

Steering Committee Meeting
Wednesday, September 24, 2008 at 3:00-5:00 pm
Baxter Community Center - Grace Conference Room

Voting Steering Committee Members Present

1. Sgt Elliott Bargas - Grand Rapids Police Department
1. Haris Alibasic - City of Grand Rapids
2. Marian Barrera-Young - Baxter Neighborhood Association
3. Ray Tromp - Baxter Neighborhood Association: resident
4. Kathryn Caliendo - East Hills Neighborhood Association
5. Pamela Benjamin - Easttown Neighborhood Association
6. Tim Doyle - Kent County Prosecutor's Office
7. Michael Yasenachak - Drug Enforcement Administration
8. Sandra Latham - Southeast East End Neighborhood Association
9. Janet Stahan - U.S. Attorney's Office (Sub for Kaye Hooker)

Non-Voting Regular Attendees and Guests Present

1. Kristine Jaros - Weed and Seed Site Coordinator
2. Johannah Jelks - East Hills/Wealthy Heights Neighborhood Association
3. Kathy Lett - Grand Rapids Police Department
4. Liz Brush - Easttown Community Association: intern

Steering Committee Members Absent

1. Captain Eric Payne - Grand Rapids Police Department (w/notification)
2. Scott Vogel - MANA business representative (w/notification)
3. Alice Menninga - Easttown Neighborhood Association: resident (w/o notification)

Non-Voting Regular Attendees Absent

1. Dr. William Crawley - Grand Valley State University
2. Dr. Debra Ross - Grand Valley State University
3. Deputy James Farris - Grand Rapids Police Department
4. Lt. Vincent Reilly - Grand Rapids Police Department
5. Officer Aaron Stevens - Grand Rapids Police Department
6. Stacey Stout - Baxter Neighborhood Association

I. Call To Order / Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Pamela Benjamin at 3:02. Members introduced themselves. A quorum was present.

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the August 27, 2008 by Kathryn Caliendo, and seconded by Michael Yasenchak. The minutes were approved.

III. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made to approve the agenda of the September meeting by Marian Barrera-Young. Tim Doyle seconded the motion which was then passed.

IV. Report by Chairperson

Pamela Benjamin discussed the CCDO Technical Assistance /Neighborhood Works training on Sustainability held Friday, September 12, 2008 at Grand Valley. DeVos Place. Members of the Steering Committee who attended included Sgt Elliott Bargas, Haris Alibasic, Kristine Jaros, and Pamela Benjamin – Guests included Tamara and Dan from Jubilee Jobs. Speakers were informative and helpful in addressing issues related to the Weed and Seed Program. Re-examining where the Steering Committee is in their process, maintaining an accurate profile of the population which comprises the Weed and Seed Target areas, determining the effectiveness of the actual events and total activities that the Steering Committee directs, and discovering and evaluating what the community itself desires and requests are the significant pieces that must fit together to produce a sustainable and stable future for Weed and Seed. Dealing with the root causes is the key to understanding how to achieve stability, not relying on cursory looks at some obvious symptoms.

An typical example of how to work effectively for sustainability described how a neighborhood which had a lot of drug traffic complained, not about the drug dealing, but about the noise the activity created. In order to rectify this, the neighborhood wanted to have a noise ordinance law passed and enforced. This then becomes a sustainable step toward improving the neighborhood. It starts with listening and being responsive to the actual issues that the neighborhood has identified. This then creates a pattern of success that generates increased cooperation and continuing positive results. It requires vigilance and a high degree of responsiveness to work together with the resident population in solving major root causes and developing a lasting solution.

V. Reports

a. 2008 Budget

Pamela Benjamin distributed copies of the revised budget report. A side-by-side comparison displayed the actual line item 2007 expenditure and the proposed 2008 line amount. The chart is an attempt to simplify the reporting of budget line items. Seven highlighted items were discussed. The Lies that Bind allocation was doubled to accommodate a longer program, from one 8-week program to two 6-week programs. An increased allocation was allowed to Eastown for children's summer programming. A funding extension would allow Johannah Jelks to complete the Wealthy Heights project. Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church is introducing a new program with an existing partner and requested \$5,200.00. Baxter Community Center has decreased funding for Around The Table to \$1,927.00. Project Sentry will continue this year with funding of \$1,200.

Discussion ensued related to the request for \$6,130.00 for Baxter Neighborhood Prevention Works Program. The program was described as lacking specificity. Marian Barrera-Young said that this program

was presented before under a different name. Kristine Jaros stated that the Department of Justice would not accept this program because it does not follow the Narrative Guidelines mandated for Weed and Seed Programs.

