

Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday, February 26, 2009 at 11:00 -1:00 pm
Baxter Community Center - 3rd Floor Sewing Room

Voting Steering Committee Members Present

1. Captain Eric Payne - Grand Rapids Police Department
2. Aaron Stevens - Grand Rapids Police Department Community Officer
3. Stacey Stout - Baxter Neighborhood Association
4. Ray Tromp - Baxter Neighborhood Association: Resident
5. Marian Barrera-Young - Baxter Neighborhood Association
6. Pamela Benjamin - Eastown Community Association
7. Sandra Latham - Southeast East End Neighborhood Association
8. Scott Vogel - Madison Avenue Neighborhood Association: Business Representative
9. Janet Strahan - U. S. Attorney's Office

Non-Voting Regular Attendees and Guests Present

1. Debra Ross - Grand Valley State University
2. Enid Gaddis - Arbor Circle
3. Aaron Rider - Grand Valley State University Graduate Student

Steering Committee Members Absent

1. Kristine Jaros - Weed and Seed Site Director
2. Kathryn Caliendo - East Hills Neighborhood Association
3. Michael Yasenchak - Drug Enforcement Agency
4. Haris Alibasic - City of Grand Rapids
5. Tim Doyle - Kent County Prosecutor's Office

Non-Voting Regular Attendees Absent

1. Johannah Jelks - East Hills/Wealthy Heights Neighborhood Association
2. Kathy Lett- Grand Rapids Police Department

I. Call To Order/Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 11:07 am by Chairperson Pamela Benjamin. .
Members introduced themselves, and a quorum was present

II. Approval of Agenda

It was suggested by the Chairperson that Items V. and VI.: The Weed and Seed Site Review, and the 2005-2008 Comparative Crime Statistics, be reversed on the agenda. With these two items, re-aligned, a motion was made by Scott Vogel and seconded by Stacy Stout to approve the agenda. The motion was passed and the agenda was approved.

III. Approval of Minutes of the January 29, 2008 Meeting

A motion was made by Scott Vogel and seconded by Stacy Stout to approve the minutes of the January 29, 2008 meeting. The motion was carried.

IV. 2009 National Conference

This assembly is scheduled to be held in Tampa, Florida in July 2009. Pamela Benjamin read the list of four attendees which include: Kristine Jaros - Site Director, Stacy Stout - Weed and Seed resident, Haris Alibasic - City of Grand Rapids/Steering Committee Rep, and a TBD GRPD representative. Anyone on the Steering Committee is eligible to attend also, if self-financed.

V. 2005 -2008 Comparative Crime Statistics

Captain Eric Payne distributed a crime comparison report covering the years from 2005 through 2008. He noted that assault crimes declined six percent from 2006-2008 in the Central City Weed and Seed area. Crime increased in the non-assault category from seven percent in 2005 to eight percent in 2008. Weapon offences were up possibly because there was more recovery of weapons.

There was a brief discussion of the composition of a "gang." Although the police department functions with a broader definition, the residents in the neighborhood have a clearer picture of who exactly is in a gang, thus defining a gang by personnel, not by a gathering of specific age or gender groups. Four young men may or may not comprise a gang, depending upon who the individuals are. Generally, statistically speaking, crime in the Central City Weed and Seed area is declining.

VI. Weed and Seed Web Site Review

Dr. Debra Ross presented the information in the absence of Kristine Jaros. The site is hosted by Grand Valley State University. The Homepage was displayed and a brief history of Central City Weed and Seed is presented. The present Strategies of Weed and Seed are available here, also. All the partnerships, the Weed division, the Seed division, the mission statement, and community police identification within neighborhoods are some of the components of the web site.

A discussion of photographs of various activities brought up the issue of privacy for individuals, including minors. The consensus of the group was to include a disclaimer for the pictures that are on the web site. Links to the web sites of the neighborhood associations will be available on the Weed and Seed web site.

