

Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday, July 23, 2009 at 11:00 am -1:00 pm
GVSU Criminal Justice Grants Office
638 West Fulton 49504

Voting Steering Committee Members Present

1. Sgt. Elliott Bargas - Grand Rapids Police Department
2. Captain Eric Payne - Grand Rapids Police Department
3. Ray Tromp - Baxter Neighborhood Association: Resident
4. Pamela Benjamin – ECA, Eastown Resident
5. Stacy Stout - Baxter Resident
6. Scott Vogel - Madison Avenue Neighborhood Association: Bus.Rep.
7. Sandra Latham - Southeast East End Neighborhood Association
8. Kathy Lett – City of Grand Rapids (alternate for Haris)

Voting Members Absent:

1. Kathryn Caliendo - East Hills Neighborhood Association
2. Tim Doyle - Kent County Prosecutor's Office
3. Mike Yasenchak - Drug Enforcement Administration
4. Haris Alibasic - City of Grand Rapids
5. Marian Barrera-Young - Baxter Neighborhood Association
6. Kaye Hooker – US Attorney's Office

Non-Voting Regular Attendees and Guests Present

1. Kristine Jaros - Central City Weed and Seed Site Director
2. Aaron Stevens - Grand Rapids Police Department Community Officer
3. Josh Hansen - Wedgewood Christian Services
4. Marquis Beene - 17th Circuit Court Probation Officer
5. Kathy Vance - Baxter Neighborhood Resident
6. Marie Cimochowicz - Southwest Association of Neighborhoods (SWAN)

I. Call To Order/Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 11:02 am by Chairperson Pamela Benjamin.

Members introduced themselves and a quorum was present. Pamela Benjamin then displayed the boundaries of Central City Weed and Seed.

II. Approval of Agenda

A motion to pass the agenda was made by Stacy Stout, and seconded by Sandra Latham. The motion was passed and the agenda was approved.

III. Approval of June 25, 2009 Minutes.

The motion to approve the minutes of June 25, 2009 was made by Scott Vogel and seconded by Sgt Elliott Bargas. The motion to approve the minutes was passed.

IV. Tampa Conference Up-Date

Stacy Stout, Elliott Bargas, Kristine Jaros, (Haris Alibasic)

Sgt Elliott Bargas reported that Raymond Munson facilitated a session about gangs and the culture of gangs. He detailed how social services constitute an important partnership in impacting the social structure of gangs, and thus represent an important piece of the financial support of de-fusing gang activities. According to his research, single-parenting is the most significant and dominant factor in determining the composition of gangs. Another seminar dealt with the roles of the community police officer in the neighborhood. It is "most important that the residents support the position of the community police." It is vital for the community to establish the fact that they need to support the assigned officer and the various roles as the officer interacts with the neighborhood residents. Community police are able to help in many ways, building and helping block clubs and making meaningful connections with the residents. Crime prevention methods; including adequate street lighting, achieving home improvement standards, promoting and protecting litter-free environments, and monitoring vacant houses, are some ways for the police and the community to work together.

Kristine Jaros reported on a day-long learning lab entitled "Building Partnerships." A shared vision, a common trust, a viable accountability, and an acceptable conflict-resolution process are typical ingredients for developing and sustaining mutually-beneficial partnerships. Funding was the issue for another lengthy seminar. Dennis Greenhouse stressed that direct lobbying for federal funding is not permissible by CCDO; however, site directors and their Steering Committee members are allowed. A national organization is reforming called NOWS (National Organization of W&S) to work on lobby congress to ensure our funding levels remain. Kristine to keep the Steering Committee up to date on any further news she hears.

A compilation of funding sources would include foundations, fund-raising events, and direct solicitation as available services are explained in community meetings. A CD power-point presentation, written documents, and conference books are available to the Steering Committee for use in obtaining more information about this conference. Members of the Steering Committee are urged to complete the National Evaluation Survey which is available on-line.

Congresspersons need to be continually educated about the value and achievements of Weed and Seed as funding cuts are continual, and the need for Weed and Seed activities is increasing. It is also important to maintain a close communication connection with the National Weed and Seed Program Manager in order that our accomplishments become familiar to those at the head of the organization and they can see that we are consistent with the Narrative.

Stacy Stout provided a three-page written review of the Conference which included interpretation of the event and application of the principles presented as they relate to her Baxter neighborhood and to the Central City Weed and Seed community. A spirited discussion resulted from her report. It was the consensus that we have a lot of work to do. The community must be educated as to the purpose and the progress of Weed and Seed.

