BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF DOUGLAS COUNTY, KANSAS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 2003

6:35 P.M.

-Convene

-Pledge of Allegiance

PROCLAMATION

-Proclaim the month of May as "Mental Health Month"

CONSENT AGENDA

(1) (a) Consider approval of Commission Orders

(b) Consider approval of resolution authorizing and providing for the sale, issuance and delivery of $8,115,000* principal amount of General Obligation Sales Tax Refunding Bonds, Series 2003-A of the Douglas County, Kansas, for the purpose of providing funds to refund a portion of the issuer's outstanding general obligation sales bonds and notes; providing for the levy and collection of an annual tax for the purpose of paying the principal of and interest on said bonds as they become due; making certain covenants and agreements to provide for the payment and security thereof and authorizing certain other documents and actions connected therewith. (Pam Madl)

(c) Consider approval of resolution authorizing and providing for the sale, issuance and delivery of $1,315,000* principal amount of General Obligation Refunding Bonds, Series 2003-B, of the Douglas County, Kansas, for the purpose of providing funds to refund a portion of the issuer's outstanding general obligation bonds; providing for the levy and collection of an annual tax for the purpose of paying the principal of and interest on said bonds as they become due; making certain covenants and agreements to provide for the payment and security thereof and authorizing certain other documents and actions connected therewith (Pam Madl)

REGULAR AGENDA

(2) Planning Item: SP-03-20-03: Site Plan for Steve's Place, a reception/meeting hall at 1388 1293 Road (Sandra Day)

(3) Receive report from Douglas County Extension on Rural Urban Issues Seminar (Trudy Rice)

(4) Discussion of county funding for school nursing services (Charles Jones)

(5) Other Business

(a) Consider approval of Accounts Payable (if necessary)

(b) Appointments

(c) Miscellaneous

(d) Public Comment

(6) Adjourn

MONDAY, MAY 5, 2003
-No Commission Meeting

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 2003
-No Commission Meeting

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 2003
-Planning item: CUP-12-16-02: Conditional Use Permit request for Eudora Quarry #68. The property is generally described as being located at the northwest corner of N 1200 Road and E 2400 Road. Requested by N.R. Hamm Quarry, Inc., for Katherine L. Neis, property owner of record) (Brian Pedrotti)

MONDAY, MAY 19, 2002
- Consider approval of open burn regulations proposal (Douglas County Fire Chiefs Association)

MONDAY, MAY 26, 2003
-Memorial Day – No Commission Meeting

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 2003
-No Commission Meeting

MONDAY, JUNE 2, 2003
-Light Agenda

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 2003
-No Commission Meeting

MONDAY, JUNE 9, 2003
-No Commission Meeting

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 2003
-No Commission Meeting

MONDAY, JUNE 16, 2003
-Light Agenda or no meeting

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18, 2003
5:30 P.M.
-Rededication of Judicial & Law Enforcement Center and Youth Services

MONDAY, JULY 14, 2003
-Light agenda or no meeting

WEDNESDAY, JULY 16, 2003
-Light agenda or no meeting

MONDAY, JULY 21, 2003
-No Commission Meeting

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2003
-No Commission Meeting

MONDAY, JULY 28, 2003
-Light agenda or no meeting

WEDNESDAY, JULY 30, 2003
-Light agenda or no meeting

MENTAL HEALTH PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS: *The U.S. Surgeon General states that mental health is fundamental to health, personal well-being, family and interpersonal relationships, and contributes to community and society; and*

WHEREAS: *The U.S. Surgeon General confirms that mental illness affects one in five Americans every year, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion or economic status; and*

WHEREAS: *The U.S. Surgeon General has found that a range of treatments exists for most mental disorders and the efficacy of mental health treatments are well documented; and*

WHEREAS: *Douglas County, Kansas, has made a commitment to community-based systems of mental health care for all residents; and*

WHEREAS: *The guiding principles of community mental health care have always been comprehensiveness, cost-efficiency, effective management and high-quality and consumer-responsive services; and*

WHEREAS: *The National Mental Health Association, the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, and the Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center observe Mental Health Month every May to raise awareness and understanding of mental health and illness;*

NOW, THEREFORE, THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF DOUGLAS COUNTY, KANSAS *does hereby proclaim the month of May 2003 as*

"MENTAL HEALTH MONTH"

in Douglas County, Kansas, and calls upon all citizens, government agencies, public and private institutions, businesses and schools to recommit our community to increasing awareness and understanding of mental illness and the need for appropriate and accessible services for all people with mental illnesses.

ADOPTED *this 30th day of April, 2003.*

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF DOUGLAS COUNTY, KANSAS

_____

Bob Johnson, Chairman

_____

Jere McElhaney, Member

_____

Charles Jones, Member

SITE PLAN REVIEW
April 28, 2003
30

A. SUMMARY

SP-03-20-03: Steve's Place Reception and Meeting Hall (Great Plains Printing), a site plan for the conversion of an existing structure (formerly a printing facility) for a reception hall generally located on the southwest corner of 31st Street and Louisiana Street specifically located at 1111 E. 1400 Road. Submitted by B.G. Consultants for Steven and Helen Meseraull, property owners of record.

B. GENERAL INFORMATION

Current Zoning and Land Use:	B-2 (General Business District) and A (Agricultural District) existing 4-acre commercial printing business.
Surrounding Zoning and Land Use:	RS-1 (Single-Family Residence District) Northeast corner, existing county park property.
	A (Agricultural District) Northwest corner, vacant property.
	A (Agricultural District) and VC (Valley Channel) Southeast corner; Baker Wetlands property.

Site Summary:

Legal Description:	Unplatted, see site plan for legal description
Site Size:	4.31 acres
Existing Uses:	single-family detached house Printing service including 6-7 employees currently [15,000 SF]
Proposed Use:	4,320 sq. ft. for a reception hall (constructed for Great Plains Printing - SP-06-44-00)
Parking Required:	Printing service 1 space / 3 employees [6-7 employees = 2-3 spaces required per previous site plan] Reception Hall 1 space / 100 SF [43 spaces required]
Total Parking Required:	47 spaces
Parking Provided:	105 spaces total provided 10 spaces (apx) located on east side of printing service building
Total Parking Provided:	115 spaces [excludes single-family residential use]

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends denial of the Site Plan request by the County Commission based upon lack of compliance with the jointly adopted Comprehensive Plan. Staff would support a request for this improvement once it is in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan, which would include: annexation, rezoning, platting and development to City standards.

