

MINUTES
Community Improvement Action Team
Tuesday, November 15, 2011 – 3:00 p.m.
City Hall – Lower Level Conference Room

Members Present: Gary Wieskamp, Gary Carlson, Bill Phelan, Mayor Dick O'Brien, Steve Boka, Richard Klimes, Laura Liegois, and Dyann Roby.

Members Absent: Holly Thomas, Ann Meeker, Brenda Christensen, Rochelle Conway, and Gregg Mandsager

Guests Present: Andrew Fangman, Dianna Stelzner, and Jeff Boldt

Gary Wieskamp called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Bill Phelan moved to approve the minutes of the October 18, 2011 meeting. Seconded by Dyann Roby. All ayes; motion carried.

There were no comments from citizens.

Mayor Dick O'Brien thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He stated he has enjoyed working with CIAT and is proud of the accomplishments that have taken place over the years. He stated the major thing that has been accomplished is the city's walking trails. He stated there are numerous other projects the CIAT has had a hand in that will be here for many years to come.

Gary Carlson stated the CIAT has seen a lot of progress over the years. He also stated that the CIAT allows city staff to work with the public on projects.

Community Development Director Steve Boka stated there was a strong public/private partnership throughout a lot of the projects.

Parks & Recreation Director Rich Klimes stated the CIAT has helped foster relationships outside this group.

John Beckey arrived at 3:10 p.m.

Mr. Carlson passed out the Blue Zones application questions which included the brainstorming results from the October 18, 2011 meeting. He stated that during the last meeting, those present went through the first six questions of the application. He stated the application is very specific in that a community that is selected for the Blue Zones Project must offer up positions or roles. One role is a local Program Manager. He stated the money awarded to a community that is selected as part of the Blue Zones Project will provide the funding for the person selected as Program Manager to live and work in the community.

Mr. Phelan stated the Program Manager will walk the community through the actual process itself. He stated the money received will be for data gathering.

Mr. Wieskamp stated the dollars that come into a community are for continued work on the Blue Zones Project.

Mr. Carlson listed three positions the city will be required to create as part of the Blue Zones Project. They are Initiative Organizer, Volunteer Coordinator, and Administrative Assistant. He stated the application indicates these could be paid positions, volunteer positions, or in-kind positions. He stated he feels it is important that the city provide a compelling story for the application.

Mr. Phelan stated the community really needs to pull together to show we are dedicated to becoming a Blue Zones community. He stated that even if Muscatine does not become a Blue Zones community, it does not lessen our need to become a healthier community.

Mr. Wieskamp stated that a meeting held last week those in attendance were told the monies received will not be in grant form. He stated the city will not be receiving the money but rather the dollars will come in the form of technical assistance.

City Planner Andrew Fangman, who had also attended the meeting, stated a lot of the details were not provided.

Mr. Phelan stated he feels the community can draw on the services provided. He stated each of the 10 selected communities will be receiving \$2.5 million which is a lot of money.

Mr. Klimes asked what the timeframe would be for that \$2.5 million.

Mr. Carlson stated it would be for a three-year period. He stated it seems like a lot of money for technical support; however, it has been made very clear that is how the money will be used.

Mr. Beckey stated it will be interesting to see how the money is used.

Mr. Phelan stated that Jeff Canfield is trying to bring a Blue Zones Project representative to Muscatine hopefully this week so that folks can ask the same questions being asked here today.

Sarah Lande arrived at 3:30 p.m.

Mr. Carlson stated that Mary Odell has submitted the "Letter of Intent" which is the first wave of the application process.

Mr. Wieskamp stated there will be a Blue Zones public forum on Thursday, November 17, 2011, from 5:15 to 6:30 p.m. at the School Board office. He stated public input will be sought on 12 different health initiatives. They are:

- Employer Wellness – Best Practices
- Faith Initiatives/Sense of Purpose
- Gardening & Community Gardens
- Grocery Store & Cooking Classes
- Medical Initiatives
- Moai Teams
- Neighborhood Gatherings
- Restaurant Initiatives
- School Policy
- Walkability, Bikeability & Trails
- Walking School Bus
- Volunteering & Sense of Purpose

There was discussion on the various methods of public notification to make people aware of the public forum.

