

VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
HUMAN SERVICE COMMISSION MEETING

April 6, 2011, 6:30 P.M.

Chairman Jacaway called the April 6, 2011 meeting of the Human Service Commission to order at 6:35 p.m. and asked for a roll call:

PRESENT: Chairman Jacaway, Ms. Carroll, Mr. Carter, Ms. Crowe, Mr. Meaney and Mr. Melton

ABSENT: Mr. Grammich and Mr. Rogers

STAFF

PRESENT: David Fieldman, Village Manager, Allison Alonzo, Management Analyst and Stan Popovich, Village Planner

VISITORS: Lucy Lloyd, Trib Local; Greg Hose, 445 Austin

March 2, 2011 MEETING MINUTES – Mr. Meaney recommended a clarification on page 6 to of the March minutes. The commission members agreed with the changes. **MS. CARROLL MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES WITH MR. MEANEY’S REVISIONS, SECONDED BY MR. MEANEY. MOTION CARRIED BY VOTE OF 5-0-1 WITH MR. CARTER ABSTAINING.**

Chairman Jacaway asked Mr. Fieldman for an overview on the social service question staff report. Mr. Fieldman noted the two preliminary recommendations of the HSC were to create an interactive and searchable website and then market that website. Staff completed an analysis of the preliminary recommendation. With regard to the website creation, staff found there would be maybe 15-20 service categories with approximately 50 service providers. The webpage would be arranged for direct customer interaction.

Staff also found there would be an element of training needed for direct customer interaction. Staff believes if the Village creates, maintains and effectively markets the website, the Village will receive calls and inquiries about the website and social services. This belief is based on the fact that in December 2009, when the Village was transitioning out of social services, staff still received calls with a minimum amount of information on the Village’s website. These calls can be challenging and current staff is not trained with regard to social service interactions. Staff believes the annual hours needed for the social service program is between 300 and 400 hours.

The creation of awareness can be accomplished through the Village’s current communication methods including the website, e-news, twitter, DGTv, hometown times and the water bill. Staff is already in the business of getting news and information out, so the social service awareness would not be an additional staff cost but an opportunity cost. The social service awareness

message would take the place of a different message. Overall, this would result in a 0.20 full-time equivalent staff position to provide this service at this level.

Per a question, Mr. Fieldman noted it is about 90 hours of start-up time for the website. If the database was in a pdf form the start-up costs would be significantly less, but the on-going maintenance and update costs would be the same. Mr. Fieldman noted staff would be open to the HSC and volunteers assisting staff in the data gathering. Chairman Jacaway felt it could be a cost-savings if the HSC or volunteers assisted with the upkeep of the database.

Mr. Carter asked about staff capacity. Mr. Fieldman noted the Village is always trying to be more efficient. He noted in the short term the Village is operating at capacity but over time there might be efficiencies. Mr. Fieldman noted the 0.2 fte is difficult to find an exact match for a quarter time staff position. He noted staff would need to find a way to be more efficient to provide this service. Staff would probably not recommend adding a part-time position at this time.

Mr. Meaney noted that based on previous discussions he felt the primary users would be experienced service providers looking for more information. He did not envision this number of calls being made to the Village. Mr. Fieldman noted the number of calls was a staff estimate and they are really in uncharted waters. He noted the number of calls are based on historical data when the social services department was functioning and when the Village was transitioning out of those services. He noted the volume could vary. Mr. Fieldman noted anytime the Village posts something, staff will get calls, regardless of the topic. The majority of the fte estimate is based on answering phone calls.

Mr. Melton thought it would be important to make the website as user friendly as possible to assist in keeping the number of calls down.

Mr. Fieldman noted staff was confident in the start-up hour estimate because staff has a webmaster to create webpages. The on-going maintenance has more variables. Mr. Fieldman believes once the webpage is actively marketed, that is when the inquiries would begin.

Mr. Meaney wondered if you're a needy person, who would think to go to a website for this type of information when you could go in person to a church or other organization to ask for assistance. Per a question, Mr. Popovich noted staff receives on average between two to five calls a week, depending on the week. Staff does not track these calls or keep track of who is calling, whether they are asking for themselves or someone else.

Mr. Meaney feels that if the primary users are experienced social service providers, not many calls would be made to the Village. Mr. Fieldman stated it is the call from the individual needing assistance or a friend or family member that would generate the majority of the calls.

Mr. Fieldman noted that if this was the recommendation that came out from the HSC and approved by Council, staff would start by training staff and keeping the same staff levels. The program would run for a specific amount of time and staff would report back what the real experience is and if that would change or modify the staffing plan.

Chairman Jacaway thinks the recommendation answers the questions posed to the HSC by the Council. Is it the end all solution? Chairman Jacaway thinks it is in the right direction and that the solution should be open for fine tuning and adjustments. Mr. Meaney offered his support for the proposal.

Mr. Fieldman noted a report to Council would include discussions on the variability and level of call answering, how staff would approach the staffing issues, and with a try it and see approach with a report after the program has run for a specific amount of time.

Mr. Carter feels it is a safe small step for the Village to take.