Review Comments from Other Departments/Agencies

County Public Works:

1. Portions of proposed illumination information (amount, direction, and screening) in not shown. Section 19A-4 (12).
2. Show intersection of access drive and Louisiana Street. *(Plan revised)*
3. Access to Louisiana Street must be considered temporary pending construction of SLT. It is our understanding KDOT purchased controlled access. *(Applicant notified)*
4. Owner will be responsible for cost of relocating entrance to 31st Street if final configuration calls fro such. *(Applicant notified)*
5. Recommend parking and drives meet minimum city standards. *(Applicant notified)*
6. Provide cross access easement, if none, or show existing cross access easement. *(Plan revised)*
7. KDOT should review this site plan. *(Applicant notified)*

County Zoning: The portion of the building that has the previous use changed will need to comply with all adopted codes for the new use. (Uniform Building Code Section 3405). *(Applicant notified)*

City Public Works: This property should be annexed and developed to city standards. Long-term access issues will be an issue. How will this property be accessed upon closure of existing drives by state? *(Issues discussed with applicant, see staff report discussion)*

KDOT: Refer to faxed plan sheets. The current access to Louisiana is fine for now but as you can see if the SLT is eventually built this would eliminate the access to it. The access as shown on the plans now is currently being reviewed to see if it is acceptable. It looks like on the profile sheet that the elevation change to get up to the relocated 31st Street would be 3 to 4 meters from existing ground line. I would suggest that they look at a way to develop their property so that an entrance/exit in the northwest corner of their property could be used if and when the SLT is constructed.

Stormwater Engineering:

1. Provide impervious surface summary. *(Plan revised to provide benchmark references)*
2. Show on-site grades, storm system layout, benchmark. *(Discussed with applicant, not a technical requirement of a county site plan)*

Traffic Engineering:	Development should occur on the City Limits and be designed to accommodate urban traffic and access.
Municipal Utilities:	City water not available to this site at this time. This property connects to the city sewer in accordance with a Sept. 20, 1976 signed agreement.
County Health Department:	The water supply will need to be evaluated by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). Uses serving 25 or more persons per year require public water connection.
Natural Resources Conservation District:	No comments received
Wakarusa Township:	No comments received
Wakarusa Fire Department:	No comments received
Westar Energy:	No comments
Aquila, Inc:	No comments received
Southwestern Bell:	No comments received

Planning Department:

1. Drawing boundary does not appear consistent with parcel data. *(Plan revised)*
2. Show possible access to 31st Street along West property line. Additional information is needed to assess how this existing and proposed use will function with access changes. *(Plan revised)*
3. Provide site summary for reference of existing conditions, building, pavement, total impervious, pervious, etc. *(Plan revised)*
4. Proposed use is intensive and cannot be limited to certain days per zoning. *(Discussed with applicant)*
5. Minimum sanitation and water issues should be addressed for this property. *(Discussed with applicant)*
6. The property is located in the urban growth area and should be annexed prior to intensification of development of the site. *(Discussed with applicant)*
7. Site should be annexed and constructed to city standards.
8. How many uses are serviced by the existing water well? Site plan includes a residence, printing business and proposed reception hall. How many residents/employees are current on site? *(Plan revised)*

C. STAFF REVIEW

The subject property is located on the southwest corner of Louisiana and 31st Street. The property is developed as a printing facility known as Meseraull Printing (now doing business as Great Plains Printing). A site plan was approved in September 2000 for a 4,320 SF building addition. It is the recent building addition that would be used for the meeting/reception hall. As part of the previous approval, an agreement to annex was executed that indicated annexation would occur upon water utility service being available. There are two significant issues associated with this proposed application; access to 31st Street and minimum potable water requirements to address the intensification of use. If approved the maximum occupancy of the reception hall could exceed 400 people according to both City and County building code requirements. This is a significant intensification of activity for the site.

Section 19A-5 of the County Zoning Resolution establishes the minimum requirements or conditions of approval to consider site plans in the county. The Resolution states:

"Before making a report to the Board of County Commissioners, the planning staff shall first find that the following conditions have been met;

1. *That the proposed use is a permitted use in the district in which the property is located;*
2. *That the proposed arrangement of buildings, off-street parking, access, lighting, landscaping, and drainage is compatible with adjacent land uses;*
3. *That the vehicular ingress and egress to and from the site and circulation within the site provides for safe, efficient, and convenient movement of traffic not only within the site but on adjacent roadways as well;*
4. *That the site plan provides for the safe movement of pedestrians within the site;*
5. *That there is a sufficient mixture of grass, trees, and shrubs within the interior and perimeter (including public right-of-way) of the site so that the proposed development will be in harmony with adjacent land uses and will provide a pleasing appearance to the public. Any part of the site plan area not used for building, structures, parking or access ways shall be landscaped with a mixture of grass, trees, and shrubs; and;*
6. *That all outdoor trash areas are screened."*

This report provides a response to the above criterion as well as an overview comparison of the applicable county and city development requirements. Typically this section is not discussed in detail except in unique circumstances or to demonstrate non-compliance or inconsistency with this section. Section 20-1428 of the City Zoning Code provides comparable language but includes more detailed development standards.

Zoning and Existing Development

The subject property is zoned B-2 (General Business District) which permits a variety of commercial uses. Existing development includes the recent building addition in 2000, which is currently vacant as well as a printing business and a detached single-family residence. The area includes a parking lot and loading dock as well as a driveway around the buildings. The northern portion of the field area has included in the past a fireworks sales area during the summer. The following table provides a comparison of zoning requirements for the combination of existing land uses by City and County zoning regulations as well as minimum parking standards. The proposed site plan has been revised to include a parking schedule and impervious site summary for

reference.

The site is accessed by an existing driveway to E. 1400 Road (Louisiana extended south). Access to this site has been affected by access controls established by KDOT for the South Lawrence Trafficway. Access to 31st Street is prohibited except for the far west 111' along the state owned right-of-way. Ultimately Louisiana will be offset to the west and access to the subject property will require a new orientation.

County Requirements		**City Requirements**	
Use	Zoning District	Use	Zoning District
Residential/Printing/Reception Hall Use –	B-2 (General Business District)	Printing operation --	C-3 (Central Commercial District) or C-4 (General Commercial District)
		Reception Hall Use –	C-2 (Neighborhood Shopping District), C-3, C-4 or C-5 (Limited Commercial District)
Parking Requirement	1 space per 100 SF	Parking Requirements	1/100 or 1/3 occupancy which ever is larger

The minimum zoning and parking standards are similar between the County and City zoning requirements. Upon annexation the existing land uses would not all be considered appropriate for the same zoning district. Single-family uses are not recommended in commercial Districts. Additionally, the printing operation would require a more intensive city zoning designation then the reception hall use upon annexation.