Mr. Carlson encouraged everyone to be there.

Mr. Carlson stated HNI has been doing wellness screenings for its employees and spouses. He stated the goal is to screen about 4,000 people this week. He stated he feels this is the type of activity that should become part of the application process.

Mr. Carlson stated question #7 asks how becoming a Blue Zones Community will accelerate our community's vision. He then opened the meeting up for discussion and ideas. He stated that today's responses will be given to Ms. Odell for the application process.

Mr. Phelan suggested combining all activities for the application into perhaps a "Health Focus".

Mr. Carlson stated that when big things happen in a community, there is usually a catalyst. He stated that the catalyst for the Pearl Projects was Vision Iowa.

Mr. Fangman stated he feels it will help to tie a lot of the smaller visions into a bigger vision.

Ms. Lande asked if there are four to five goals that ideas could be attached to.

Jeff Boldt stated we are building a health quilt and our thoughts and ideas are the threads that make up the quilt. Speaking in reference to CIAT, he stated that folks can come to you with ideas and you can run with them.

Mr. Beckey stated he is still struggling with what a Blue Zones community means. He asked how we are defining a Blue Zones community.

Mr. Carlson stated he feels it is up to us to define it.

Laura Liegois asked if we are meeting the basic needs of the community. She stated she feels this should be included as part of the application process.

Dyann Roby asked if we have the ability to meet the community's basic needs.

Ms. Lande stated she feels these are the people that need to be part of this process and asked how that could be accomplished.

Mr. Klimes stated that on the Parks & Recreation side, the struggle is not the use of the facilities but rather making everyone aware of what is available.

Mr. Carlson stated he recently saw an e-mail from Trinity about heart and diabetes studies Trinity is making available to the community for education purposes. He stated we know about it because we saw the e-mail but what about those who didn't get it. He asked how the community can become better aware about health initiatives.

Mr. Beckey suggested neighborhood health groups.

Mr. Carlson stated a neighborhood health watch is a good idea.

Mr. Fangman stated a central location is needed so that everyone knows what is available to them.

Mr. Bold stated there is a one word answer and it is “awareness”. He stated the fact we are sitting here discussing the Blue Zones Project has already created awareness.

Mr. Carlson pointed out there are currently a lot of people talking about the Blue Zones Project.

Mr. Beckey stated that becoming a Blue Zones community should give us energy.

Mr. Carlson stated that question #8 asks us to identify any recent or anticipated changes in policies to improve health. He asked what subjects need to be captured here.

Ms. Lande stated that most of the major companies in Muscatine have some type of wellness program. She suggested capturing companies and organizations that have health programs.

Mr. Phelan stated that schools are making new changes.

There was discussion concerning restaurants and getting them involved in the Blue Zones process.

Mr. Carlson asked if there was anything else that could be included as part of the application process.

Ms. Lande stated that Andrew Fangman will be providing a map.

Mr. Carlson asked if it was pdf format, and Mr. Fangman answered yes. Mr. Carlson stated that if it is in a pdf format, it will strengthen the application.

Mr. Phelan stated we should remember all the various walks and runs that take place in the community.

Mr. Boldt stated a lot has already been done for our community. He asked how those things are going to be enhanced.

Mr. Carlson stated that many employers are changing their policies regarding wellness. He stated that HNI is now paying for health screenings for its members’ spouses. He also stated HNI has an aggressive “stop tobacco” plan in place.

Mr. Phelan pointed out that many places are now “smoke-free”.

Mr. Carlson stated that question #9 asks us to describe up to four current or future initiatives designed to improve the health and happiness of our community impacting at least 3% of our population.