Tim Doyle questioned the new 2007 budget format. He requested a column showing how much money was unspent, or left-over, for each line item listed. This request will be reflected in the next budget report.

b. Crime Statistics

Sgt. Bargas presented Central City Weed and Seed Crime Data Sept.23, 2008. A large increase in the burglary category was noted. The removal of copper piping and other metals account for part of the increase of this criminal activity. Some of the sites burglarized were empty residences; others were entered as residents were vacationing. Kathryn Caliendo inquired if there was a way to mark or engrave the copper piping for identification. He did not believe this could happen, and many acceptors of metal do not look at the metal, it is weighed only. Another increase was apparent in domestic assaults, which could be related to increased stress in a declining economy. For a majority of crimes in the Weed and Seed areas, a decline is evident.

(The reports were then set aside to accommodate the guest speaker.)

VI. Guest Speaker

The Community Outreach Coordinator of the Baxter Community Center, Brian Jones, introduced himself and described his background. Moving here from Gary, Indiana he traveled throughout the neighborhood in an effort to familiarize himself with the neighbors. Discovering a strong sense of non-cooperation, he arranged a picnic for all the neighbors at Joe Taylor Park. This event was so successful, he has continued it for the last ten years. He has recruited students to help residents prepare income tax forms, he is teaching budget classes, as well as classes on self-esteem. He passed around many pictures illustrating the Family Festival and his other activities in the neighborhood.

Brian Jones was questioned as to why he was doing these types of services under Baxter Community Center, rather than the Baxter Neighborhood Association. He talked about the faith-based aspect of the Community Center which allowed him to volunteer on a wholistic basis.

V. Reports (con't)

c. CRI Site Evaluation Up-Date

Pamela Benjamin reported many problems in completing the survey. Because of the lack of success with this method of surveying, Pamela Benjamin suggested that Grand Valley State University provide students from Sociology and Criminal Justice classes to conduct the neighborhood survey. This could also be conducted by way of a community-wide meeting. So far, the Community Resources Inventory has completed 65 of 250 surveys, this represents 28% of the total. The final date for completion is October, 2008, for the survey which is out.

d. Domestic Violence Conference Planning Up-Date

Pamela Benjamin stated that the planning was complete for the Domestic Violence Conference on October 18, 2008 at Martin Luther King, Jr. Academy at the corner of James and Henry Avenues. Volunteers were asked to pass out fliers and to assist the Chairperson of the Conference Committee.

VII. 2008 Budget Approval

The Steering committee asked Kristine Jaros for a suggestion on where to reallocate the Baxter Neighborhood Prevention Work Program monies. Kristine Jaros suggested that an additional \$2,000.00 be designated for the "Lies That Bind program," and that an additional \$4,000.00 be designated to Jubilee Jobs for youth employment. Marian Barrera-Young stated that the Prevention Work Program helps at-risk teenagers with jobs and keep them off the streets. Kristine Jaros explained to the Steering Committee that according to the Narrative "stipends" are not allowed. Any program under the Department of Justice Guidelines must pay minimum wages or above. In addition, the work provided must be real jobs. Non-permanent activities are not allowed, such as passing out fliers. The program, "Lies That Bind," deals with the at-risk young people. It was noted that it was important that the budget be approved at this meeting due to DOJ deadline requirements. Marian Barrera-Young left the meeting.

A motion was made by Tim Doyle to (a) re-allocate funding from line item Baxter Neighborhood Prevention Works Program in the amount of an additional \$2,000.00 to line item "Lies That Bind" program, and (b) re-allocate \$4,000.00 from the line item Baxter Neighborhood Prevention Works Program to Jubilee Jobs for youth employment, and, (c) approve the Wealthy Heights extension and the "Around the Table" extension of \$1,927.00 for project completion. This motion was seconded by Haris Alibasic. The motion passed unanimously.

Tim Doyle made a motion that with the re-allocation of these items (a) and (b), and the extensions (c) that the 2008 budget be approved. Haris Alibasic seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

The \$15,000.00 allocation for "Administration of Grant" was explained by Kristine Jaros and Janet Strahan. Normally the fiduciary charge totals 40% of the grant, however, in our case, Grand Valley State University has charged us only 15% of the total, thus resulting in the \$15,000.00 allocation. We are grateful to Grand Valley State University and to Dr. Deborah Ross and Dr. William Crawley for this important and valuable service, especially at this much-reduced rate. It was noted with appreciation that Weed and Seed is also provided an office and a parking site by Grand Valley State University.

VIII. Announcements/Updates/Public Comment

The Steering Committee is trying to find the most compatible time to meet. The newest time-frame is inconvenient for many. The most appropriate time seems to be from 11:00 - 2:00. The Steering Committee agreed that the time should be changed again. An electronic voting will be held prior to the next meeting.

The next Steering Committee Meeting date, time and site will be announced soon.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Ray Tromp

Next Steering Committee Meeting
**** Tuesday ** October 28, 2008**
11am – 1pm, Baxter Community Center: Grace Room