Accountability must be improved within and between the neighborhoods. We must foster more collective concern for the each neighborhood within the Central City Weed and Seed area. Members of Weed and Seed must work together; not just as individual representatives of their own neighborhood. This will result in a stronger community and a stronger organization for Weed and Seed.

Other community organizations and centers and ministries should be encouraged to work together, and they also should reduce functioning as isolated entities. For example, various groups should not be focused solely upon their own turf, but rather should work across

the board to support each other for the benefit of all residents within the area. In effect, all of the Weed and Seed efforts should be focused entirely within the Weed and Seed area, but without major distinctions within the area because.... “residents ARE the SUSTAINABILITY plan. We need more residents engaged and as voting members of the Steering Committee...it is the residents who are affected. Weed and Seed meetings need to be in the Weed and Seed area to truly engage and be welcoming to residents.”

In fact, residents are the exact population that is the focus, the goal, and the future of Weed and Seed activities. Working more closely together will strengthen each part of the whole.

The suggestions and commentary of Stacey Stout’s report, and the discussion that followed, led to the general consensus that there is a gap between what the Steering Committee is doing and what the neighbors are experiencing and perceiving as it relates to the role of Weed and Seed in the community. “Where are the changes?” is a valid question that Weed and Seed should be able to address for all the residents. One of the best ways for Weed and Seed to gauge itself and to promote knowledge of its progress is to make sure that at the next community meeting there are more residents present and more shared communication, particularly more listening by the Steering Committee to the residents. This sharpened focus on the residents will benefit all, and will help show the path for increased progress in the functioning of Central City Weed and Seed.

V. Reports

The Community Meeting may be held at MLK Academy, but this has not been verified. A draft agenda was discussed. Tables for information from various community partnerships will be set up. The main discussion will emphasize sustainability of activities and programs sponsored by Weed and Seed. Discussion ensued on how to collect ideas from the neighbors regarding their needs and expectations and what they would like to have Weed and Seed do in the neighborhood.

a. Fiscal Report

From the total grant budget of \$150,160.00, the amount already spent is \$77,180.11. The balance in the budget is \$72,979.89. (see *H. p.5*) The Grand Rapids Police Department will submit the invoice for equipment. The Local Conference budget of \$6,500 has a balance of \$4,763.52 having spent \$1,886.48. Increased amounts of funding has been made available for the Gang Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. Project Sentry generated a discussion as there has been \$0 spent from this line item. Captain Payne shared that he would like to see the dollars reallocated to print more Gang Awareness Guide as the Project Sentry program is being replaced by TEAM.

b. Weed Report

Captain Eric Payne supplied a Quarterly Crime Statistics sheet. Most crime categories show a decrease in criminal activity. He informed the Steering Committee that they often attempt to get Habitual Offenders charged in Federal Court. Many of the Federal charges carry higher penalties than State charges. If the charge meets Federal criteria, Federal Prosecutors can seek higher bonds and penalties if convicted.

c. Site Manager's Report.

Kristine Jaros reminded the Steering Committee that the progress report is due at the end of July to the Department of Justice and this progress report will close the FY 2007.

RAK Saturday, June 27, 2009 - Random Acts of Kindness Day was very successful and attracted a large group of participants, numbering approximately 100 youths. The specific acts were informal and appreciated. Macatawa Bank provided a lunch, introductions were made, and tee shirts were provided to all participants. The RAK date for 2010 was set for the same time next year. This was a low-cost event that received much positive feed-back.

National Night-Out: Tuesday, August 4, 2009 - Two observances will be made: one at Joe Taylor Park and the other one at Eastown Community Association house. A discussion about the date developed, and it was stated that Washington, D.C. sets the National Night-Out date each year. It was noted that funds had been budgeted for these two observances.

A request was made to invite Grand Valley State University to assist with the Annual Survey.

VI . Announcements, Up-Dates, and Public Comment

1. An Open House of the Field Office of the Grand Rapids Police Department located at Hall and Cass S.E. is scheduled for July 23, 2009. All Steering Committee members are invited to attend.

2. A discussion related to the next meeting scheduled for August 20, 2009 at 11:00 am resulted in a **change of location** which will be disseminated by e-mail. .

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:47 p.m. .

Respectfully submitted by
Ray Tromp
Secretary

Next Steering Committee Meeting:

THURSDAY

AUGUST 20, 2009

11:00 am - 1:00 pm

at

MLK Leadership Academy

Second Floor MEDIA CENTER

645 Logan Street S. E.