The proposed use will not alter the current building arrangement, but will affect the current land use and parking configuration and *especially the intensity of land use (emphasis added)*. For the majority of the time the reception hall use will not overlap with the printing operation. The allowable intensity based on building codes could result in large events that exceed 400 people (by City or County code).

Sufficient parking in terms of amount can be provided on site. At the maximum allowable occupancy, additional parking would be required. This would require expansion of the parking lot area to a minimum standard. Parking lot design and signage are required to separate traffic from the printing/loading areas of the existing development. This issue of vehicular separation and on site signage must be addressed regardless of annexation of the property. The internal circulation pattern must be clearly defined. The site plan has been revised to show sign locations to accommodate this requirement. This issue is a prevailing concern since all access must come through the site from the east.

Access

Two access issues must be further clarified, the internal access pattern as previously discussed and the direct access to the adjacent street network. Currently, access is still taken from Louisiana Street via a gravel driveway. This driveway access is intended to remain until such time as adjacent street improvements are made. The Louisiana access driveway will then be removed and a new access point to 31st Street will be provided. As the access is reoriented to the west the reception hall traffic should not impact the printing activities. Long term, the applicant may wish to provide separate drives around the site and use specific signage to denote printing operation

traffic/access routs from the other uses on site.

31st Street access: Much of the surrounding area of the subject property is right-of-way purchased by the Kansas Department of Transportation for the eastern leg of the South Lawrence Trafficway. Agreements between the property owner and KDOT were made stating access to the site would be from the SLT/31st Street and that the connection to Louisiana would be removed. The site plan shows graphically that portion of the periphery of the lot that is encumbered by access control restrictions.

Although a location for the eastern leg of the SLT alignment is uncertain at this time, the need for significant street improvements to 31st Street have been studied and are readily apparent. 31st Street is designated as a principal arterial street in the recently adopted Major Thoroughfares Map. Improvements to 31st Street are needed before the redevelopment of this site to support a more intensive use. Staff does not recommend the intensification of land use prior to the provision of adequate public facility improvements to the surrounding street network to accommodate anticipated traffic generated by the proposed use.

Access for this property to 31st Street was established by KDOT along the west property line and would result in a direct access point to an arterial street. Direct curb cuts to arterial streets are not recommended as a best planning practice. The site plan was revised following a meeting with the applicant and staff to discuss access options. The revised site plan now includes a proposed access easement along the far west property line. The dedication of the easement will be recorded by separate instrument if approved and will provide the basis for a shared access to 31st Street with the adjacent property to the west. The access easement is structured to provide a collector street type access option with the dedication of comparable easement or right-of-way upon development of the adjacent property. Any access to 31st Street should comply with minimum access management policies effective at the time and should also include a setback from the "intersection" of 350' if ultimately dedicated as a public street. The site plan anticipates that the parking lot will be reconfigured to utilize the access easement, but does not include the exact point of intersection.

Louisiana Street Access: The possible/proposed realignment of Louisiana and 31st Street will result in the removal of the current driveway access to Louisiana. Staff does not endorse direct access of individual properties to an arterial street (31st Street). The 2000 staff report suggested that ultimately a public street should be constructed along the west property line that would serve the subject property and the adjacent property to the west. The offset of Louisiana would be further to the west of the subject property, requiring additional east/west cross access easements. This issue will be further considered with the submission of a subdivision plat for this property and the surrounding area. Access to Louisiana may remain until such time as the SLT project progresses. The site plan has been revised to show a conceptual access to 31st Street including a public access easement to be dedicated. This easement is expected to service the subject property and the adjacent property when it is developed.

The City Limits are located northeast of this site and development pressures are being experienced along 31st Street between Louisiana (E. 1400) and Iowa. The subject property is located within the urban growth boundary of the City of Lawrence. The home improvement

development application containing Home Depot was approved and is nearing completion west of this site and on the north side of 31st Street. With the development pressures along 31st Street and, the proximity of this site to the City Limit boundaries, this property should be annexed into the City of Lawrence. Staff recommends that any new development or intensification of the site should be constructed to minimum City standards.

Parking Lot design and landscape requirements:
The County zoning regulations require a minimum parking ratio of 1 off-street parking space per 100 SF as noted in the summary of the staff report, adequate parking is provided on site for all uses and could reasonable be expanded to accommodate an event in excess of 400 patrons. The site plan has been revised to incorporate additional notes to clarify parking drives throughout the site and to separate the loading dock access from the general internal circulation of the site. This will improve the safety and convenience of parking on site. It does not appear that the loading area is intensively or frequently used but is not currently well signed to prohibit unauthorized access.

A service access to the proposed reception hall is shown on the site plan. The plan notes that parking stalls will be denoted by both paint and bumper blocks. Staff discussed the minimum city requirements with the applicant at some point in the future with regard to pavement, curbs and gutters, and landscape islands. The proposed parking lot design is intended to accommodate these future improvements. Staff recommends that prior to approval the site be annexed, rezoned and platted into the City of Lawrence and that the site is improved to minimum city standards.

Section 19A-4 of the County Zoning Resolution requires that a landscape schedule be shown and Section 19A-5 (5) requires that there be provided on site a *"sufficient mixture of grass trees, and shrubs within the interior and perimeter of the site so that the proposed development will be in harmony with adjacent land uses and will provide a pleasing appearance to the public."* City Zoning requires that in addition to the documentation requirements and the required ground cover of any unimproved portion of property that a site plan comply with specific landscape standards. These include interior landscape islands, shade trees, street trees, etc. Currently the surrounding character of the adjacent properties is agricultural and thus landscaping is not a significant issue at this time. Ultimately shad trees, interior and peripheral landscaping will be required within the parking lot and throughout the site to screen the use and the parking lot from public streets and future development.

Pedestrian access: The site is not designed with a significant pedestrian element. Ultimately the 31st Street improvement project will include public sidewalks on both sides. The site is not immediately adjacent to any other existing development. The plan does not contemplate any outdoor patio areas that necessitate pedestrian access. There is no integration of the site with the adjacent roadway network that includes a pedestrian element.

Public Utilities
Sanitary Sewer: The site is currently developed and served by City sewer. According to the City's development policy, any property utilizing City services should be annexed into the City limits. An annexation agreement was executed with the approval of the building addition in 2000 that established the timing of annexation upon the availability of municipal water.