WITH RESPECT TO THE SOCIAL SERVICE QUESTION, MR. MEANEY MADE A MOTION TO FORWARD TO THE VILLAGE COUNCIL THE RECOMMENDATION AS DRAFTED IN THE REPORT TO THE HUMAN SERVICE COMMISSION DATED APRIL 6, 2011 WITH THE ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY FROM TONIGHTS MEETING.

MR. CARTER SECONDED THE MOTION. ROLL CALL:

AYE: MR. MEANEY, MR. CARTER, MS. CARROLL, MS. CROWE, MR. MELTON, CHAIRMAN JACAWAY

NAY: NONE

MOTION CARRIED: VOTE 6-0

Mr. Fieldman noted the recommendation would be presented to the new Council after they are seated on May 3. Staff would keep the HSC informed about the hearing date.

Mr. Popovich noted the Chamber of Commerce handout was based on Chairman Jacaway's request for additional information about the Chamber's program. Mr. Carter noted he respected the Chamber's program and they are a great resource.

Chairman Jacaway opened up the discussion on the primary recommendation of TCD3. He reviewed staff's memo and believes that this is very similar to the other idea in terms of communication. He is not sensing a lot of support for the neighborhood organization model from neighbors and other residents. He believes there is not a need for it. He believes people are happy with the Village communication model as it is. He does not hear complaints about specific issues that people are having with Village responsiveness. If people become involved it is usually when a project directly impacts them. He can see ways the Village can communicate better but he does not see how a neighborhood organization model could help.

Mr. Meaney noted an organization would not be a political organization but based on a common geography. He recalled that the group considered neighborhood overlay districts / virtual neighborhoods for common interest groups, such as condominium owners. Referencing a memo from Mr. Dabareiner, Mr. Meaney noted the Village has many existing non-geographic based

groups. He noted if there is nothing precluding non-geographic groups, there is nothing prohibiting neighborhood groups from forming. A Village recommendation would be an encouragement for these groups to form. Mr. Meaney is in favor of the neighborhood organization model and a resolution should not restrict the formation of common interest groups or limit the right of assembly.

Mr. Popovich noted the Village would never prohibit a right of assembly or any resident from speaking individually or as a group of neighbors. Mr. Meaney would not want an individual to come before the Council and be rejected because they were not part of a neighborhood organization. Chairman Jacaway relayed his experience with regard to brick street issues in his neighborhood. He felt the mayor and council were all very accommodating. Mr. Popovich provided an example of how a neighborhood organization might function in terms of notifying the area about a proposed development.

Per a question, Mr. Popovich noted the Community Wide Notification System (CWNS) can be used to notify residents of issues. He noted it can be block specific, such as a recent hostage situation, or it can go out to the whole community, such as the recent blizzard. Ms. Carroll noted that system could be used to notify residents without incurring additional costs. She noted the Village has many available communication models that they can use.

Mr. Carter asked if there have been specific incidents where people felt they were not getting information from the Village. Mr. Popovich noted he was not aware of any issues. Mr. Carter felt they really have not defined a problem that needs to be addressed. He does not think the Village should be in the business of creating neighborhood organizations. It should be up to the resident if they want to communicate with the Village.

Chairman Jacaway noted the website invites residents to interact with the Village. Mr. Popovich noted staff can select the areas that would be contacted by the CWNS. The message can be tailored and directed to specific streets, blocks or neighborhoods. Twitter is used in a similar way to notify residents of events or issues. Mr. Carter related how he recently had received a CWNS notification. Mr. Carter noted the important issue is that staff knows it is important that they communicate with the Village.

Mr. Meaney related about the two sides of the issue. The one side is how the Village communicates to the citizens while other side, which is talked about in the TCD 3 document, talks about creating formal channels for residents to talk to the Village. Mr. Meaney read small excerpts from the TCD 3 report and noted the result desired from the TCD 3 report is more focused and responsive efforts on the part of elected officials. He believes the intent of the report is to encourage the formation of these groups so that they can speak with the Village in an organized manner.

Mr. Meaney supports the idea of formal opportunity for people to communicate with the Village. He noted the energy for these groups include non-geographic entities. Chairman Jacaway noted the focus should be on geographic based organizations.

Mr. Carter noted the residents of Downers Grove come together over specific issues or needs and did not believe a formal neighborhood group model would be very efficient or effective to set up when the neighborhoods are self-sufficient and could set them up if they need to.

Ms. Carroll was concerned about the implementation on the Village end and possibly having a staff person coordinate and be a liaison for the groups. She noted there is nothing to preclude a group of people from getting together and speaking to the Village as a group. Chairman Jacaway noted he had been to numerous Village Commissions and Councils to speak about issues and always felt listened to. He likes the concept but how to organize it and get buy-in is the deal breaker for him.

Mr. Meaney noted the concept is a noble one and noted many communities around the country have similar systems. He noted it seemed to be working in some places but did not know once you get into the details on how it would work. A discussion ensued about how to maintain the organizations over time.

