

Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday, January 29, 2009 at 11:00 -1:00 pm
Baxter Community Center Grace Conference Room

Voting Steering Committee Members Present

1. Sgt. Elliott Bargas - Grand Rapids Police Department
2. Aaron Stevens - GRPD Baxter Community Officer (rep for Captain Payne)
3. Kathryn Caliendo - East Hills Neighborhood Association
4. Pamela Benjamin - Eastown Neighborhood Association
5. Michael Yasenachak - Drug Enforcement Agency
6. Janet Strahan U. S. Attorney's Office (rep for Kaye Hooker)
7. Haris Alibasic - City of Grand Rapids

Non-Voting Regular Attendees and Guests Present

1. Kristine Jaros - Weed and Seed Site Director
2. Debra Ross - Grand Valley State University
3. Kathleen Lett- Grand Rapids Police Department
4. Alyson Parham – Partec Consulting Group
5. Johannah Jelks - East Hills/Wealthy Heights Neighborhood Association
6. Aaron Rider – Grand Valley State University, graduate assistant
7. Monica Groen – Grand Valley State University, student
8. Amber Kilpatrick - Eastown Community Association

Steering Committee Members Excused Absence

1. Marian Barrera-Young – Baxter Neighborhood Association
2. Ray Tromp - Baxter Neighborhood Association: resident
3. Captain Eric Payne - Grand Rapids Police Department
4. Stacy Stout - Baxter Neighborhood Association: resident
5. Kaye Hooker – U.S. Attorney's Office
6. Sandra Latham - Southeast East End Neighborhood Association
7. Scott Vogel - Madison Area Neighborhood: business representative
8. Tim Doyle - Kent County Prosecutor's Office

Non-Voting Regular Attendees Excused Absent

1. Dr. William Crawley - Grand Valley State University

I. Call To Order/Introductions

Chairperson Pamela Benjamin called the meeting to order at 11:10am, and members introduced themselves. Because quorum was not met at this time, approval of agenda and minutes was moved to later in the agenda.

II. Written Reports

A. Fiscal Report and Site Director Report (combined)

Kristine Jaros, in combining her report with Debra Ross', reported that the closing process of the 2007 grant has begun and the most recent progress report was sent in and received by Fred yesterday. A copy of this report was handed out and should be included in each Steering Committee member's binder. Per the financial audit, matching funds must be documented, and Kristine will be collecting this documentation for the \$66,670 matched funds in the coming months. Pamela Benjamin asked how much of these funds were for 'weeding' and 'seeding' operations. Kristine indicated that probation officer costs made up approximately half of this. Kristine also indicated that the 2008 grant Progress Report was filed yesterday and the 2009 grant application was submitted and received. The reward letter for the 2009 grant is expected in July or August.

Kristine stated that she and Pamela will be attending the NeighborWorks training in Atlanta from February 15-19, and that the budget will be funding ground transportation and per diem, per the Steering Committee's electronic vote in January.

Sgt. Elliott Bargas requested funding for 5 police officers, each with community-oriented roles that target areas falling with the Weed & Seed site boundaries to attend the CPAM training: Current economic trends impacting crime prevention, community policing and school resource officers on March 6, 2009 in Grand Rapids. GRPD will also be sending other officers, the Chief and Deputy Chief, but Weed & Seed funding would include these 5 officers and Kristine Jaros, for a total of \$120. Voting on this was tabled, as quorum was not yet met. Pamela Benjamin emphasized the relevance and importance of Steering Committee members attending this. She will seek funding from ECA for her attendance. Dr. Debra Ross plans to attend, providing her own funding as well.

Kristine stated that the Steering Committee would need to determine whom to send to the National Conference in Tampa in July. We will need to discuss and vote on in the next few months. Pamela stated that it is imperative that someone from GRPD is sent, in part to provide a better interpretation of what material is discussed at the conference, and suggested 4 members be sent. Alyson Parham indicated that this is a much larger conference than the training conference last year, and that a letter would likely be sent with regards to whom from the Steering Committee should be in attendance.

Kristine brought up the issue of how to spend the money that was allocated to the promotions budget of the 2008 award, which needs to be spent by Oct. 31, 2009. She suggested the money go toward a marketing campaign for the Franklin/Eastern business corridor. All those in attendance expressed a strong consensus in seeing the money go toward this marketing campaign, however, a vote will not take place until a proposal is developed. An overview of this information can be found on the report that was emailed on Jan 28th.

B. GRPD Report

Sgt. Elliott Bargas reviewed the materials provided in the GRPD Report. Sgt. Bargas indicated that the rise in robberies and non-aggravated assaults could be related because they reflect a similar pattern and based on how they are reported. Sgt. Bargas reported that another suspect from various gun-related crimes has been apprehended, and based on the work of detectives in the area, expects to see the reported sounds of gun-shots decrease in the next 6 months. Domestic violence within the site boundaries appears to be occurring in the same areas, suggesting the same individuals are involved. Although this is general a difficult problem to address as it is a silent crime, Sgt. Bargas indicated the importance of attempting to increase the involvement of this population.

III. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Kathryn Caliendo, and seconded by Sgt. Elliott Bargas, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was passed and the agenda was approved.

IV. November and December Meeting Minutes Approval

A motion was made by Kathryn Caliendo, and seconded by Sgt. Elliott Bargas, to approve the November meeting minutes as presented. The motion was passed and the agenda was approved. A second motion was made by Kathryn Caliendo, and seconded by Sgt. Elliott Bargas to approve the December meeting minutes as presented. The motion was passed and the agenda was approved. Because voting was tabled earlier, a motion was made by Kathryn Caliendo, and seconded by Sgt. Elliott Bargas, to approve the spending of \$120 to send 5 GRPD officers (including Sgt. Bargas) and Kristine Jaros to the Crime Prevention Association of Michigan meeting in March at the cost of \$20 per attendee. The motion was passed and the spending of \$120 on this approved.

V. Sustainability Discussion

Alyson Parham discussed the topic of sustainability regarding the Central City Weed & Seed site. Alyson indicated that as a graduated Weed & Seed site, the Steering Committee could continue to attend future conferences, use the official logo and benefit other agencies applying for federal funding, who get 'points' for being affiliated with a Weed & Seed site. However, difficulties of maintaining a site include needing to find alternative funding sources, needing to maintain the same reporting measures and outcome standards as requirements. In determining whether to become a graduated site, Alyson suggested that the Steering Committee keep in mind its original intent of the site. The question the Steering Committee will need to face is: 'what components or elements of the site will be sustained?' Alyson also expressed the important of focusing on the Steering Committee as a facilitator of funding and resource acquisition as well as capacity building rather than acting as purely a programming source. Per Alyson's handout, steering committee members will need to address the following questions if work within the site will be sustained:

- 1) Is there a clear vision for the community?
- 2) What has Weed and Seed done to bring residents and other stakeholders together around common issues? Are more residents, including youth, now involved in addressing community issues?
- 3) What is working or not working relative to the steering committee structure?
- 4) Can the community readily identify ways in which Weed and Seed has made an impact in the community in the areas of: (1) law enforcement, (2) community policing, (3) prevention, intervention and treatment, and (4) neighborhood restoration?
- 5) What resources have been leveraged by Weed and Seed? Has this leveraging of resources been communicated to the community?

There was general discussion on including emphasis on these questions in future work and development of strategies, such as addressing domestic violence. Various individuals indicated that while residents may not have reached desirable conclusions about the realities of role of Weed and Seed (as a facilitator and capacity builder), area businesses and agencies have been giving positive feedback and appear to appreciate the potential for Weed and Seed. Alyson indicated that this is a normal transition, and to include residents in this perspective, the Steering

Committee needs to be clear about the vision for the community. Alyson also discussed the trend of sites narrowing their focus on what exactly will be the target of sustainability, rather than trying to address every problem at hand.

In response to Kristine Jaros' question about how a Site Coordinator transitions when a site becomes recognized as graduated, Alyson indicated it is common for the coordinator to be pulled into the budget of the mayor's office, as well as the original site boundaries to expand to include other neighborhoods (e.g. Atlanta and Memphis) to address the issue of displacement. Dr. Ross asked about the role of universities with graduated Weed & Seed sites, and Alyson replied that they are valuable because they are seen as neutral institutions, capable of housing funds awarded, and provide valuable evaluation techniques and data analysis, often required by funding sources.

Alyson also identified resources for graduated sites worth being aware of: Compassion Capital Fund (Department of Human Services), which provides funding for capacity building (as high as \$750,000 over 3 years); NeighborWorks, which is one of few funding sources which is actually growing instead of being cut; various Department of Justice grants (many of which focus on domestic violence); the Youth Anti-Gang initiative, currently being explored by Kristine Jaros and the GRPD; Atlantic Philanthropies; and grants for program money focusing on job training and readiness from the Department Health and Human Services. Finally, Alyson indicated the value of continuing the steering committee format rather than becoming more like a board of directors and reflecting a non-profit funding source, which has been problematic for other locations.

Pamela Benjamin stated that the Steering Committee would need to develop a serious dialogue about becoming a graduated site in the future, and about how this would specifically be done.

VI. Announcements

Sgt. Elliott Bargas distributed copies of the 'Gang Awareness Guide' that was recently produced through GRPD in collaboration with Weed & Seed. 5000 copies were made, which will be disseminated to Neighborhood Associations and area agencies and included in future training/presentations made by GRPD officers. Kristine stated that an electronic copy would be available on the website, which would be ready for viewing by the Steering Committee at the February meeting.

Pamela Benjamin suggested everybody go see 'Gran Torino' which is currently in theaters, and provides a worthwhile commentary on gangs (anyone who saw it agreed).

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:43pm.

**Next Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday, February 26th, 2009 – 11:00-1:00pm
Baxter Community Center – Sewing Room**