

Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday, March 26, 2009 at 11:00 am -1:00 pm
GVSU Criminal Justice Grants Office
638 West Fulton 49504

Voting Steering Committee Members Present

1. Captain Eric Payne - Grand Rapids Police Department
2. Ray Tromp - Baxter Neighborhood Association: Resident
3. Marian Barrera-Young - Baxter Neighborhood Association
4. Pamela Benjamin - Eastown Community Association: Resident
5. Kaye Hooker - U.S. Attorney's Office
6. Kathryn Caliendo - East Hills Neighborhood Association
7. Sgt. Elliott Bargas - Grand Rapids Police Department
8. Haris Alibasic - City of Grand Rapids
9. Michael Yasenchak - Drug Enforcement Administration

Non-Voting Regular Attendees and Guests Present

1. Debra Ross - Grand Valley State University
2. Kristine Jaros - Weed and Seed Site Director
3. Aaron Stevens - Grand Rapids Police Department Community Officer
4. Kathy Lett - Grand Rapids Police Department
5. Maria Gajewski - Community Research Institute
6. Tina Yalda - GVSU CJ Department
7. Carly Helinski – GVSU CJ Department

Steering Committee Members Absent

1. Stacy Stout - Baxter Neighborhood Association: Resident
2. Sandra Latham - Southeast East End Neighborhood Association
3. Scott Vogel - Madison Avenue Neighborhood Association: Bus.Rep.
4. Tim Doyle - Kent County Prosecutor's Office

I. Call To Order/Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 11:04 am by Chairperson Pamela Benjamin. Members introduced themselves and a quorum was present; Kaye Hooker announced that several grants were available on the web site.

II. Approval of Agenda

Kathryn Caliendo made a motion to pass the agenda which was seconded by Marian Barrera-Young. The motion was passed and the agenda was approved.

III. Approval of Minutes of the February 26, 2009 Meeting

A motion was made by Eric Payne and seconded by Marian Barrera-Young to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2009 meeting. The motion was carried.

IV. Community Survey Results

Maria Gajewski from the Community Research Institute distributed a 31-page booklet containing the "Fourth Annual Community Survey." The first 19 pages included the Introduction, Survey Background information, Findings of the Survey, and the Conclusion. The next section included three appendices, Appendix A contained the questionnaire for the participants, Appendix B described the volunteer training process and Appendix C listed the Big Problems within the neighborhoods surveyed in the Central City Weed and Seed area.

On page three of the report, an executive summary gave background information regarding the development of the survey and the steps taken to administer the survey. The overall results of the survey revealed a difference of opinion and interpretation of the survey. Most residents believe that the Central City Weed and Seed neighborhoods are becoming a better place to live, but they are less convinced that it is a great place to live, or that it is a first choice for residency. Some perceptions of crime and other neighborhood issues have remained unchanged from previous surveys, and other perceptions have worsened since previous surveys were taken.

The survey was done door-to-door based upon a random selection model. There were 128 surveys completed, with a margin of error of plus-or-minus 5%. Because of this margin, there is no analysis breaking down sub-groups of race, gender, or any other demographic variable, and there would be no statistical advantage to such a breaking of the data into these variables.

The Community Research Institute designed this survey to measure the perception of residents as outlined in the Central City Weed and Seed funding proposal. The specific measurements noted in the proposal are the resident's perceptions of juvenile crime, narcotic-related crime, aggravated assaults, and gun crimes. It also included questions about the effectiveness of the police. Gang activities, housing availability and community involvement were surveyed for perceptions of the residents.

This year, some significant changes were incorporated into the survey which has an effect of comparability to previous surveys. Questions were added from the National Crime Victimization Survey. Other questions in the crime area were thus removed. Additional questions were re-written for clarification purposes. These measures insured that the time required to complete each survey was comparable to previous surveys taken. The current rendition of the survey offers more opportunity to capture the means and the modes for averaging responses.