Chairman Jacaway noted in terms of communication, maybe there are tweaks to the system to make it better. He related how the Village communicated construction updates along Prairie Avenue. Chairman Jacaway noted the website has lists of current projects on it, but could there be a way to offer more information

Mr. Carter recommended the HSC forward a recommendation that would state, the HSC recommends staff continue to identify and implement best practices in developing and maintaining two-way communications between government officials, municipal staff and citizens. He believes that is a simple and to the point recommendation.

Mr. Meaney would want to see something that emphasizes more citizen to government communication, such as formally encouraging neighborhood groups and developing improved channels of communication from citizens to governmental entities. Mr. Carter noted staff is doing a good job communicating and that recommendation would be to keep doing what you are doing, identify best practices and implement those. He likes encouraging citizens to be proactive. Mr. Carter thinks staff is already communicating effectively.

Mr. Meaney related how an existing group formed and evolved and now meets on a regular basis with the Village to discuss environmental issues. He noted the staff takes their opinions and ideas seriously. He noted this could be a model for future groups. Mr. Carter noted the recommendation could be the HSC recommends staff continue to identify and implementing best practices in developing, maintaining and encouraging two-way communications between government officials, municipal staff and citizens.

Chairman Jacaway noted the commission needed to look at the original questions posed. The Commission believed the existing communication models do not need to be improved, but just continuous quality improvement, such as recent improvements to the website. With regard to the second question, the Commission found it difficult to answer. Some Commission members noted their neighbors were fine with the current communication practices.

Mr. Meaney noted the discussion has really focused on question one, but felt the second question is the key issue. He wondered how the Village can help citizens have a voice? Ms. Carroll noted that may be assuming that residents do not have a voice. Have residents or groups gone to the Village to ask for assistance?

Per a question, Mr. Popovich noted the Village may not have a database of all the groups or homeowner associations in the Village. It goes back to the neighborhood organization model where the Village would collect that information. As a resident, Ms. Carroll would rather have the Village communicate directly with her rather than through an intermediary.

Mr. Meaney noted the progress made in the social service question when the Commission heard from specific groups. He wondered if it would be beneficial to speak with the other towns and cities that have used the neighborhood organization model. Mr. Popovich noted whom he had spoken to regarding their neighborhood organizations. Mr. Popovich noted the cities that use it have been doing it for many years and that there are departments and staffs dedicated to the neighborhood organizations. He noted the models were not only about specific development or construction projects but also about community building. Mr. Popovich noted turnover, maintenance and leadership development are keys in sustaining the organizations.

Mr. Carter feels the Commission had yet to identify a problem that would be necessary to consider the next step. He wondered where the issue is where someone has had trouble communicating with the Village. He did not feel it is the Village's role to create a model for neighborhood organizations.

Chairman Jacaway noted the Commission felt a neighborhood model is not necessary or feasible. Mr. Meaney preferred the Commission continue to explore the neighborhood organization model. Mr. Carter did not believe there is a problem, therefore it is difficult to determine how a neighborhood organization would solve the problem. Mr. Meaney wondered if there is an opportunity the Village would be missing. Mr. Carter believes staff is meeting the need and there is not a weakness that would require a solution.

Chairman Jacaway noted groups could form now without a formal organizational model, similar to the brick street example. He does not sense that the Village is unresponsive to groups of any size. He believes if it is not broke do not fix it. The majority of the Commission were reluctant to request additional information about neighborhood organizations.

Mr. Melton did not believe there is a large issue with the questions posed to the Commission. Ms. Crowe noted previous TCD efforts found significant needs that needed to be addressed. She noted there are 34 recommendations that came out of TCD 3. She is not sure how many people wanted a better form of communication. It is difficult to gauge since it is not a concrete recommendation such as a hospital or sidewalks. Ms. Crowe thinks it is okay to let Council know they think the Village is doing a good job and that residents have ways to communicate to the Village and their government.

Ms. Carroll noted the Commission has discussed the topic and that no one she has spoken to feels there is a void. She believes it would be appropriate to respond back to Council that the

concept is not necessary or feasible at this time. She noted if the Village would need to hire a position for this concept it may not be feasible.

Mr. Meaney noted great organizations always look for ways to excel beyond where they are and he thinks great communities should as well.

A discussion ensued regarding the next steps and recommendations. Mr. Popovich noted staff would prepare a report for the Commission to review next month, similar to the social service report that was completed tonight.

Mr. Carter wondered if the Commission could vote on the TCD3 recommendation tonight since the Commission seems to have come to a consensus. Mr. Popovich noted it would be beneficial to prepare a report so that the report could answer the questions before the Commission and lay out the rationale behind the recommendation. A report would give the Commission an opportunity to review the materials and ensure it adequately portrays the message that the Commission came to a consensus about.

Ms. Crowe discussed the Woodridge Wellness Council and how non-profits come together to share ideas. Chairman Jacaway noted if a representative of the Wellness Council wanted to come before the Commission, she is welcome to come in and talk about their program. Chairman Jacaway related his recent experience at the Walk-In-Ministry of Hope.

Chairman Jacaway opened the meeting to public comment. There being none, public comment was closed.

MS. CARROLL MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. MR. CARTER SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 8:30 P.M.

/s/ Stan Popovich
Stan Popovich
(As transcribed by MP-3 audio)