Existing Water Source: The property currently utilizes well water as the non-potable water sources for all buildings on the site. State law states that compliance with state and local drinking water standards must be meet when 25 or more customers/employees/residents are provided service for 60 or more days a year. Staff recommends that the use be annexed into the city and that a public supply of water be provided to this site. In staff's opinion, the proposed intensification of use will result in excess of this requirement.

Municipal Water: The Municipal Utilities Department has stated that the extension of water to this site would be difficult at this time because of the distance, lack of planning for the infrastructure extension, and that it would result in a dead-end line that poses water quality deterioration. According to the City's development policy, the developer would need to pay for the extension of the water lines. A line would need to be extended south along Louisiana and then extended to the west to provide a looped system. This improvement is not immediately planned.

Chapter Four of **Horizon 2020** is entitled Growth Management. The opening paragraphs state *"The growth management policies seek to ensure that adequate facilities and services are provided, or are assured, in connection with development. The policies also continue to require new development to bear its share of the costs for the extension and improvement of required facilities and services; and, to assure that the residents of Lawrence and unincorporated Douglas County are not unreasonably burdened by these costs".* The developer should therefore pay for the extension of the water and develop the site to City standards. The proposed intensification of the site does not comply with the growth management policies of **Horizon 2020.**

The site plan includes a note that states potable water is supplied via bottled water for all uses on the site. Both the local and state health departments have commented on this concern. Staff does not recommend this type of water source as a feasible or prudent alternative.

Annexation Requirements

In Chapter Four under the heading City of Lawrence Urban Growth Area, it is stated that land within the City of Lawrence Urban Growth Area (UGA) is encouraged to be annexed and developed in the City of Lawrence over the planning period, subject to the goals and policies for Growth Management. This property is located within the UGA and should be annexed prior to additional development/intensification of land use. Horizon 2020 also states that non-contiguous parcels of land may be developed subject to the policies of the Comprehensive Plan and upon agreement by the property owner to annexation at the time the land becomes contiguous to the City. As a condition of approval, an agreement not to protest annexation was executed for the subject property per the approval of SP-06-44-00. It was noted in the 2000 staff report that the proposed use did not comply with the recommendations in **Horizon 2020** regarding growth management and specifically stated:

> *Policy 1.3.2 (d) Nonresidential Land Uses in Chapter Four states that developments within the Urban Growth Area need to be platted. This is consistent with development requirements within the City Limits.*
>
> *The Site Plan, as proposed, is not in conformance with the Goals and Policies established in Chapter Four – Growth Management.*

In Chapter Seven – Industrial and Employment-Related Land Use, under the heading Unincorporated Douglas County, the Comprehensive Plan states "With the exception of the industrial area adjacent to North Lawrence, all other industrial areas are within the Lawrence urban growth area illustrated in Figure 9 and should be annexed into the City in the future". This statement, in conjunction with the previous Horizon 2020 references, supports Staff's position that this site should be annexed into the City of Lawrence prior to any additional development or redevelopment.

The Goals and Policies in Chapter Seven relate to development standards for industrial sites and are achieved generally when sites are developed to City standards.[1]

Summary and Conclusion

The applicant has revised the site plan to provide additional detail regarding access and to clarify several elements regarding the existing and anticipated land use and site improvements. However, the critical issue is not site layout but one of timing of the use and balancing the intensity of the use with the ability to provide the minimum public infrastructure and service. The proposed use is premature as the allowable intensity exceeds the ability to provide adequate public facilities.

1 *Taken from discussion in SP-06-44-00*

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April 11, 2003

To: Douglas County Commissioners

From: Trudy M. Rice

Subject: Rural Urban Issues

Enclosed please find a white paper report from the Rural/Urban issue forums that were held throughout Douglas County in February. I have also enclosed copies of an educational series that is available through the Extension Service.

I look forward to presenting the information from the report at your meeting on Wednesday, April 16, 2003. If you have any questions prior to the meeting please give me a call.

Thank you.

Douglas County
Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service
K-State, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating.
All educational programs and materials available without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or disability.
"Knowledge for Life"

The Rural Urban Interface

Public Issues Education Opportunities in Douglas County

Douglas County Rural/Urban Task Force
facilitated by:
Douglas County-K-State Research and Extension
Trudy M. Rice, County Extension Director and Bill Wood, County Agriculture Agent

Introduction

The Kansas City Metropolitan area extends its presence into six Kansas counties and influences several surrounding rural counties. Growth and development of this region presents a rapidly changing environment, producing challenges and opportunities for residents, communities, and leaders.

The entire Kansas City metropolitan area is home to more than two million people, while the six Kansas counties (Wyandotte, Johnson, Leavenworth, Miami, Douglas, and Shawnee) have more than 900,000 in population. While the metro population has increased by about 18.6 percent over the recent twenty-year period of 1977-1997, the changes in certain segments of the metro area have been much more significant. The Kansas side of the metro area has increased almost 29 percent in population. While Johnson County contributed most to the change with a 67 percent population increase, **Douglas County** grew rapidly as well, at approximately **45 percent.**. With this rapid growth in population and the accompanying development, several issues generally emerge in the public spotlight.

In most counties, sprawl comes in the form of "low density" residential development such as one-to-five acre home sites and ten-acre "farmettes" that spring up in rural and undeveloped open space areas. Taxpayer costs are just one of the impacts to be considered as people struggle with the results of the urban/rural collision. Other impacts come in the form of changes in property values, changes in the community structure, traffic congestion and commuting times, environmental impacts, and changes in the perceived quality of life that can be attained now and in the future.

The five Rural/Urban Issue Surfacing Forums held throughout Douglas County in January and February of 2003 were designed to identify the public perception of the impact of growth on Douglas County and specific issues with wide support that are a result of this impact. This was designed to be the first step in a long range public issues educational program.

A Statistical Profile of Douglas County

Douglas County ranks fifth in Kansas county population. According to the 2000 Census, Douglas County has a total population of 99,962. The county's population increased by 18,164 or 22 percent since the 1990 survey. Of Douglas County's residents, 60.2 percent have lived here more than five years. Douglas County's population is expected to increase 22 percent before 2030.