Mr. Carlson stated that a meeting was held recently with Dr. Bark who has presented an idea about a project that would involve the construction of a bubble that would house indoor sports activities. He stated it would be a project that creates a community place for health.

Mr. Klimes stated a lot of the city’s facilities are opened during limited hours. He stated that Dr. Bark is proposing a facility that would benefit second and third shift employees. He stated this is a huge project and is still in its infancy.

Mr. Carlson stated that a future initiative could be the creation of future facilities. He stated there are a lot of things that could be considered.

There was discussion on possible expansion of the Community Y.

Mr. Phelan stated that an important part of health and wellness and happiness in our community is employment. He stated that when people are employed, they are more pleased with themselves. He stated that creating more jobs in our community raises the bar for everyone.

Ms. Liegois stated people that are employed can meet more of their basic needs.

Community Development Director Steve Boka listed four statewide issues: They are:

- Smart planning principles
- Safe Routes for School/Walkability
- Complete Streets (Mr. Boka gave a brief explanation.)
- Use of public transportation

Mr. Carlson stated the city has a fabulous transportation system that is not utilized enough. He stated now is a great opportunity to really promote it.

Mr. Boka stated he recently had an opportunity to travel Europe. He stated that what he noticed was their effective and efficient use of public transportation. He stated he was also surprised to see there were not many grocery stores; however, there were a lot of open markets. He stated these markets help keep the economy moving on a daily basis.

Mr. Carlson stated the idea about the open markets should be taken further. He stated that most big projects have been galvanized around a vision. He asked if there was something that is going to pop the trigger to keep us moving on something that is a big idea.

Mr. Beckey suggested recycling and going green.

Ms. Lande stated we could work with Branching Out to make a big effort on trees (Tree Initiative).

Mr. Carlson stated that was a good idea. He stated it would be easy to get 3% of the population involved in a tree project.

Mr. Boka stated that a broader initiative could be green building codes which would involve using recycled materials in buildings.

Mr. Beckey stated it will be interesting to see if we can get the public to have a long-term view instead of a short-term one. He asked how we are going to get folks to see things in the future especially for the next generation.

Mr. Carlson, speaking in reference to question #7, stated we could add community pride.

Mr. Phelan stated community involvement it is needed.

Mr. Carlson stated that question #10 requires the cooperation of local community leaders and a description of how these groups have collaborated in the recent past to successfully advance community initiatives. He listed the Pearl of the Mississippi, Pearl II, Leadership Muscatine projects, Community Y, soccer, synthetic fields, etc.

Mr. Carlson, speaking in reference to question #11, stated that the CIAT is part of the proposed leadership for this initiative.

Mr. Carlson stated that question #12 asks for a list of potential staff for this initiative. He stated there is a lot that can be done with volunteers and volunteer groups. He stated that representation is needed by minority groups, non-profits, and the elderly.

Discussion centered on ways to reach out to minorities, the elderly, and non-profits. There was also discussion on the need to involve high school students.

Mr. Boldt stated we need to home grow our community leaders.

Mr. Carlson stated that CIAT will continue to work on the application process.

Mr. Boka, speaking in reference to the Mississippi Drive Corridor status, stated there is a problem along the bluff area when trying to accommodate a sidewalk. He stated that putting sidewalks on the railroad side would require the relocation of utility poles. He stated he has information he will be sending out prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Carlson asked if the sidewalk was in lieu of using the trail system, and Mr. Boka answered yes. He stated there are a number of issues that need to be discussed.

Mr. Boka then gave an update on the TeStrake buildings. He stated this matter has got to be handled carefully because we do not want to jeopardize funding.

There were no Action Team reports and there was no other business to report.

Mr. Wieskamp stated the next meeting will be held on December 20, 2011.

Mr. Boka stated he has been told that Hershey Avenue will be opened this weekend.

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran Donelson
Administrative Secretary