

Granite State Future
Equity and Engagement Technical Advisory Subcommittee

September 25, 2013

Local Government Center, Concord, N.H.

Meeting Summary

Present:

Barbara Salvatore, EngAGING NH
MaryLou Beaver, Family Assistance Advisory Council, Every Child Matters
Molly Donovan, UNH Cooperative Extension
Michele Holt-Shannon, NH Listens
Bill Guinther, NH Housing
Bruce Mallory, Carsey Institute, UNH
Janine Lesser, NH DHHS/DFA
Dominique Rust, NH Catholic Charities
Tara Bamford, NCC
Shayna Sylvia, SRPC
Jazmin Miranda

The meeting was called to order at 11:05 PM by CoChair Bruce Mallory. Bruce discussed next steps for the committee – they will be contacted as needed with questions/clarifications/guidance as a group or as individuals through Bruce if RPC staff have specific questions.

Communities of Interest and Communities of Place Reports

Michele Holt-Shannon reviewed the draft executive summary of the Communities of Place and Communities of Interest. The final will be out next week. Michele will send the report out to participants and post on the GSF website. The executive summary covering both Communities of Place (COP) and Communities of Interest (COI) will be sent out to Communities of Place participants and to Communities of Interest groups. COI groups will also be contacted and provided the full COI report. COP participants will be provided the full COP report. All of the information will be available on the website.

Molly Donovan reviewed the Communities of Interest report. She noted that participants clearly saw the link between transportation, housing and jobs. This included limited transit schedules as a barrier to part-time work, access to affordable housing and the impacts of having to overspend for housing, transportation to jobs, internet access for online job applications. Another theme was the language barrier re childrens' schools – here b/c value education but can't participate fully. Youth groups

mentioned concern about lack of community support for schools. Native Americans were the only identified focus group they were unable to make arrangements with.

Michele reviewed the Communities of Place findings. The sessions were held in 10 locations, included 45 small group reports, and over 500 people from 115 communities. The topics most talked about were employment and educational opportunities, the aging population and loss of young people, transportation and housing. The reports, which will all be included in the appendix, will tell us what the people spent time talking about.

In every group someone mentioned how beautiful N.H. is. Under community and economic vitality, comments were made about the need for affordable higher edu, K-12 edu, and jobs with good benefits. Taxes came up a lot but with varying opinions. The needs of those who will be aging in place, and concern that we are losing young people b/c the cost of higher edu is too high were mentioned. Barbara Salvatore mentioned that the terms "older adults" or "elders" are now considered preferable to the term "senior citizens." Other topics that came up included: transportation options including bike/walk, public transit for the needs of the youth; housing that is affordable, near transportation, and appealing; water quality; energy diversity, cost and efficiency; growth and development issues such as zoning, large projects such as wind farms and Northern Pass that won't be addressed by zoning, need to preserve natural beauty while allowing development, barriers to redevelopment; land conservation including some misinformation; role of government - freedom vs complexity of issues. Participants did not express much concern for climate change, obesity, or safety (some in COI).

Bruce summarized the findings like this: COP - biggest concerns were jobs, educational opportunities, youth and elders, transportation, and housing; COI - jobs, housing and transportation.

All were pleased that many of those who came to the meetings skeptical about the process participated in the discussions and helped broaden the perspectives represented.

Next Steps

Discussion followed about "lessons learned" from some of this public engagement. Bruce mentioned that he is already finding other venues to share info with. The group agreed it would be very helpful if there was an opportunity in the future to learn from Molly's experience with this project, a lessons learned debriefing to help everyone involved in their future work. Tara said she will mention this to Jen as a GSF managers meeting topic. Molly said her goal is to help the RPCs build relationships with the community so they can, e.g., do own focus groups in the future.

Barbara suggested the key findings will provide an objective nonpartisan report to point to when asking candidates their positions on jobs, housing and transportation.

Bruce will be coordinating with Jen Czysz on how best to bring the information to the other TASCs.

Equity & Engagement Checklist

All agreed regarding the need to keep the checklist on the radar for all of the project partners, including the RPCs who have not typically had the funding for this level of engagement. The group brainstormed re steps that RPCs could take to build upon the contacts made during the SCI project despite limited budgets. It was noted that engagement is also essential for building support for plans. Suggestions included using e-communications, e.g., exchanging email with interest groups re events, newsletters etc; and ensuring that communities of interest are represented on RPC boards/committees. Molly offered to create a checklist for RPCs to help facilitate this next step. This will provide a tool for helping to train RPC staff on more effective engagement, including those who were not directly involved in this project. This will be part of the phase 3 outreach step (replacing the public meetings that it was agreed previously would be redundant and too late in the process).

Other outgrowths for the work of the Equity & Engagement TASC and the checklist will include Bruce's involvement in developing the UNH School of Public Policy, and additional outreach and engagement work Molly is involved in.

The meeting adjourned at 12:52.