Only 6 percent of the counties land is considered urban. However, in 2000, 87.2 percent of the county's population live in an urban area (incorporated area more than 2,500 in population) and 12.8 percent live in a rural area. Of the 12.8 percent, 1,500 individuals live on a farm and 11,280 live in the rural area but not on a farm. These compare to Douglas County in 1990 when 87.7 percent lived in an urban area and 12.3 percent lived in a rural area. Of this 1,716 individuals lived on farms and 8,348 lived in a rural non-farm setting. As you can see, there has not been a significant change in the percentage of urban/rural over this time. It is important to note that the Census Bureau defines a farm residence as a housing unit located on property an acre or more in size from which $1000 or more of agriculture products were sold in the preceding year. The farm population represents 9.3 percent of the population in the average county and 1.5 percent in Douglas County.

In 1970 there were 1,138 farms in Douglas County and in 2000 there were 870. In 2000 the average farm size in Douglas County was 256 acres. The total harvested and pasture acres in 1970 were 231,256 and in 2000 it was 185,900. In 1999, 946 individuals were farm owners or workers, and 60,008 of the county's residents were non-farm employees.

Types of Issues

From an educational perspective, it is important to consider rural/urban issues in the overall framework of the changing local landscapes and identify appropriate avenues for discussion, education, and potential programming. The breadth of issues discussed below are not confined just to rapidly growing metropolitan counties. However, it is often the presence of growth and development that drives these issues to the forefront as a traditional balance or equilibrium is disturbed. Thus, they can be considered in the context of impacts of development. These impacts can be separated into the categories of **geographical, fiscal**, and **social** impacts of development. Importantly, the different categories of impacts imply the need for different educational goals and methods.

The most apparent changes in the local landscape define the **geographical impacts** of development. As population growth and development occur, the most significant impact is on the environment. Issues that emerge include the conversion of farmland for development, the management of resources on small acreage in developing areas, the impact of storm water management on the developing areas, and the changing demand for open space or farmland preservation.

The second category of impacts is the **fiscal impacts** of development. There are numerous issues in this category that often prove to be the true underlying drivers of a realm of public debates and policy proposals. The fiscal impacts focus on the public finance sector, balancing sources of public funding and economic activity with demands for public finance and demand for public services that drives the realm of the land use issues, even though the issue is truly fiscal instead of geographical.

The final category of impacts is by its nature the most difficult to define and measure. **Social impacts** of development include issues related to farm-non-farm relations, interpersonal relations among residents and communities, and relations between citizens and decision-making organizations in the political spectrum. While these are difficult areas to address, in some sense they represent the deciding factor in the measurement of the overall question **"How does growth and development impact the quality of life?"**

Forum Background and Goals

In order to accurately identify the rural/urban growth issues of importance to Douglas County residents, a series of five issue surfacing meetings were held across the county in February of 2003. These meetings were held at Baldwin City, Eudora, Lecompton, Lawrence and Marion Springs. The meetings consisted of sharing basic information about growth of Douglas County from 1970 to 1999 and comparing ourselves to other Kansas counties. Participants were given the opportunity to surface issues and come to agreement on which issues were of most importance to those in attendance. It was not the purpose of the forums to get consensus on individual feelings about the issues. These issues were then generalized for this report.

We had more than 150 individuals attend the forums. Of this, 116 completed profile sheets. The following is a summary of the participant profiles.

- 2/3 were male and 1/3 were female
- The majority (35 percent) of the participants were 46-65; 27 percent were over 65; 18 percent were under 45 years of age
- 78 percent of the participants owned farmland or open space; only 2 percent lived outside of Douglas County
- 71percent of the participants reported that they have a financial interest in development or construction industries (landowners see themselves as potentially having a financial gain/loss as land develops).
- 83 of the participants lived outside of the corporate limits of a town or city within the county; 33 lived within the city limits of one of the four incorporated cities in Douglas County
- 26 of the participants had lived in Douglas County over 50 years; 64 had lived here between 20 and 50 years; 17 had lived here less than 20 years

Overwhelmingly, the participants felt that the facilitator encouraged participation and remained neutral and non-biased. However, there were mixed opinions on whether the forums helped participants clarify their own thoughts on the topic or understand different points of view. It is important to note that this was not the purpose of these forums but should be the next step. Most participants indicated that they would be interested in participating in other community based educational forums on this topic.

When asked why the participants attended the forum the comments can be summarized as:

- "to educate myself further regarding the issues"
- "to listen to the community concerns and express some of my own"
- "interested in the future of Douglas County"
- "to protect my rights as a landowner"
- "interest in changes coming about in the county"
- "to try to keep informed on issues"

Basic Issues

More than 75 issues were identified and agreed by the participants to be of importance to the residents of Douglas County. The first three categories could be classified predominately as issues having a **geographical** impact. The fourth category are issues with a **fiscal** impact, and the fifth category focuses on issues that would have a **social** impact. Following is a listing of the top issues generally identified in each category. The number in parentheses is the number of groups (we had a total of 25 discussion groups) who agreed that this-or something similar to- was one of their top issues.

Managing Growth- The top issues of most importance in this category were: five-acre exemption (13); zoning and platting (9); private property rights (8); three-mile growth circle(4); planning process (3) annexation (2). These all relate to the conversion of farmland and open space to development. The educational goal to address these issues should be to increase citizen involvement in decision making on land use, growth management and farmland and open space preservation. This could be done through public issues education on issue understanding, policy development and consensus building.

Environmental Amenities/Resource-The top issues of most importance in this category were: flood plain definition and restrictions (2); environmental impact of development and agriculture (2); definition of "prime farmland" (2); family farm preservation (2); conservation easements (2). The educational goal should be an informed use of development standards and options. The educational method to be used should consist of both educational materials and activities as well as public issues education on issue understanding, policy development, and consensus building.

Viable Agriculture Industry-The top issues of importance in this category were: impact of development on present farming operations (5); education on rural living (4); protection of right to farm (4); effect of environmental/historical regulations on agriculture (3); regulations on alternative agriculture (2). The educational goal to address these issues should be recognition of the agriculture industry and the right to farm statues. The educational method could be educational materials and information.

Public Finance and Sources-The top issues of most importance in this category were: availability of water (6); economic impact of development (6); tax support for green space/industrial development (4); safety and maintenance of roads (4); property valuation and tax structure (4); coordination of public services (4). The educational goal to address this area should be to increase understanding of growth impacts on demand for public services as well as an understanding of property tax system and citizen involvement in the decision making on taxation, public spending and tax reform. The educational method that would be most effective in this area would be research and educational material, consultations, and programs.

