

Summary of Meeting (Internal Discussion on strategic plan)

Civic Caucus, 8301 Creekside Circle, Bloomington, MN 55437

Friday, November 28, 2008

Present: Verne Johnson, chair; David Broden, Marianne Curry, Paul Gilje, Jim Hetland, Dan Loritz, and Clarence Shallbetter

A. Context of the meeting: The Civic Caucus core group is taking a break today from its weekly schedule of interviews to look at possible changes in our strategic plan.

B. Draft memo presented--We reviewed a memo that outlined several possible points for updating our strategic plan:

--Continue our over-riding objective of helping Minnesota restore its public policy leadership role through information and involvement of our participants. Ties that hold our state and metropolitan community together urgently need strengthening.

--Demonstrate to other organizations a proven method of using electronic capability for (a) widespread distribution of serious public affairs information and (b) involving more volunteers in civil dialogue without requiring excessive amounts of time in attending and traveling to meetings. Deliberately enlarge our list of participating organizations and make it clear that our hope is for them to consider adopting any and all aspects of our process for their own use.

--Communicate our intent to serve as a prototype for others, with no long-term objective for the Civic Caucus itself.

--Continue to increase the number of electronic participants. Emphasize more involvement of legacy builders and others experienced in public policy, while welcoming all participants.

--Broaden the understanding of the Civic Caucus as a prototype by inviting a foundation to take on a task of financing and writing a manual on the Civic Caucus thereby making details of our process accessible to any organization anywhere.

--Postpone consideration of an appropriate brand for the Civic Caucus, depending upon what we decide over the next year about a succession plan.

--Modify the question of a succession plan for the Civic Caucus to include the question of whether the Civic Caucus is a temporary organization, with an eye to be more definitive in our 2010 strategic plan. As the Civic Caucus role of serving as a prototype becomes established, the longer-term future of the Civic Caucus itself becomes less of an issue.

--Delay for another year any major fundraising beyond core participants

--Define better all aspects of the current Civic Caucus process and seek to distribute more of the workload to willing volunteers, to ease pressure on existing staff.

In discussion of the memo the following points were raised:

1. Think of a prototype, not a permanent organization--Verne stressed that we hope that other organizations will adopt for themselves many of our procedures that:

- a. Make it possible for large numbers of persons to have a sense of ownership without having to attending meetings.
- b. Distribute in-depth, non-partisan information that isn't likely to be provided by traditional mass media.
- c. Give individuals an opportunity to share their opinions and have those opinions be considered by others.
- d. Maintain a strict non-partisan status, by providing balance in airing various points of view and reaching conclusions and by refraining from involvement in any candidate-related activities.

2. Don't contemplate a long-term future for the Civic Caucus--Over the next year we'll continue to carry out our work largely as we have in the last three years. We can then evaluate further whether the functions of the Civic Caucus should be continued, and, if so, in what organizational framework. With contributions from a few members of the Civic Caucus core, we will have sufficient funding for another year without conducting any other fund-raising.

3. Prepare a booklet describing the Civic Caucus approach--Over the next year we need to find an organization that could finance the preparation of a booklet, or "manual" that would describe the Civic Caucus approach in terms that other organizations would find beneficial. It doesn't look as if existing Civic Caucus personnel can themselves prepare such a booklet, because they are wholly involved in keeping the Civic Caucus program going day-to-day. We talked about whether foundations might be willing to support such an endeavor.

4. Improving the communication of Civic Caucus materials--We have an email list of more than 1,050 persons. We have a very good website, where everything we produce is placed and archived. Nevertheless, we know that our information needs much broader circulation. We need to be open to improved ways of using the Internet. We need to bring our materials to the attention of more individuals and groups, including, for example, regional development commissions around the state.

The improved communication must include the primary audience--(the participants) and also the impacted audience--(government, civic etc.). We need to have a process and approach as we outlined in the communications plan or similar to both

broaden communications and to enable our discussions to have an impact and cause those who are interested and need the info to go to the Civic Caucus as the "Resource and Thought Leaders of Choice" for info and public policy statements with "value".

Adjourned