

## NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING PUBLIC COMMENTS - VOLUNTEERS MAY 11

26 Volunteers; Lou Ellers and Carl Smith, Board members; Rob Goodwin, staff; Ray Sauvey and Joe Enzer, steering committee.

Mark and Leslie joined the regular Volunteer Business meeting. After Volunteer business was handled Lou and Carl thanked the Volunteers for taking the time to participate in the Master Plan portion of the meeting. Then Rob, Carl and Lou left the meeting.

Mark first presented the early results of the Almont survey.

Comments included:

- We are not getting much out of the survey, the questions were too open ended and the results are exactly the opposite. There were questions why some of these individual items can be considered a strength but also a weakness.
- What are we doing with the data?
- What are the next steps with relatively generic results/data? **Mark** responded that Almont will use this as part of their analysis looking at how to integrate with all their other data.
- Who's in charge of this? **Mark:** Almont
- Are they looking to use these (+) and (-) as the plan moves forward? **Mark:** Yes.
- How does this compare to the public meetings?

Mark took this opportunity to brief the group on the public meetings and the turn out. He also showed some of the Power Point slides that are used at the public meetings specifically the Discussion Questions slide. Some questions from the volunteers were:

- What has the public feedback been? Are they ignorant or informed?
- The comments seem to be all over the place.
- Do you think people really understand why they need to be there?
- For all intents and purposes, by dipping into reserves – service has maintained status quo so people are not paying attention – the reserves have floated the budget. When you get to the money part of this everyone says yes to a red truck and ambulance when I call. Even though property tax revenues may go up 30% we either have to take real cuts or go back to the voters.

Mark briefed the Volunteers that values are going up roughly 26%, but revenues will still be lower compared to a few years ago since values fell approximately 42% during the recession. Property tax revenues will be about 25% lower than the “high years” – such as 2013. .

Volunteer members then asked a series of questions and made a number of comments (below)

- Just looking at the discussion questions from the slide show and from the public's reaction "I" see no controversy so people do not get involved. i.e. the new bridge in Glenwood brought out a lot of folks because it was controversial. What are your next steps – where do we go from here? **Mark** said that we are getting some good recommendations out of these meetings.
- Are you going to your meetings saying "your service will be cut"? **Mark** explained that the point was to gather information and not start with options or if this than that type of scenarios. We have not been directed to do that and as the plan is still evolving so we don't know what the options/recommendations will be.
- Would we agree that we should be more forthcoming with what is going on?
- We need better communication from our Board to tell the public what is going on.
- Do you have a website or a place that we can put information?
- I thought tonight's meeting was an opportunity to get input from others just like the previous Almont meeting.
- We got into the grit with the discussion with Almont. And I thought we were going to see the results.  
**Ray** reviewed what the previous Almont meeting entailed and the topics that were discussed which included a review of what Almont was going to consider in their part of the Master Plan.
- The public is apathetic – when we got our two year reprieve having told everybody we needed money – what did we do?? we held a shindig in Redstone, bought a new fire truck. The attitude was the Fire District thinks the public are suckers; they'll go for it again.
- It that the public's perception? We ask for money – then spend it?
- My understanding from Almont is if something was discussed ad nauseam they made it a topic but there is a lot more information that we talked about then what you showed us as their early results – Almont has a lot more information that we gave them then what you showed.
- I think that feedback needs to be fleshed out in the plan.
- I would like to see us come up with a department message or goal. It feels like it is in a bubble right now. We as a department need to shut up or go with the flow or take our issues and put them in front of the public until the public understands what we are up against.
- Before the mil levy vote of 2013, we were told to "shut-up". In other districts we've gone out there to drum up support. So for me we've gone through this period of tight budgets because we were told to put the trucks in the garage, shut up and "we "will take care of this.
- If we need more money, more ambulances, we need to tell the people of the district and they need to know what we are doing.
- We should be more up front with the issues today and tomorrow.
- The other thing that lies at the base of this is that an all volunteer district is in transition to paid personnel. Will we be able to provide the same LOS?

- This all started because after the defeat, the CAC said we need a plan. This is our blueprint. We need to rephrase our cause – don't use scare tactics – but need to rephrase to get community input and involvement.
- We heard loud and clear from the CAC; do not go for another mil levy without a master plan.
- Provide clear, concise communication/message.
- There is a possibility that Almont will say you need this, and people say we want that, but the voters may still say no.
- We are all vested in the fire district but if the public doesn't understand then where does that get us?
- Alert the public. In the other election the word did not get out, I never heard a word about the mil levy. The public then has no idea about the question.
- At the end of all of this it seems we want a plan, approach, or budget that we can all support so the public knows we support this.
- I agree 100% but we want to see the survey results addressed in the plan not just the results of the survey in the plan.

Everyone realized partway through the meeting that what Chain and Lamont thought was the purpose of the meeting was different than the Volunteers' vision of the meeting. After some frustrated discussion of the purpose, several attendees left, and some left to respond to a call for service, but things settled down and Chain/Lamont tried to make sure that all questions were answered and anyone that wanted to comment on the process or the District had done so. The Volunteers agreed that because of Almont's meeting and the meeting tonight enough room was created to provide feedback and air critiques.

**Leslie** asked if the attendees at tonight's meeting were representative of the diversity of opinions of the Volunteers. Most responded yes there is good diversity at this meeting and there was with Almont.

After the meeting **Leslie** had a one on one conversation with a Volunteer that was present at the Almont meeting as well and wanted to expand on "communication".

*There are communication issues throughout an organization. Here, it is not clear or effective. It goes out once and if you miss that email for example you miss it. I am not sure why there is not a feedback loop. The website and Facebook page are not updated. It is difficult to find information. This process is a good example. Others know what is going on but many are not getting the information. i.e. having an open house. Therefore information gets out late. There is no cohesiveness in outreach efforts. The message during the election was to shut down all discussion.*

*I believe that the staff is not using our assets. No one asks how we can help. As Volunteers we would go to the skate park, schools but it seems the staff doesn't want to impose this on us.*

*Almont needs to know that what they heard at the Volunteer meeting with only 9 members attending was a very good representation of opinions of the Volunteers. Opinions ran the whole gamut.*