Public Policy Process -The top issues of most importance in this category were: representation of rural property owners in the planning process (4); process to make rural/urban decisions (4); number of county commissioners (2); training for committees, residents and commissioners (2). The educational goal should be citizen understanding of and involvement in public decision making processes. This could be done through public issues education on issue and process understanding

Conclusion

Douglas County's population is expected to increase 22 percent between 2000 and 2030. How our community responds to this challenge is of utmost importance.

If development is over regulated, will community growth eventually become strangled? If we allow farmland and open space to be developed at will, will we eventually wipe out an important natural resource?

We know there are trade-offs. Are the trade-offs as black and white, now or never, all or nothing, as they are often portrayed? Facts often conflict with each other. So it is important to know the source.

Citizens of a community would like to feel as though they have an impact on what's happening. Is there a means for getting past the stalemate to examine or create solutions that diverse interests in the community can live with?

This has been done. Arriving at solutions to land use concerns and implementing land use policy requires the creation of consensus among broad coalitions of interests that normally compete with each other. The implementation of policies in several states and communities are proof that citizens and their interests have had an impact when the issue has been approached with patience, diligence, and processes that work.

This can be possible through a three step process. First, citizens need to gather to discuss the nature of the local concerns and how they affect those things that are considered to be of value to the community. Secondly, various ideas and approaches for solving the problems need to be identified. It is important to understand how each choice would effect the attributes that are collectively valued in the community. Third, a community must identify common ground that has been identified; then work through the range of solutions that meet the common interests of all citizens.

To take effective action, elected officials need to understand problems and have public support for solutions. Public support, of course, depends on broad awareness and understanding of the issues.

The Rural/Urban Issues Forums process was only the initial step in a long process. As one participant noted "wow, I learned a lot" and another participant stated "this appears to be an excellent beginning to a more inclusive process of discussion."

Proposed Plan of Action

Participants agreed that the kind of exchange of urban and rural views that occurred at these forums had not happened before for this audience and was very useful. The task force agreed that the dialog and educational programming should be continued. However, there was much discussion on how to keep the public interested and involved in a proactive way.

The following methods were suggested:

- Public information meetings on issues of importance. These could take the form of a speaker to explain a specific topic such as the local tax structure or a panel of experts that might present different alternatives to handle an issue such as growth management. This would provide a forum to share factual information that participants could use to make their own opinions from.

- Organize public hearings on specific issues

- Supporting citizen participation strategies. One way to do this would be to develop a network to inform citizens of issues that are being addressed or need to be addressed in the policy arena that might be of interest to them. Another way is to create an informal focus group to be used when an issue comes up and decision makers need a sounding board.

- Continue to educate the public on first, the need to be actively involved in public policy development and secondly help individuals develop the tools necessary to be effectively involved in public policy development.

Communication with stakeholders and the general public is central to establishing new public policy. Communication needs to take the following three forms: information flowing from local officials to the public-public education; information flowing from the public to local officials-public participation; and the overall management of this process-public relations. We would be happy to continue to do anything that we can do to facilitate this process.

Leadership in the Public Arena

Part one of six

K-STATE Kansas State University

The leadership capacity of local government officials is critical to getting public policy adopted and to dealing with controversy. This publication identifies the foundation skills needed for effective public leadership, group decision making, and action. It discusses the basis of power and influence in the political arena and the interpersonal skill needed to bring about productive action.

What is Public Leadership?

Understanding public leadership begins with an understanding of one's self within a framework to guide the choice of style and tactics in getting things done. To understand public leadership, we begin by looking at two models of democratic leadership and four personal styles of leadership.

A traditional model of democratic leadership suggests a leader is chosen by peers or elected to serve as the chief authoritative figure within a group. The leader is empowered to direct the group toward the completion of some task or goal. In this model, the focus is on the task. Group members may be advisory, but the leader is responsible for the final decisions. Probably the closest local government model of this type of leadership is the "strong mayor" model.

A more contemporary model of leadership is group-centered leadership, where the dynamics of group functioning are often as important as the task. In this model, the leader both takes charge as well as inspires others on the board and in the community to action. It is not only *what* gets accomplished, but *how* it is done. This style of leadership may be more indicative of a rotating mayor council, where support for leadership initiatives largely depends on building support among a coalition of council members.

These leadership models are not mutually exclusive. A "strong" leader is often inspirational. The initial distinction, however, provides a first-cut in the formulation of strategies for getting things done.

About this Series

Public issues are matters of widespread concern in the community. They are resolved by group decision processes that create local public policy. We often assume the responsibility for resolving public issues is in the domain of government. But as society becomes more complex, and we acknowledge the limits of what government can achieve, we recognize the need for public and private interests to work together. Involving diverse interests in public issues, however, can often heighten local conflict and make the resolution of community issues more difficult.

Keeping on Track, a series of publications for local officials and community leaders, deals with managing controversial public policy. The issues vary, but all too often the problem is the same. Whether it's corporate farming, school bond issues, or new development proposals, communities often get bogged down in controversy, and nothing seems to get done. This series of publications presents strategies local leaders can use to navigate the minefield of controversial public policy so the community can resolve the issue and keep moving forward.

Styles of Leadership

An individual's preferred leadership style will affect his or her success in a leadership role. Most people instinctively gravitate toward a given style, although they may exhibit more than one style, depending on the circumstance. All styles have strengths and shortcomings. An effective leader will recognize when one or another style will be most effective in a given circumstance and have the capacity to assume qualities of the role. With

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some reflection and practice, an individual can learn to assess the circumstances and exhibit different leadership styles as needed.

Supporting: Cooperative and idealistic, supporting leaders focus on principles and values. Their communication style is sincere and not critical. These people try to be dependable and accessible, but are at times easily influenced and judgmental. They may have a casual approach, but are usually successful in eliciting cooperation from others.

Controlling: Directive and urgent, controllers focus on action and results. They generally are task oriented and minimize small talk. A controlling leader strives to be confident and resourceful, but is sometimes impulsive and domineering. They may have a formal approach and are usually effective in organizing others.

Analyzing: Practical and logical, analyzers focus on facts and reason. Their communication style is unemotional and devoid of spontaneity. Striving to be orderly and thorough, they can be stubborn and critical. They are generally formal in approach, and usually think before acting.

Promoting: Flexible and enthusiastic, promoters focus on relationships and awareness. They communicate by being stimulating and sociable. Striving to be diplomatic and socially adept, they also may be indirect and temperamental. They may have a flamboyant approach, and usually promote win-win solutions.

