

## Summary of Meeting, Internal Discussion

Civic Caucus, 8301 Creekside Circle, Bloomington, MN 55437

**Friday, October 10, 2008**

**Present:** Verne C. Johnson, chair; David Broden, Charles Clay (by phone), Marianne Curry, Paul Gilje (by phone), Jim Hetland, Jim Olson, and Wayne Popham

**A. Context of the meeting**--The current Civic Caucus strategic plan was adopted in November 2007. See <http://www.civiccaucus.org/strplan.htm>. Today we are reviewing aspects of that plan as well as looking at a communications plan for the Civic Caucus.

**B. Developments since strategic plan was adopted**--Paul reviewed objectives for 2007-2008 that were part of the strategic plan:

**1. Increase participant list from 600 to 1,000**--Objective has been reached. We're now about 1,050.

**2. Establish and refine our website**--We established our website in January 2008, <http://civiccaucus.org>, and we have made significant refinements since then.

**3. Concentrate on government structure and process**--We issued several position papers, all dealing with structure or process, including redistricting, judicial selection, and constitutional amendments.

**4. Emphasize education and involvement as our first priority**--While we have issued position papers, we have continued our weekly education reports. Early in 2008 we made a major change in receiving input, by seeking responses to specific questions, in addition to inviting general comments. All responses are reported on our website. We consistently receive six or more pages of comments each week.

**5. Add new core participants**--We have added David Broden, Marianne Curry, Marina Lyon, and Joe Mansky.

**6. Continue collaboration with the Citizens League**--Both organizations provide website links to one another. The executive director of the Citizens League receives the same information as core participants.

**7. Raise additional funds**--We have maintained in 2008 the same level of funding as in 2007. We have not undertaken a more ambitious fund-raising effort as had been contemplated in the strategic plan

**8. Consider a special role for selected veteran thought leaders**--The strategic plan called for an evaluation of whether a special role might be developed for some of the most respected civic and governmental leaders in Minnesota, past and present. We have yet to proceed on that front.

**9. Consider expanding the Civic Caucus work program**--The strategic plan called for an evaluation of a significant expansion of our ability to gather, organize, and disseminate information. We have yet to proceed on that front, other than to conclude that we're probably doing as much as we can now with existing resources.

**C. David Broden presentation on communications plan**--David Broden gave a power point presentation on what we might consider in expanding our communications efforts. Broden stressed the following:

- 1. Overall approach**--The communication plan has these elements:
- Define the Civic Caucus, its objectives, vision, strategy, scope, and purpose
  - Identify the Civic Caucus target audience.
  - Identify the "soft" and "hard" products of the Civic Caucus, how they can be used, and by whom. "Soft" products include its core group, its ability to analyze public issues, and its 1,000-plus participants. "Hard" products include its interviews, summaries, website, and policy recommendations.
  - Leverage the Civic Caucus unique operating structure and process
  - Develop communication plans unique to each type of Civic Caucus report.
  - Build a process and criteria for succession of Civic Caucus leadership.

The strategic plan and communication plan must be dynamic and always subject to update and change to reflect changing interests of the Caucus and the activities of government, the economy, or other issues.

- 2. Key Civic Caucus strategies**--The key Civic Caucus strategies are:
- Build a prototype virtual organization that could be emulated by other groups in Minnesota and elsewhere.
  - Emphaize education and involvement on public affairs by utilizing an internet-based network of thought leaders from throughout Minnesota.
  - Establish the Civic Caucus as a "go-to" resource for in-depth, substantive, high quality public policy information which supports and enables policy maker debate and action.

- 3. Types of audiences for the Civic Caucus**--Three types of audiences were identified:
- A primary audience of Civic Caucus network participants and thought leaders.
  - A benefiting audience of impacted government officials, units, and agencies, plus collaborative partners (other public policy organizations)
  - A communication/information audience of media, interest groups and the general public.

**4. Collaboration opportunities**--We have opportunities to collaborate with organizations such as the Citizens League, Growth and Justice, the Minnesota Business Partnership, 20/20, the Minnesota Free Market Institute, MPR, MinnPost, the Humphrey Institute, and foundations.

**5. The need to develop a "brand"**--The Civic Caucus needs to be easily understood by others. An easily-remembered label is needed, conveying the essence of what we are.

**6. Audience survey needed**--The Civic Caucus should survey its audiences to capture their understanding, opinions, and impact of the Civic Caucus.

**7. More background on website of priority topics**--We should add a page to the website that identifies our top priority topics, including purpose and benefit of each, to orient participants and serve as a guide for the core.

**8. Key strengths of the Civic Caucus**--The Civic Caucus has these key strengths:

- Its independence
- Its non-partisanship
- Its unique process for education, involvement, and recommendations

**D. Discussion by Civic Caucus core**--During general discussion by core participants the following points were raised:

--A member urged that the Civic Caucus continue to emphasize structure and process and stay out of governmental operations.

--A member said we need to define the process for getting information and interviewing key people.

--A member stressed the need for broader involvement by respondents.

--A member observed that we need to make it clear to others that we do not lobby governmental officials.

--A member suggested that branding requires a logo, which surfaces the identity question: Who are we?

--There was general agreement there are too many topics. A member wants selection criteria in alignment with objectives.

--Members expressed a desire for the Civic Caucus to become recognized as a "Go To" organization: maybe a name change is necessary, selection of individuals with extensive public policy experience for the Core Group is an asset; quality of information must remain very high; we need to define a strategy for establishing a relationship with key audiences.

--A member said the plan must be results oriented, not process oriented. He suggested that "public policy development" needs to be integral to CC's identity.

--Structural change is an over-riding theme as it applies to transportation, education or energy. For example, maybe we should be looking at a different delivery system (ie, internet education, more efficient underground transmission lines, removing the local government authority to build roads and thereby forcing more integrated planning. Or abandoning the Highway Trust Fund (!!)) to allow more flexibility for transit.

--It was suggested we need to look at the question of who decides how these public services are delivered.

--A member would add state economic policy and impact of downturns to list of topics

--Curry agreed to do some work on the governance questions facing CC: succession, criteria for selection of Core Group members, Paul's role, Core Group role, terms of appointment, expectations with respect to participation by Core Group, identifying skill sets needed within Core Group.

#### **E. Upcoming meeting schedule**

Friday, October 17--Peter Hutchinson, president, Bush Foundation

Friday, October 24--Dee Long, former speaker, Minnesota House of Representatives

Friday, October 31--Jeffrey Eppink, consultant on energy resources

Friday, November 7--Jim Solem, former executive director, Metropolitan Council, and Nacho Diaz, former director of transportation planning, Metropolitan Council

Friday, November 14--Don Ostrom, former legislator, retired political science professor, Gustavus Adolphus College.

Friday, November 21--Jay Kiedrowski and John Gunyou, former Minnesota state commissioners of finance

Friday, November 28--Internal discussion on transportation

Friday, December 5--Officials of the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals

Friday, December 12--Joe Nathan, director, Center for School Change, University of Minnesota

Friday, December 19--Jim Bartholomew, Minnesota Business Partnership, on education

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