Community Dialogue

June 24, 2013

What is What's Next Alexandria?

A City initiative to begin a community conversation about civic engagement and planning for the future.

How Alexandrians can best participate in the public decisions that shape the City.

The Goal: Principles and a Framework that will guide future civic engagement processes in Alexandria.

Introductions

City Council

Members of ACPS School Board & all City of

Alexandria Boards Commissions

Deputies, Department Heads, Staff

Members of the Community

Chris Lewis

School Board Member, Alexandria City Public Schools

Introduction

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Ground Rules

- Stick to the task at hand – follow the agenda
- Treat each other with respect
- Only one person speaks at a time
- Listen as an ally not an adversary
- Ask for clarification, don't assume you know what someone means
- Give everyone a chance to participate equally; avoid dominating
- Avoid side conversations
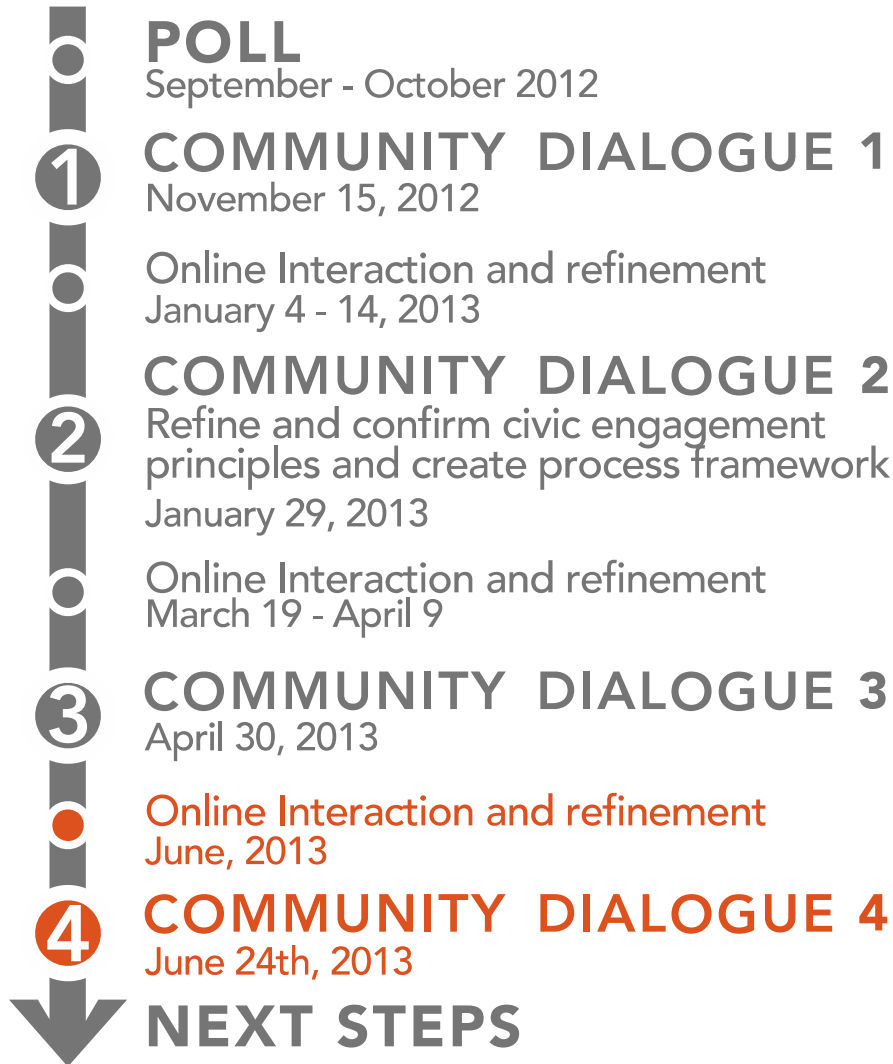- No one will characterize other people's view in or outside of the meeting

What We Heard: 4/30 Evaluation

- More outreach/diversity of involvement in this process – not just cultural; also, age, economic status, community groups, etc.
- Accessibility – i.e., make it less complicated; simplify language; need more documents translated into Spanish; different locations for meetings; more access to information
- The clarity of the process needs improvement.
- students in the city want to be kept informed of local issues/what is happening in their city government.
- How will all of this work be communicated to the public-at-large and implemented? Are all city organizations working together toward a common goal?
- Community ambassadors will help with neighborhood/city communications.
- Everyone's participation will bring success.