Characteristics of Effective Public Leadership

Effective public leaders have a number of distinguishing characteristics. Among the most important is their attitude toward community change. Change is viewed as an opportunity to move forward rather than a challenge to be feared. In fact, effective public leaders are distinctly dissatisfied with the status quo. They are often willing to take risks to initiate improvements.

According to research related to business and organizations, effective leaders exhibit five qualities:

1. Leaders challenge the status quo by taking risks.
2. Leaders inspire a shared vision of common goals and promote a shared sense of possibility.
3. Leaders enable others to act, understanding different individuals' capabilities.
4. Leaders lead by example.
5. Leaders understand something about human nature, responding to emotional needs of individuals as well as task-orientation.

The **personal strengths** of a leader include:

- a strong sense of mission;
- enthusiasm for the task at hand;
- the ability to conceptualize an issue within the overall framework of the mission or mandate;
- communication skills, including the capacity to listen, to reframe an issue, and to be assertive.

The **skills** of an effective leader include:

- recognizing opportunity and knowing how to make the most of it;
- optimizing group effectiveness;
- understanding the basics of planning;
- the ability to effectively network;
- willingness to delegate;
- knowing how and when to challenge others;
- understanding the benefits of change and not hesitating to implement it when needed; and
- willingness to take risks.

Power and Politics

An overused word and vaguely understood concept, power can be about money, influence, sports, or business. It can be about tragedy or heroics. It is always central to politics. So, how is power defined and what does it mean for the local leader?

Power is commonly thought of as the ability to influence or inspire others and to delegate effectively. Power is not a moral issue. How it is used determines whether there are moral implications.

For a local government leader, power usually deals with facilitating decisions. Local officials have only as much power as the community will allow. Problems arise when what was assumed to be allowed is confused with what is wanted or expected.

For example, local government may be expected to address water quality concerns. When addressing them means passing tighter restrictions on septic tank installations, however, there may be an uproar. The community may want the schools to address a gang-related problem, but when the school board imposes new sanctions that include expulsion, the community may be dissatisfied.

It is one thing to have power; it is quite another to know how to use it well. There are three keys to using power effectively. You should:

1. Be aware of community standards and expectations, especially the unspoken ones.
2. Know the basis from which the power arises, both the tangible and intangible.
3. Make sure everyone involved is motivated toward completion of the goal.

Power is relational. Authority may be conferred by a title or degree, but it is the quality of the relationship a leader has with the community that determines actual authority.

How can local leaders legitimize their actual authority? Power in the public arena comes from many sources. From the standpoint of moving the community forward, forging consensus, and being effective in making policy, power is based on the individual capacity to lead.

The bases of power important for local public leadership are:

Positional power: based on the office a leader holds, such as director, mayor, or chair;

Expert power: based on the knowledge and expertise a leader has; usually refers to formal knowledge; experiential knowledge also counts;

Referent power: based on the leader's individual personality traits; creativity, efficiency, organizational capacity — may not be tangible but does get attention;

Information power: based on the leader's ability to glean and gather information important to an issue in a timely manner; may speak to a leader's connections; and

Connection power: based on a leader's ability to network and build coalitions.

Power exists both formally and informally within all groups. **Formal power** is what elections and appointments confer. It is known and obvious. **Informal power** is used by those not officially part of the system to influence those who are. Citizen lobbying is an example. There are hierarchies of power in every community. An effective leader must avoid being caught between active, involved citizens, and those whose money and education give them power behind the scenes. An effective leader learns to court both.

Effective Group Meetings

Local government and many community organizations do most of their work in group meetings. Whether the context is the formation of a new city commission, a joint city/county work group or some other community development organization, it is helpful to know something about group dynamics and what makes a meeting efficient and productive.

Group Development: Basic Member Needs

Every group consists of individuals who have personal needs that affect group interaction and the success of team building efforts. Failure to appreciate the individual can hamper the productivity of the group. The degree to which the following points about individual needs are relevant will vary in different group settings. Understanding what promotes personal satisfaction, however, can be an effective tool in promoting group success. Following are a few points to keep in mind.

1. A general feeling of belonging is vital. Even for groups that are created through election or appointment, the sense that one belongs to the group is essential.
2. A sense that the work of the group is worthwhile and productive is necessary. Involving all members in the selection of goals and priorities can help facilitate this feeling.
3. Involving everyone in setting the ground rules for deliberation and decision-making helps them feel more connected to the process and to one another. This can help establish mutual respect.
4. Clear expectations make a difference. Everyone should understand what the group is to accomplish and how it will go about doing business. Sometimes it is necessary to begin by establishing a consensus about the group's procedures.
5. Everyone should have a particular responsibility. It may be best to tie it to an area of personal expertise or interest.
6. Group members need to see progress toward their goals. Inertia, delays, and obstacles lead to group stagnation.
7. Confidence in the leadership is also an important part of keeping the group operating smoothly.

Group Development: Team Building

There are four elements essential to transforming a group into a team. A team is more effective in achieving common goals than a group of individuals.

1. There is meaningful interaction between all group members; important information is not restricted to coalitions within the group.
2. Everyone has a commitment to the purpose of the group.
3. Group members use personal expertise to further group goals and build common respect for one another's strengths.
4. Individuals identify with the group's overall identity and feel a part of it.

Group Development: Team Member Roles

A well-functioning group consists of interdependent members who rely on one another's knowledge, commitment, and dependability. The role expectations of each individual can lead to group cohesion and action. Each of the roles identified is a building block to team success:

1. In the **initiating** role, members encourage one another to get involved and think creatively. They help stimulate problem-solving ideas.
2. In the **listening** role, members encourage one another through active listening techniques. This aids in eliciting self expression and honest feedback.
3. In the **supporting** role, members respect one another's ideas and add to them with their own. This can lead to interactions where solutions emerge.

In a given instance of group interaction, people will fluctuate between these roles. The effective leader will recognize which role will be most effective in moving the group forward.

Group Development: Barriers to Organizing Effective Groups

When groups form or reform, some members may be initially hesitant to get involved. The leader can overcome this hesitancy and bring the group up to full capacity more quickly by delegating small tasks, conducting brainstorming sessions, asking different members to lead part of a discussion, and creating an atmosphere where active involvement is encouraged.

The leader should watch that the more experienced or assertive do not dominate discussions. It may be possible to pair an experienced person with a newcomer on certain tasks to both mute the assertive person while bringing the new person along.

A leader will ensure the goals and rules are clear to avoid ambiguity. The leader also may meet with members individually to discuss their involvement and troubleshoot any problems. It is also helpful to share information about other members early to communicate the type of expertise present.

