Solving the Mysteries of Public Engagement
Notes and Key Points of Presenters
June 4, 2009

About the notes and key points. The notes and key points are the collective summaries and thoughts from several of the workshop conveners. By no means are they comprehensive or complete, but reflect some of the key points we heard as take home points and thought beneficial.

Paul Moline, Carver County – Key Points
Case Study – An Example from Carver County of a Successful Public Involvement Process
- *Paul's presentation is posted on the website.*
- Tour for committee members of example projects helps with future understanding and decision-making
- Use every tool possible, multi-pronged approach is more effective
- Get away from public hearing format – not conducive to generating interaction
- Smaller area issues (such as individual neighborhoods or lake associations) generate more ownership

In regards to committees
- Large membership allows for more continuity and representation from many groups and interest areas.
- Diversity of board members helps. Diverse backgrounds & opinions
- Provides a good sounding board before topics or decisions are brought to the county board.
- Careful – expectations can run high and people will expect actions and quick results

Marcey Westrick, BWSR – Key Points – key answers from participants
Q & A session: Why is public involvement important?
- Avoid derailment
- Most land privately owned, need public participation to achieve goals
- Government is public, we need to look at our public as part of the structure
- We don't have all the answers, public can provide assistance

Panel Discussion - Key Points
A Variety of Experiences, Challenges, and Successes with Citizen Advisory Committees and Public Participation from Watershed Organizations

Dawn Pape, Blue Thumb Program
- Identified a common thread in the issues and solutions revolving around an issue (stormwater) – before developing program. That common element was plants.
- Program developed with a philosophy of sharing information, tools, and resources. Beneficial not only to the operations of the program, but also in achieving the goals of the program

- Proper terminology and consistent use of terminology important
- Logo development $3-5K can be critical and worth the expense.
- Businesses are willing to advertise for a program as the program advertises for businesses (mutually beneficially)
- Marketing to advocacy groups, neighborhood groups, master gardeners, 4H; and at community events such as fairs, neighborhood (Tupperware type) parties. Additional marketing on Facebook
- Web based program, use Google Analytics for analysis of the website
- Delegate - partners responsible for marketing/outreach
- Coordination with many partners provides more opportunities for mass media efforts
- Tours/Demo projects – via neighborhood parties
- Avoid open enrollment of partners; takes too much time
- Look for ways to simplify and automate

James Wisker, Public Involvement in Planning and Rule-making
- Creek Visioning process identified creek corridor issues and vision of what creek should look like in future. *Recognize what the issues are.*
- H&H model looked at creek from a technical perspective and resulted in a division of Technical and Public participation efforts
- Visioning and model came around full circle in the watershed plan and set groundwork for the rules rather than centering rules around angry homeowners and regulation
- Early up front involvement can save a lot of long-term heartache
- Recognizing issues helps keep stakeholders engaged throughout the project as well as maintain a core group throughout the years
- New groups were formed to mix fresh blood with long standing members.
- Use as many tools as possible: big media blitz, website, listservs, mailing list, newsletters and articles, homeowners associations, recruiting from LGUs, recruit members via city mayor appointments, etc
- Provided technical background and foundation in watershed plan, but gave CAC a task to actually draft a group response and rule language – more ownership taken by committee members.
- Striving for consensus isn't always necessary or good, but managing controversy is important. Committee is to make recommendations to Board, Board can determine final policy
- When facilitating, have a clear expectation in mind, but keep it to yourself (regarding rules) to avoid disenfranchisement avoid creating perception that the future is already written (don't have a predestined end product).
- Make sure you document the public participation process.

Louise Watson, Citizen Advisory Committees and Participation
- Think outside the box of what is required and look at <u>why</u>.
- Understanding your stakeholders (audience) and relating the message to their interest and locality, is key to gaining and retaining their interest. They aren't going to show up just because you need them to.

- Identify target audiences in the watershed, then create framework for participation.
- Grassroots recruitment process and open door policy, "Everyone who calls has volunteered to be involved"
- Acquire names of everyone who contacts watershed and orient their location within watershed, personal mailings, schools and teachers targeted by subwatershed as conduits to the public
- Give them opportunities to learn and grow, such that they become advocates for your goals, gradually increase level of responsibility .
- Give them hands-on opportunities.
- Provide members/citizens tools to teach others, encourage culture of sharing information outside of group
- No one right way; participation is continually evolving. Originated with a Natural Resources Planning Group in addition to the traditional CAC. Eventually combined the two groups into the Watershed Advisory Commission with multiple teams depending on interest, need, and abilities.
- Measuring success is gauged by how many projects are implemented on the ground: schools, city/county sites

Jenny Winkelman, CACs and participation
- Philosophy that public participation is important for all reasons mentioned earlier, training ground for elected officials/future leaders, establishes WMO as a technical resource, members are ambassadors/ messengers (and treat them as such) in the watershed as well as beneficial in bringing information back. Members tend to be the "movers and shakers."
- Training ground for future elected officials and leaders
- Establish yourself and organization as an expert.
- Use CAC as ambassadors to engage multiple cultures
- Hands on Twin Cities – a non-profit assisting with managing volunteers
- Define clear tasks, job description – budget review, comp plan input, stewardship grant and cost share project award recommendations
- Only convene at pleasure of the Board (determined in annual work plan). Avoid meeting for the sake of meeting – expectation management.
- Staff informs them of educational opportunities
- Keep the discussions resource based rather than city based. Structure committees around an issue, a resource not a political or geographic boundary.
- All cities represented on CAC, plus at large citizens, including subwatershed representation, businesses
- Ask for feedback on processes.
- Keep it positive and productive, with a recommendation that comes out at the end.
- Use existing connections with watershed as mechanism to recruit
- Nurture relationships with CAC member, be responsive to each one.
- Keep staff opinions out, give the CAC history, facilitate process, staff recommendations separate.
- Email doesn't always work, nurture relationships, be responsive to CAC