by the Parks and Recreation, invite the nonprofits. People desperately want to expand their programs and this is a great opportunity to do so.

Tim Stillings stated that Treasure Coast Planning Council is working with the Achievement Center and with Village Academy to combine efforts from the City with the park system. It might be good to have the sub committees to tap into their debate and incorporate that into the Comp Plan.

John Miller stated that we need to alleviate the perception that our schools aren't safe. People send their kids to schools so they can get a good education and be safe.

Janet Meeks stated that when they were doing boundary changes for Plumosa and Pine Grove there was a lot of discussion with these sober homes coming in, and the issue of trash around the area. Maybe we also need to improve the areas around these schools.

- ❖ Look at how Atlantic Ave developed
- ❖ Improve the neighborhood landscaping > look at Spady Museum
- ❖ Work with neighborhoods

Rebecca Loveless stated that there should be more emphasis on safe walk/bike paths to school.

John Miller stated that we need to focus on the positive, but address the negatives

Jim Chard stated that Plumosa has great parent organization (PTA), they've spent thousands of dollars. They hold concerts and tap into local artists, and they raise a lot of money that way. Maybe something to encourage parental involvement can be in the Comp Plan. I understand what Yvonne said, some parents may have 3 jobs and it's hard to attend/be a part of these type of things, but we have to start somewhere. Find those parents that will show up and raise money. There are a lot of academic studies that show schools are successful when there is a lot of parental involvement.

Janet Meeks agreed and stated that we need to start early, 0-5 years

- ❖ Provide parental classes
- ❖ Obstacles may be language barriers
- ❖ Have a family to school policy and provide strong parental support and look at the Achievement Center

David Schmidt stated that to fill the gap in those school systems, maybe reach out to the younger entrepreneurs. Reach out to businesses and provide those skill sets in schools.

Some colleges are waiving the foreign language class requirement, and replacing it with coding. I don't know if coding is taught in public schools, maybe they should teach it. What skillsets do the younger kids need to have to go into the future (e.g. college, trade schools).

Jim Chard stated that we need to use the Achievement Center as an economic resource that we can tap into. Maybe they can help some of those problems in the public schools.

Janet Meeks said it all comes down to capacity and funding.

John Miller stated, resource challenged and we should create a position and reach out to the businesses community. (e.g. we've identified our issues and we are willing to partner with you).

Jim Chard suggested that the Achievement Center can do that. They are very good at raising money and getting grants.

Steve Mackey stated that you need a large business base. Maybe look outside the City too and use a resource center as a bridge between schools and employees.

Jim Chard suggested that the Chamber of Commerce be utilized. Mr. Chard also addressed items regarding higher education:

- ❖ We don't have any higher education
- ❖ There has been conversation for Lynn University to move their culinary school to Delray, which is great because we are a culinary center.
- ❖ Is there a way to tap into these higher education centers that need a location and we need them?

Mark Stivers stated that Janet and I went to a meeting recently on the homeless population, one of the things that came out of that were the number of kids who are putting packets of food together on a Friday afternoon and sending it home so they can eat for the weekend. The idea came out that developing education programs for the parents there, so the parents can then gain a skill that will help them get productive.

Understanding that the homeless issue is more than just not having a job, you're dealing with mental health issues, addiction, etc. We should get some of those programs that say "hey, we can train you do to this and pay you."

For example, look at these landscaping companies: it doesn't need a very skilled laborer, but it can get someone on their feet again. We need a place that can guide them to get those skill sets.

Yulia Konovnitsyna: Housing is a problem and the community has to be involved. We need to find a representative in the homeless community who can be trusted enough to conduct a program where the homeless can have a connection to jobs needed around the area.

Steve Mackey suggested that we just need to communicate where and when to sign up, and they will show the initiative. That way, you have a data base of all the homeless people who want to work/want to learn skills to work. Similar to a virtual labor pool.

Alene Egol stated that there are many faith based shelters in Palm Beach County. There are also plenty in Delray Beach. Every year the Quantum Foundation gives almost \$1million to 70 nonprofits, and about 60 out of the 70 are food pantries or faith based shelters. We could organize with all of the shelters. This is a resource that hasn't been tapped, but could be tapped if we had a registry of shelters and had a list of people who are looking for jobs.

Yulia Konovnitsyna inquired how are we going to reach out to people who may need the help? They may not have computers. I think we still have to put together a campaign or something. I like the idea of putting a registry together.

Jim Chard questioned how do we attract higher education? Look at all these successful cities (Austin, Cambridge, Asheville). They all have a prestigious university at the center. We do not have that.

