



**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
SPECIAL WORK SESSION
Minutes
March 9, 2021**

Commission Present: Barlow, Traverse, Johnson, Farrell, Todd, Lantieri, Hurley and Harte

Staff Present: Wight, Rogers and Putzier

The meeting was convened at 4:36 p.m. by Traverse

Presentation on Trusted Community Voices Program

Phet Keomanyvanh introduced herself to the Commission and stated she had been an employee of CEDO for the past six years, does a lot of outreach, created new model of outreach called Trusted Voices (TCV), started in April to deliver information regarding COVID19 resources and services to non-english speaking communities. Keomanyvanh explained how the Burlington School district also has a liaison team to get information out. The TCV team informs the City of the needs and issues, to see how to improve systems that are much more inclusive. Some of the projects that the team have worked on are; delivering masks to neighborhoods, relationships with business owners, as that is a place that people gather and help to engage, helped to create multi lingual letters to deliver information. Other projects are developing information meeting sessions with other community members, such as childcare issues and the needs. Keomanyvanh felt the program was a great model, includes consultants with years of service with working in the field and that is why it is called "trusted", seen real success with the program.

Some of the different groups that are represented are identified as communities, population size and needs, not limited to language, translated some. There is 8 languages, the DRC Democratic Republic Community, which has several languages and ethnicities within, many are French speaking.

Currently in engagements with communities and always room for improvement and learning, if endless resources would do much more but important to engage personally with individuals, some have never met a public official and some of the next steps could be to invite them to a public meeting and meet half way.

Todd asked how the commission could support the work currently happening, stated parks are a place that many people gather and wanted to know if any ways could support as commission or the parks themselves could support. Keomanyvanh encouraged to share the work that is being done by the group and coming to some of the meetings so that people can meet and be familiar with and see all the services and programs that the department and commission support. Felt ways to partner and CEDO could do moving forward, one of the big things is spaces, and the need for individuals to see themselves included in them. Festivals that have vendors from all different communities and international performances, be more supportive of public spaces to celebrate and have them see themselves in public spaces.

Barlow said when he was on the School Board he saw multi lingual work being done and feels a lot of collaboration could be done with the School Department in terms of outreach and such as they have had great success in the past and moving forward.



Todd asked if it would be possible to have special sessions with commission and if schools had done that and invited and Barlow said yes would target special communities and get interpreter and more input so that all communities could be involved in the conversations.

Traverse stated he knew resources were limited but in looking at TCV program, if the commission wanted to have forum directed at communities, what extent could they rely on the program for assistance.

Keomanyvanh said is limited but understanding what the community is interested in and not making assumptions is most important. When supporting public meetings and boards CEDO could meet with first and see what looking for and then help to build tools and resources to bring together the needs. TCV helps get information out but being careful to hold the integrity of having the community say what is important to them first rather than City coming to them with what is important to them and assuming.

Traverse also felt some might be unaware of some of the availability and wants to make sure getting good outreach and engagement.

Keomanyvanh suggested doing something that is more regular and send a specific mailing list or some other tools and strategies, representation is very important. People want to come and feel welcome to things that are unintentional. Suggested quarterly informal sessions, invited many different groups and have very open and welcoming to all.

Todd said she would like Keomanyvanh to pass on that the commission will have a vacancy at the end of the month and would love to have a New American join the commission. Would love to have the voices and the diversity on the commission and ask what elements and values are to have New Americans represented.

Keomanyvanh said the team they put together has a large age range difference and there is a lot of untapped talent in the area and is a great asset. She also gave a brief explanation of "New Americans", stating that at one time all people of another country were called New Americans and currently now people continue to be called New Americans even though they were born here, need to think about when it comes to unintentional impact, need to be aware of when making assumptions. Some do call themselves that still, but personally she tries to avoid.

Traverse then opened up to discuss among the group how to frame the discussion, sees in the agenda that is built and are covering the correct topics, largely built on items that are brought up at meetings and that come up as well as if any other commissioners have topics they would like to discuss. Other is the location and how advertising the meeting.

Todd would like more action steps to take as commissioners to add the engagement and outreach strategies. Wight said not waiting for public to come to staff but staff reaching out first and building relationships and connecting.

Hurley said with programming, not necessarily coming to meeting but commissioners being available to answer directly to people. She suggested to be available and ask 3 questions at playground when picking



up children from school, what is realistic and can be smaller and more engaging and gets herself to talk to parents and families not necessarily getting engaged with.

Harte said sometimes feels others may think we don't value feelings. Encouraged to ask for input of others and how they can help us and will help build a relationship and show that we do care what they feel and think.

Todd said she would like to go to other places to shop for food, likes the idea of engaging in community and finding out what is on others minds, feels really critical, need to know what they want versus what commission might feel is important. Made personally Facebook invitations for the next couple of meetings and does not take a lot of time and need to find something that is more actionable and doable for everyone to begin engagement outside of commission meetings.

Barlow asked as parks if the commission could get outside in June for the monthly meeting, while adhering to social distancing etc. and Wight said it would have to get approved by Mayor first. Wight also said in an attempt to be inclusive having the meetings in different locations and times might be more confusing and exclusive and harder for some. Todd said that might be a good first step to investigate, time, location and make the commission more accessible as well as what would make more interested and engaged.

Lantieri said most know that commissions exist but not what they do, but summarize what doing and getting to people that are interested in specific topics.

Johnson added to the date and time of meetings, stating it could work in our favor to have flexibility.

Harte asked if the goal was to have a wide range of people or a smaller group that come more regularly, need to decide preference.

Hurley asked if the department had a record of different groups of people that gather in parks and spaces and when. Wight said yes could likely find that. Feels need to start to reach people that are currently using parks and spaces with groups first before reaching out to just random people and communities. Farrell agreed and would like to interact with current users in a non-formal manner. Wight said could have O'Daniel get a list of the different users schedules and can have those conversations.

Traverse stated that there are many meetings that get a lot of engagement.

Todd would like to have all meetings broadcast more amongst their own community members to amplify the various events and happenings and meetings.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 5:01 p.m. by Traverse.