VII. Atlanta Training Up-Date

Pamela Benjamin explained that the full report from Atlanta Training will be presented next month when Kristine Jaros will attend. The three -day training included a session in which the various participants were asked to describe their local Weed and Seed program. Pamela stated that the majority of the people attending were from sites that were considering continuing on as a "graduated site". These site would self-funded, as their national funding has run the full life of their grant. Each graduated site had a different story and approach related to running the program as self-financed. For example, one graduated site started a credit union, and another graduated site planted trees.

A specific course of action must be determined for the Grand Rapids Central City Weed and Seed as our cycle of financing is coming to a close. It was suggested that a forum be organized to explore the options, to see what problems need to be prioritized, and what solutions might work. With this process, a goal should be set related to obtaining operating costs of the continuance. What is needed is to analyze the current situation and see what can be projected for the future. The existing programs as supported by Weed and Seed will be impacted by our decisions. Someone will be required to represent the interests of the Weed and Seed community to the City of Grand Rapids and the City Commission. We need their support on several levels.

It was suggested that an all-day special session be arranged, possibly to be held next fall to address the development and continuance of a graduated site.

VIII. Community Forum

In order to showcase the programs and successes of the Central City Weed and Seed, a community forum will be held. The Weed and Seed partnerships will be high-lighted, and the new web site will be introduced. It will be an opportunity for all Weed and Seed members to observe how the partnerships are investing our grants into their programming. This will also constitute a progress report on their sustainability and further assist us in planning our future as a graduated site. This community forum will likely take place sometime in May 2009. All residents will be invited to be part of this public forum.

IX. Written Reports

The fiscal report was presented by Dr. Debra Ross. With the closing of Fiscal Year 2007, all contract items have been covered. There is a question about matching funds, which carries on through the 2008 and 2009 budgets. There will be a correlation of terms so “matching funds” can be properly defined.

Because Baxter Community Center’s “Around the Table” program does not fit the criteria of either Weed nor Seed per Fred Filberg with CCDO, the Steering Committee will be re-allocating the funding towards another line-item program for FY2009.

X. Announcements and Updates and Public Comment

1. Enid Gaddis from Arbor Circle stated that the Arbor Youth Center is developing a partnership with Annessia Freeman to serve homeless teens by providing them with hygiene supplies. Enid Gaddis is referring homeless teens to the “Lies That Bind” series. Sandwiches are being distributed from a Arbor Circle van to young people on the streets during nighttime hours.

2. East Hills Neighborhood Association has completed a tree count in their area. This evening, Thursday February 26, 2009 at the Wealthy Street Theatre, they will present their internet-based media production “Tree Map and Urban Forest Plan.” Their inventory uncovered that East Hills has nearly 1,500 street and park trees, with a cumulative market value of nearly 4 million dollars. The tree map and the neighborhood urban forest plan are based upon a tree inventory conducted in August 2008 by inventory specialists from Bartlett Tree Experts assisted by approximately 20 neighborhood volunteers. They found that there is space for more than 600 trees, and most of the trees counted were maples. All

are invited to this presentation at 5:00 tonight.

3. East Hills is hosting a fund-raiser at the Green Well Gastro Pub on Cherry St. from 1-4 on Sunday, entrance fee is \$25.00.

4. A Grand Rapids City Budget and Stimulus Hearings will be held
on March 4, 2009 from 6:00 to 7:30 at Union High School.
on March 9, 2009 from 6:00 to 7:30 at City High School.
and, on March 12, 2009 from 6:00 to 7:30 at Ottawa High School.

All Steering Committee Members are urged to attend one or more of these sessions.

5. The next Steering Committee Meeting will be on Thursday, March 26, 2009.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:25 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ray Tromp
Secretary

Next Steering Committee Meeting:

THURSDAY

MARCH 26, 2009

11:00 am - 1:00 pm

~~**BAXTER COMMUNITY CENTER**~~

~~**Grace Room**~~

CHANGED TO:

**GVSU Criminal Justice Grants Office – 638 West Fulton
Street, 49504**