Yvonne Odom stated that FAU is starting a nursing program with Village of Academy through Healthier Delray. I am not sure how far they are though.

Jim Chard stated that there have been a lot of efforts to talk to FAU, Lynn, and PBSC. Those are all good, but we don't have any results.

Steve Mackey responded that it takes a lot of federal money to start it. I think that a good example is that Delray could use a Jeff Green from Palm Beach, in starting a cutting edge stem school.

Tim Stillings commented that you can also spin off the nursing schools. There are schools like Keiser, and other training schools that teach skills. There is a statistic that says there are about 8-10 people that assist every doctor.

Steve Mackey stated that for a college we need a lot of space, maybe Congress?

John Miller responded that you need acreage to have a physical campus – maybe the old Plumosa or on Congress Avenue?

Janet Meeks responded that we may be able to use existing facilities

Mark Stivers stated, we may have an incredible opportunity coming up, after a grant, looking at a train station in downtown Delray. That's with Coastal Link and Tri Rail. One of the areas they are looking at is just north of the Silver ball Museum. What if one of the floors above the station was a space for a University, as an offsite campus?.

Jim Chard stated that we have all this asphalt/surface parking lot. In the future we may not need this. If you could build a parking garage and put a University on top that could work.

Yulia Konovnitsyna inquired if the schools coming together and sharing ideas in a public forum where the public can come in as well.

Janet Meeks responded that there are forums all the time, but they're not very successful, and they have very low attendance.

Jim Chard stated that there is an effort by Chamber of Commerce to have a city wide calendar. The idea is that you can go to one place and find out everything that is happening.

John Miller stated that the City needs to maintain the education coordinator position who can manage all that. Each organization will be responsible to give their information to that central hub.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Joan Goodrich stated that she was impressed with some of the thought coming from our Community Workshop.

- ❖ That we need quality skilled, educated workforce – invest in people and skills
- ❖ Take community ownership
- ❖ Validated the path we are on in terms of economic growth. Put more effort in resources around (e.g. startups, etc.)
- ❖ Education and workforce development is a funding principle
- ❖ Leverage resources, non-profit, public, private, etc.

Jim Chard stated that we need to decide if we are open for business. The general participation by companies is that we are not open for business.

Mr. Chard further stated that the Comp Plan needs to be clear if we will be a single industry (hospitality) or are we expanding in growth and provide jobs for the youth?

- ❖ Issue is that space is not available and businesses downtown are leaving (e.g. a business wants to go from 10,000 sq. ft. to 20,000 sq. ft., but the City won't allow them).
- ❖ They are being forced to go to Boca Raton
- ❖ We aren't creating jobs, we are sending them away

Mark Stivers inquired what are the barriers keeping business from growing downtown? - is it height restrictions? Parking?

Steve Mackey stated that height restrictions and density. Rents are super high and you have these businesses that can only fit max 10 employees. It is going to come down to:

- ❖ Do you have a robust economic City?
- ❖ Or do you have a barbell where you have super wealthy people and not many young people who can afford to live here.

The downtown area is so big. We need to focus on building in other areas of the City. Not everyone can work, live and play within two feet of each other. The Comp Plan should promote development in other areas other than Atlantic Avenue.

John Miller stated that we do not have many Class A office space in Delray. Boca is almost double us. They have a 100-120 foot height restriction, and ours is 54 feet. At the same time, a big reason come to Delray is because of the small scale downtown. How do we get them out to Congress, Linton and Military? Let's increase the height there.

Tim Stillings responded that we need to be careful of the height track because it adds value as it tends to increase

Jim Chard stated, I think we have plenty of space. Look at area between Swinton and I-95.

Steve Mackey stated that downtown growth circle is bursting-where do we push the growth? Look at the next reference of development (e.g. we are only 1-2 miles from downtown or we can take the trolley to downtown for lunch, etc.)

Jeff Meiselman stated that one need to look at areas of opportunities

- ❖ South and North for development and redevelopment
- ❖ Congress
- ❖ Four Corners
- ❖ Congress was an opportunity to mix uses for residential users to be accommodated within close proximities to employer generators

David Schmidt stated that affordability and flexibility are key, and can we create similar places like downtown in other areas of the City where people can live/work/play? It doesn't have to be as successful as our downtown. Create mixed use clusters so it does not remain vacant at night.