The Community Research Institute recently produced another 15-page booklet titled "Grand Rapids Juvenile Offense Index Annual Report". This report was also distributed to Steering Committee members. The data covers January 1, 2007 through December 31, 2007. Youth offenses by Grand Rapids City residents aged 8-16 are targeted in this booklet. The data presented breaks crime into those committed at both the city-wide level and at the neighborhood level.

V. Reports

Kaye Hooker stated that there is money available for crime prevention activities and non-crime oriented activities on the Department of Justice web site. These are short-term funding and an applications have a quick turn-around. Most likely the states will have priority over neighborhoods in this funding cycle. Nevertheless, everyone was encouraged to see where a specific need could be filled by one of these grant offerings. It was advised that a neighborhood meeting be conducted to support a grant application.

A. Weed Report

Captain Eric Payne announced some police projects for Summer 2009 as follows: curfew sweeps, implementation of more drug intervention, foot patrols activated, and more police presence on the streets.

He stated that first-time crimes have been reduced. At the next meeting he will provide crime statistics first quarter 2008 compared to first quarter 2009. The police are taking a harder attack on the prostitution solicitations that are moving along Eastern Avenue, which will effectively put Eastern Avenue on the same bonding program as Division Avenue.

Captain Eric Payne and Kristine Jaros led a discussion on establishing a sub-committee to determine an agenda to present at a future community meeting. One of the issues for the sub-committee would be to look at where Weed and Seed is now, and what would be a viable direction to move towards. Another issue relates to composition of the Steering Committee in the area of adding more community input through including more residents on the Steering Committee for the future. Members of the Steering Committee appointed to the sub-committee to set the agenda for a future Community Meeting are: Marian Barrera-Young, Stacy Stout, and Eric Payne.

B. Fiscal Report

The budget update was provided by Dr. Debra Ross. The Fiscal Year 2008 Grant extension is yet to be approved. We have experience a change in program directors. Not sure if this is the cause for the delay. By October 2009, the fund for traveling expenses must be spent. Anyone with interest in travel to conferences/training should present their requests to Kristine ASAP.

C. Site Director's Report

The Baxter Fix-Up Day on April 18 will involve many volunteers, and Kristine requested that Steering Committee members help at the Baxter Community Center site. This annual event involves a general cleaning of the premises and provides a lunch for all volunteers. It starts at 8:00 am and people are encouraged to bring any cleaning or repair tools they have.

Youth Leadership Camp is cancelled for 2009.

Domestic Violence Committee will be meeting to decide on events and direction for this conference.

"Lies That Bind" has obtained more funding for the out-reach program. More partnerships have been developed. A section of this program is scheduled to start on April 16, 2009 at Urban Ministries and will run to six consecutive weeks. Sessions will start at 6:00pm.

VI. Atlanta Sustainability Training Up-Date

Kristine asked the members of the Steering Committee, "What is the vision for Weed and Seed?" and instructed them to ask the residents in the community "what do they think the vision should be?"

She wrote down six things;

1. Looking back what do you see?
2. What have we done?
3. Evaluate goals and objectives - have we reached them? Have we reached the goals contained in the Narrative?
4. Weed and Seed of the future? Looking at the vision in the mission statement? The Steering Committee members should come back to the next meeting prepared to say in what way is the mission statement being met? In what way is it not being met?
5. At the Community Meeting, a table should be set up displaying the different activities that Weed and Seed is involved in, and directing people to other community resources, as a resource center operation.
6. "How to move?"

VII. Announcements / Up-Dates / Public Comment

Kathryn Caliendo said that now, after several years, the Wealthy Heights Master Plan is now on the City Commission agenda. One of the projects involves connecting all of the dead-end streets going north off Wealthy Street with a road going east and west along the northern end..

The next meeting will be on Thursday April 23, at 11:00, at GVSU Criminal Justice Grants Office on 638 West Fulton..

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:37 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ray Tromp
Secretary

Next Steering Committee Meeting:

THURSDAY
APRIL 23, 2009

11:00 am - 1:00 pm

GVSU Criminal Justice Grants Office
638 West Fulton Street