

## **TRRG @ Two Meeting Notes - June 4, 2016 – Ward 6 Community Room**

Ruth Beeker, TRRG's Board Chair characterized the meeting as an expanded meeting of the Board of Directors. [There was a very attendance initially, but eventually there were 16 people in attendance.] Ruth provided further background and made reference to the [most recent Board Meeting](#) and the election of officers for the year, and then introduced other board members who were in attendance.

Ruth described the purpose of this event — to reflect on what TRRG has accomplished, and what it will do in the future.

Ruth asked several questions to get a sense of the familiarity and involvement of this audience with the organization.

Nearly all those in the audience had been present during one or more of the 2013 summer meetings in which TRRG's "[This we believe](#)" document was produced.

Ruth wanted to know about the kinds of things that the audience might have imagined that TRRG would have accomplished in relation to the items on the list of actual accomplishments handed out in the meeting. While many in the audience revealed a rather high level of expectation, Ruth indicate how surprised she was with TRRG's accomplishments to date. Among those accomplishments, she included the upcoming June 21st study session of the M&C meeting that will address a number of concerns raised by TRRG.

Ruth identified the tentative schedule for the City's Boards, Commissions and Committees (BCCs) study group as an additional reflection of the impact that TRRG's efforts have had on the City Manager's (CM) plans for the organization. Mayor & Council indicated to the CM that TRRG should be involved in this effort, and as a result, Ruth and Colette have been very actively involved in that re-assessment and development of strategies for "overhauling" BCCs.

Ruth's overall sense is that it is most unusual in past history that public involvement has been reflected in city decisions and efforts to expand public involvement.

The next item involved an assessment of the "tools" that TRRG has been using in order to realize the kinds of influence we have had on the city governance process. Tina Pacheco managed this session where the audience was asked if we used the tools with different audiences or targets, and whether or not we should continue using those tools.

- 1. Find solutions to problems by cooperating with city elected officials, city staff, other stakeholders
  - City elected officials: the majority says yes we have, and yes, we should continue.
  - City staff: mixed response regarding cooperation, have we cooperated, some of which reflected differences with regard to what cooperation meant.
  - Other individuals/stakeholders: Mixed response; could do better
- 2. Become knowledgeable about city procedures and policies: Mixed response; could do better
- 3. Research what works in comparable communities. The consensus was that we have done this very well. There was an overwhelming thumbs up with regard to whether we should continue doing this.
- 4. Gather data to justify policy changes. The strong consensus was that we have done this very well. There was a strong "thumbs up" to indicate that we should continue doing this.
- 5. Be creative in proposing new solutions to old problems? There was a "mixed" or "neutral" sense of whether we have been creative. However, there was strong agreement that we should be doing this.

- 6. Organize and build networks? The consensus was that our performance was “marginal” or not so well in this area. There was strong agreement that we should be doing this.
- 7. Publicize both positive and negative findings. This led to an open discussion regarding our performance in this area, focusing in part on what we have done to inform the public in general about what we have done. TRRG membership is informed about our efforts and our success, but it is not so clear that the public knows. Have we had much press coverage of what we have done? The consensus was not at all. Some participants suggested that city staff don’t know about us either. When asked about whether this blind spot applies to ward office staff? The general sense was that there is not much awareness at the staff level about TRRG activity. There was strong agreement that we should be engaged in publicizing our efforts.
- 8. Educate [the public as well as our members] through Forums, media and text. It was noted that we’ve certainly had several forums and special events like this meeting. Bonnie Poulos described the kinds of attendance that was common at TRRG organized forums. These events were not well attended, and the sense was that public interest is hard to attract with regard to issues like Charter Change. It was noted that Don’s Ijams TRRG website is a resource for the community. The record indicates that there were over 10,000 hits on the web site. It was noted that there is also Facebook presence. But the general conclusion was that we are not doing a good job in this area. Should we do more [including Facebook]? Strong agreement that we should.
- 9. Monitor COT adherence to TRRG’s 5 essentials of good government. Have we done this? Reference was made to the study of comments by M&C members regarding these essentials during council sessions and in council members’ newsletters. The general consensus was that we have done this, and that we should continue doing it in the future.

#### TRRG Member Input Sheet Discussion

Ruth distributed the member input sheet summary which listed priorities for the organization as determined at the Annual Meeting. These were items that people said they were interested in as activities we should pursue, and it included indications if members of the organization were interested in doing it themselves. Some 24 respondents indicated what they felt was worth doing. The items were listed in a summary sheet in order of their importance to the membership. Discussion about these interests were initiated by comments by members who were actively engaged in these areas.

The goal was to determine whether TRRG should monitor, support, or become actively involved in moving this issue forward, possibly by forming a TRRG committee.

1. Bonnie reported about the nature of Charter Review process in which the city council and the commission often differed in terms of what should, or should not be in special elections, or general issue votes. The ward only elections issue has been tabled, due to a hearing by the full 9th circuit court. The court will hear Tucson’s views, but probably not in time to make it onto the coming ballot.

Other petitions have been proposed for the ballot: regarding ward only ballots, simply making word changes in the charter, but not until November 2017; a second initiative would create a three term limits for elected officials [no more than two in a particular seat]. While supporters are seeking to have this included in the 2016 ballot: there was no sense that there is any momentum. With regard to Charter revisions and related public education: The consensus was that we should continue to “monitor” this issue.