- ❖ Look at houses with home offices that fit into the community
- ❖ The land trust should not be strictly for residential
 - What about a commercial land trust and if the property is provided by CRA and we have land trust provide opportunity to create local businesses which will have lower rent

John Miller suggested that one look at ways to have flexible rents

Steve Mackey also suggested that we focus on demand of space, develop flexible space

Jim Chard stated that zoning causes separation of residential and commercial

- ❖ Comp Plan should readdress the parking requirements. It causes us to get in our cars and drive and park, so now Congress Avenue has to be 6 lanes.
- ❖ Look at alternative modes of transportation and the impact of economic development (e.g. auto driving cars, Uber).

Mark Stivers stated that the next generation is going to want to stay around the City center when they're young, and then move further out when they are ready to have a family.

Jim Chard responded that if you have good schools, and people can walk and bike to school, there's no need to move away from the City center.

Rebecca Loveless stated that lighting and safety is a priority. More people may go to more businesses if they were better lit.

- ❖ Develop and improve alleys to turn into bikeways, etc.

John Miller commented, alleys are a special feature of Delray, Boca and Boynton doesn't have them. If they were safer, they could be used more.

Jim Chard said that on the other side of I-95 we have canals that could serve the same purpose. However, there is a NIMBY issue.

Rebecca Loveless suggested that we focus on crime, and neighborhood watches.

Steve Mackey, stated that the trend of future office space going into neighborhoods.

John Miller stated that a balance must be maintained between preserving the character of the City vs development.

David Mackey stated that the process of development is pretty long in Delray. Maybe improve the process to be administrative.

Jim Chard responded that there is a lot of development and investment in Delray and the size of our department is not set up for that.

Jeff Meiselman stated that most of the increases in taxes go to CRA, which is spent in the district for improvement.

Jeff Costello responded that the CRA funds are used in the CRA area only:

- ❖ Often CRA covers lots of infrastructure improvements (in the next few years major redevelopment and improvement projects)
- ❖ Provide funding for non-profits, such as library, OSS, arts garage, etc.
- ❖ Provide funding to the City that works on City projects

Jim Chard questioned that CRA money cannot be spent outside the district, yet a lot of the customers come from outside the district—could the law be changed?

Yvonne Odom stated that the CRA have done a wonderful job.

Jeff Meiselman commented that we may need to readjust the boundary of the CRA. There are other programs and tools to generate funds for the CRA. Certain areas may not be blighted anymore and other areas are.

Yvonne Odom stated that the whole City benefits from the CRA. The money needs to improve facilities that were approved.

Tim Stillings encouraged the members to listen to speech on taxable values and current structure. Our current structure somewhat penalizes investment. It costs more to add value and invest in the community.

David Schmidt stated that about 50% of the City's budget comes from property tax, and of our budget, 70-75% is personnel (health care, salaries, benefits)

Steve Mackey stated that just because a building grows in height, doesn't mean you need more employees (such as fire, police, etc.). So the 50% should still remain.

Jim Chard suggested the creation of technology and innovation districts:

- ❖ Co-op space/ workspace
- ❖ We have an insufficient power grid
- ❖ Extension of the CBD designation, like SW and NW 5th Ave. would be helpful in creating jobs
- ❖ Pop-up culture show > we used to have one but the City shut it down. But those are the type of things that can generate excitement
- ❖ Water Plant is old and obsolete and can't handle the salt water intrusion – it's a regional issue.

Yvonne Odom suggested to consider forgiveness loans to teachers if they teach in Delray, create incentives (e.g. for every year you teach here, part of your loan is relieved. Partnership with employees –teachers, fire fighters, and get discounts

Rebecca Loveless inquired if those people (teachers, fire fighters, etc.) show their badge and get discounts from local businesses.

Jeff Costello stated that Bexley Park provided a blueprint for that program by providing housing for fire fighters, etc. and these policies should be included in the Housing element. As you look at other areas for development, look at incentives and policies to encourage development activity on the fringes of Delray Beach

Tim Stillings suggested that we can talk to our own community on how to invest locally instead of sending out the RFPs and hoping for a developer to come in, we can do it ourselves as a community.

Steve Mackey suggested that we explore the Land trust concept:

- ❖ Land banking –the City can hold on to it and lease it out

John Miller stated that there's a push right now for the City to sell any excess land it has, and that he disagrees with that.

Yvonne Odom stated that what is happening is you might have a person buying a small parcel they cannot do anything with it other than to be aggregated to the neighbors and that the neighbors should get the first opportunity to purchase.

Steve Mackey said there should be a land preservation trust.

Mark wraps up the meeting and briefly talks about the sub group scheduling and dates.

Jasmin Allen stated that future sub group meetings dates have been established.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.