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Where We Are

POLL
September - October 2012

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE 1
November 15, 2012

Online Interaction and refinement
January 4 - 14, 2013

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE 2
Refine and confirm civic engagement principles and create process framework
January 29, 2013

Online Interaction and refinement
March 19 - April 9

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE 3
April 30, 2013

Online Interaction and refinement
June, 2013

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE 4
June 24th, 2013

NEXT STEPS

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Goals for Tonight

- Review Progress to date

- Review Timeline for adoption

- Work Together to Create Strategies for Communication and Engagement that are Shared by Citizens and the City

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Paul Smedberg
City Council

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Progress to Date

Civic engagement principles: What standards are we *all* going to follow?

Civic engagement framework: What process we can expect for *every* project?

Guidelines for successful implementation What do we need do to make this work?

Progress to Date

- Principles (standards)
- Framework (roadmap)
- Guidelines (actions that ensure success)

Tonight: *Communication Tools and Strategies* to expand the number of people who participate

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Handbook for Civic Engagement

Why a Handbook?
What's in it?
What's the timeline?

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Handbook – Principles

EASY PARTICIPATION

EARLY INVOLVEMENT

EVALUATION

INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUITY

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

RESPECT

SUSTAINED COLLABORATION

TRANSPARENCY

Handbook - Framework

Why it's needed:

– Consistency throughout City government

– Shared understanding of what to expect (phases, engagement strategies, tools, deliverables)

– Build trust and transparency

How it will be used:

– Each project has a *Civic Engagement Framework* that the community helps to create

– Content includes: Project goal, timeline, deliverables for each phase, and tools and activities required to accomplish goal

Civic Engagement Framework

City Department: Project: Goal :   Overall project timeline:

Phase

1 Information
(Gathering, Organizing, Understanding)

Key Principles:
- Meaningful Engagement
- Mutual Accountability
- Early Involvement
- Easy Participation
- Inclusiveness and Equity

Engagement Activities:
- ☐ Hold public meetings that are well-organized and include group work to hear community opinions
- ☐ Collect research and identify community concerns
- ☐ Educate community on important issues about the project (online and in person)
- ☐ Reach out to the community to encourage participation (phone calls, door knocks, flyers, online)
- ☐ Visit a project location as a group

Tools:
- ☐ Offer online participation (surveys, forums, social media)
- ☐ Use graphics, maps, 3D models, & pictures to explain project

Products:
- ☐ Community engagement plan A preliminary report that describes the project, schedule, tasks, and budget
- ☐ Clear goals for each step of the process that must be met before moving to the next step
- ☐ Community's list of issues to address and their view of what we should be working toward

2 Options
(Discuss and Evaluate Options)

Key Principles:
- Sustained Collaboration
- Easy Participation
- Transparency
- Inclusiveness and Equity

Engagement Activities:
- ☐ Hold public meetings that are well-organized and include group work to hear community opinions
- ☐ Provide information about options, including what has worked well in other places
- ☐ Research possible options and potential impacts

Tools:
- ☐ Offer online participation (surveys, forums, social media)
- ☐ Hold group meetings with people who are affected by project
- ☐ Use graphics, maps, 3D models, & pictures to explain project

Products:
- ☐ Short term report with realistic options for achieving the shared view
- ☐ Provide tools to help the community choose between the options

3 Recommendations

Key Principles:
- Transparency
- Easy Participation
- Sustained Collaboration
- Mutual Accountability
- Meaningful Engagement