2. Transportation planning: PDS and DOT were ranked quite low as agencies and functions of the city in TRRG’s assessment during the June 2015 meeting with CM Ortega. A lively discussion ensued. It was suggested that we should extend the definition beyond just “transportation” — as it was more important to improve the overall policy process and its relationship to the governmental decision-making. Instead, it was suggested that

we need to address the disdain in government regarding public involvement. It was also suggested that this kind of a recommendation was like “low hanging fruit” where like our success with the “Call to the Audience” issue was fairly easily obtained. On the other hand, the desired level of public participation in transportation planning would be far more difficult to achieve.

The group was also reminded of TRRG's original motivation for participating in important [if difficult] planning areas [including land use planning]. This might involve a change in the culture of policy making. We were reminded that we have to go beyond the generalizations about culture, and the difficulties associated with transforming the culture. In one view, it is said that we can mobilize the public in ways that can shift their orientation— perhaps a social movement that forces the government to listen and respond to public interests.

Several participants indicated that there have been important and productive interactions with staff, such as interactions with the CM, and with Rebecca Ruopp. It was also suggested that we need to help the city understand how this effort is best done through education about best practice with regard to public participation.

It was also suggested that we know the underlying problem we face—there is no process that really works. TRRG needs a “subgroup” that does a goals, strategy, and tactics review in order to assess our movement toward to this lofty goal.

The example of progress being made with Boards, Commissions, Committees (BCCs) was offered as a basis for optimism. It was suggested that argues that several organizations within the city are “voluntarily” seeking to derive the benefits that would come from improving the BCCs, and they think it is worth doing, especially within in a department that already has a “bad rap” with regard to public participation.

There was general support for the development of a committee to be formed to focus on public transportation planning. Don will send messages to those who have already indicated an interest in participating on such a committee.

3. BCC: Boards, Commissions, Committees: Colette Altaffer noted how much progress this effort appears to be having. It has been recognized that the process would be interminable with 64 official groups, so the city will be hiring “interns” to help manage the work that will be needed to move forward on this assessment stage. There was clear agreement among the audience for TRRG to continue supporting this effort.

4. Public participation in PDS. Bill Ford provided a summary and handed out a document which was later replaced by email. He noted that as with BCC, there is already a city committee on which he is a member and has reported in the past. He noted that that “the culture” of planning was actually on the agenda for the committee’s engagement. There was general concern regarding an apparent sense of entitlement. It was felt that the committee had plenty of developers, and not much in the way of “neighborhood” involvement, because of the strong presence of the investor community. In contrast to Bill’s framing, it was suggested that the public, if they see the massive development presence, this committee’s efforts will be treated as a waste of time with regard to neighborhood interests. It was also noted this is not an ongoing committee — it is expected to be dissolved in near term.

Nevertheless, it was recommended that we should monitor what actually happens with this committee and its efforts, including those related to public participation. The general agreement that monitoring was the appropriate response.

Neighborhood Services Enhancement: Don’s report noted the roles of Rebecca Ruopp - PDS/Neighborhood Resources, and Council aides from Ward 3 and Ward 6, in trying to have more meetings for neighborhood leaders. The most recent one was a “neighborhood huddle” on April 16, 2016 which was generally viewed as successful. His participation was as NSN and as TRRG. Don urged that we implement “support” of this effort. We could put the initiative on the website, to voice our support of this effort. Barbara suggested that

Neighborhood enhancement is a vital activity. Ruth wonders where are the best entry points in which we can increase involvement of the public.

5. Code Enforcement (CE): Don updated a prior committee report on the changes taking place within CE, including indecision about exactly where in the COT organization it is likely to be. Questions and doubts were raised about whether it was actually going to Environmental Services (ES) as previously reported. How can we see planning? Much of the uncertainty is related to changes in the ES leadership position. Don indicated that he was resigning from leadership of TRRG CE committee, but the co-chair, Kris Yarter, will try to bring the group together to determine its future.

6. The item that emerged as a top priority for TRRG was public participation in Mayor and Council meetings, sparked by the disregard shown for the public at a meeting last August where there was an overflow of public interest, but members of the public, including TRRG members were turned away. As a result of the efforts of this special working group, M&C has scheduled a study session item to address problems found, and TRRG members are scheduled to offer testimony. Further evidence came from a more recent meeting when an overflow room with cameras, speaker cards, etc. was provided to those not initially able to enter the council chambers.

The TRRG M&C Participation working group is being led by JD Garcia, and constant pressure, as well as substantial local and regional research is believed to have convinced M&C and the City Clerk that action would have to be taken. It has been recommended that this TRRG initiative be established as an expanded committee that would be able to address whatever comes from the scheduled study session.

After a brief break, the TRRG @ Two audience was divided into two groups. Bonnie Poulos indicated the questions that needed to be answered with regard to how we will move forward with a strengthened organization.

The questions involved:

1. Relationships with other stakeholders
2. Relationships with the friends of TRRG: what do we want these friends to do with and in support of TRRG?
3. Building the membership. As we have received 35 renewals out of 95 members. We need to get people to renew, and get new members. The membership committee needs guidance about what is the role of members for this organization. Each of the groups had a recorder who would deliver their reports to the membership committee.

Notes by TRRG Secretary Oscar Gandy