Engagement Activities:
- ☐ Hold public meetings that are well-organized and include group work to hear community opinions
- ☐ Present final options and how/why they were selected
- ☐ Hold public hearings where community members can make statements for City officials to consider, revise, and/or approve

Tools:
- ☐ Offer online participation (surveys, forums, social media)
- ☐ Hold group meetings with people affected by project
- ☐ Hold meetings open to the public for elected officials to hear comments and make decisions

Products:
- ☐ Report with options that have been reviewed and chosen; Report will show how community ideas guided the final recommendation, and will include the proposed plan and schedule to complete the work

4 Implementation and maintenance

Key Principles:
- Transparency
- Meaningful Engagement
- Sustained Collaboration
- Mutual Accountability
- Evaluation

Engagement Activities:
- ☐ Offer visits to project sites as needed
- ☐ Evaluate how well the plan is being carried out
- ☐ Identify someone from the City who is responsible for the work and who citizens can call
- ☐ Involve the community in carrying out the plan in each phase of the process

Tools:
- ☐ Provide a schedule of project activities to carry out the plan
- ☐ Notify community about public meetings

Products:
- ☐ Use objective measurements to determine if the community engagement in the decision-making process was successful
- ☐ Provide regular progress reports

Handbook: Tools & Strategies for Meaningful Engagement

- Before event: *early notice*, *clear agendas* and *access* to background information

- Type of event: what's *most productive* for issue at hand? In person or online? Workshop, town hall or open house?

- After event: prompt *follow up*, *show* how *input* is shaping next steps

- Communications *toolbox* – what works best for broad participation?

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Handbook: Implementation & Evaluation

Implementation

- Develop first year action plan
- Training for staff and community to improve engagement skills
- Ingrain WNA principles and framework into City government culture

Evaluation

- Evaluate *both* individual meetings *and* overall success of engagement for each project
- Establish criteria, process for annual evaluation

Upcoming projects

Upcoming projects will follow the principles, framework and guidelines in the handbook, including:

- Public Art Master Plan

- Eisenhower West Transportation Study and Small Area Plan

- Stormwater Management Plan

- Bicycle Master Plan

Handbook – Successful Outcomes

- Working together to solve common problems.
- Public is well informed, has a clear understanding of how to participate.
- More people participate in (and benefit from) City decisions.
- Community takes an active role in organizing others.
- City decisions/actions are accepted because they reflect public participation in a transparent process.
- Engagement approach is consistent throughout City government.
- Community and government have mutual trust.

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Handbook Timeline

June/July: Preliminary outline for public/staff review

July: Draft for public review

July-September: Outreach, Briefings

October: Council Adoption

Ongoing: Implementation, Training, Monitoring, Evaluation

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Activities 1 & 2

OBJECTIVE : Identify your networks and best methods for communication

DIRECTIONS: Fill in your information and responses. Remember that the City and the community share the responsibility for communicating.

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Activities 1 & 2

OBJECTIVE : Identify your networks and best methods for communication

DIRECTIONS: Fill in your information and responses. Remember that the City and the community share the responsibility for communicating.

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Activity 3 – Round 1 and 2

OBJECTIVE : Develop strategies for use of specific communication tools with the understanding that everyone shares responsibility for implementation.

DIRECTIONS: Your table facilitator will lead a discussion about your table's communication tools. Think about how these tools can be used, what their advantages and limitations are, and what it would take to create a sustainable citywide system of communication using them.

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Activity 3 – Round 1

QUESTION: How can the community and the city use this tool to increase public knowledge and participation in city projects?

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Activity 3 – Round 2

QUESTION: How can the community and the city use this tool to increase public knowledge and participation in city projects?

Report Out

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Reminder - Next Steps

June/July: Preliminary outline for public/staff review

July: Draft for public review

July-September: Outreach, Briefings

October: Council Adoption

Ongoing: Implementation, Training, Monitoring, Evaluation

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Meeting Evaluation

Please complete your evaluation and leave it at your table.

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