It is often helpful for members to be introduced or to introduce themselves at the first meeting. Encourage participants to *briefly* outline their ideas, values and interests. Encourage questions to begin breaking down the barriers to involvement and facilitate group cohesion. While such get-acquainted activities may seem awkward or silly, they have their place in building a strong and effective group.

Group Development: Productivity

A key element to any group's success is its accomplishments. Large or small, formal or informal, task-oriented or social, accomplishments are the key to individual and group satisfaction. Productivity does not simply happen. It is the result of group dynamics working well. All the parts must be in place and working in synch. The essential dynamics of the group include:

- meaningful communication;
- mutually accepted goals;
- a supportive working atmosphere;
- active involvement by all;
- use of group decision making and conflict resolution; and
- roles within the group that are flexible as situations warrant.

Conclusion

A key element to the resolution of any public issue is the capacity of community leaders to function effectively either individually or within groups and organizations. A number of leadership characteristics and principles were offered that serve as the foundation to effective community action.

In addition to leadership capacity, other elements to resolving public controversies include employing effective communications skills and strategies and the ability to resolve conflicts and disputes. These topics are included in the other portions of this series.

This is one in a series of publications dealing with the issue of managing controversial public policy. The entire series includes:

- Leadership in the Public Arena
- Informing the Public Debate: Public Education Strategies
- Meaningful Input to Public Policy: Citizen Participation Strategies
- The Public Relations of Public Policy
- Successful Negotiating Skills
- Resolving Multiparty Disputes

Individually or together, these resources are intended to help local officials and others develop greater leadership capacity.

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Informing the Public Debate: Public Education Strategies

Part two of six

K-STATE Kansas State University

Communication with stakeholders and the general public is central to establishing new public policy. Communication needs take one of three forms: information flowing from local officials to the public — public education; information flowing from the public to local officials — public participation; and the overall management of information to create an environment conducive to decision making — public relations. This publication deals with the first of three strategies for managing public communication.

What is Public Issues Education?

The city commission holds a neighborhood meeting to inform residents about a new youth curfew proposal. The county commission requests that agents from the local K-State Research and Extension office initiate a speaker's bureau to discuss water quality protection alternatives in concert with a city-county water planning initiative. The mayor writes a monthly column in the local paper to discuss topics addressed by the commission.

Whenever local government tries to inform and educate the public about issues being discussed and decided, public issues education is taking place. Raising community awareness is a key element in the process. Public issues education is intended to create greater interest among citizens by focusing on the facts and alternatives being considered by local government.

An informed public debate begins by fostering community-wide awareness, interest, and knowledge about the issue. Concurrently, efforts are needed to dispel ignorance and misinformation that often surrounds controversial issues. The "alternatives and consequences" approach to public education focuses the debate on the feasibility of alternatives and helps place value-based preferences in the proper context.

About this Series

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Keeping on Track, a series of publications for local officials and community leaders, deals with managing controversial public policy. The issues vary, but all too often the problem is the same. Whether it's corporate farming, school bond issues, or new development proposals, communities often get bogged down in controversy, and nothing seems to get done. This series of publications presents strategies local leaders can use to navigate the minefield of controversial public policy so the community can resolve the issue and keep moving forward.

The Alternatives and Consequences Approach to Public Education

Policy choices will affect individuals and groups in the community differently. There will seldom be such clear advantages or disadvantages that everyone will agree on a choice. In sorting through alternatives, individuals need a systematic process for understanding the relative benefits and liabilities associated with choices.

A highly recommended form of public issues education is the alternatives and consequences approach. It

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focuses on presenting the range of feasible alternatives for addressing an issue. For each alternative, the likely consequences are identified. Rather than starting with a focus on value-based positions or creating a ranking of a particular group's preferences, all the alternatives are presented. This can be of great help when trying to conceptualize not only a problem, but what can be done about it.

Consider the following statements:

- "Do we need to increase the sales tax?"
- "Are our current local government revenues adequate?"

Which is likely to encourage discussion of alternatives? Which is value-laden?

Public issues education differentiates between facts, values, and myths, placing most emphasis on facts. Emphasizing fact focuses the discussion on what is possible rather than what different interests believe ought to be. This, in turn, can be helpful to local officials who must balance public interests with financial concerns, legal constraints, and administrative feasibility. An educated public can be a significant asset in this process.

Some other approaches to public issues education ...

Public issues education can be accomplished in several ways. Each approach has strengths and drawbacks. Regardless of the approach, it is important to have an educational goal articulated and to be able to tell when it has been achieved.

The **scientific approach** focuses on logic and method. A scientist or well-respected expert in the field sets criteria with which to evaluate alternative solutions to a public problem. While this approach has appeal, the criteria with which to judge alternatives are also based on some sort of value system. Any value-based criteria can be problematic when evaluating alternatives.

The **promotional approach** is used by someone who feels strongly enough to try and "sell" the merit of an alternative. In this approach, image and exaggeration are often present, and substance may be lacking. The solution is promoted rather than analyzed.

The **analytical approach** focuses on the pros and cons of alternatives. While this seems reasonable, the very idea of pros and cons reduces objectivity. The words "pro" and "con" have very different connotations than does "consequence." With consequences, no solution is categorized as positive or negative. It will be adopted based on its effectiveness in resolving the issue and its feasibility in the judgement of the public and policy makers.

Local Government Roles in Public Issues Education

Local government is a vital community institution. Its scope of responsibilities and access to staff and resources allows it to serve several essential roles in helping the community respond to need or cope with change. Among its chief contributions is the capacity to generate and disseminate information related to issues of concern. This allows local government to serve several roles in meeting community information needs. Local government can be a powerful force for educating the public in ways that will benefit community prospects.

Forecaster: Local governments have decision makers and professional staff who monitor external issues and trends that have potential to affect the community. In some cases, new mandates from broader levels of government may require local organization and action. Broader national and global trends may indicate the need for local responses. Forward-thinking local leaders can use public education to help the community understand the need for action that will better position the community to meet future challenges.

Advisor: Local government has access to superior information resources and professional staff who can sort and evaluate relevant information and make recommendations about current or future needs. As such, local government is in a position to advise other community institutions about anticipated needs and strategies to respond. An example is the county planning department working with local builders to create infrastructure specifications and building and design standards.

Facilitator: Local government is one of the local institutions with the credibility and legitimacy to serve as public mediator on a controversial issue. There may be no better center for public debate on an issue. In addition to bringing differing interests together to communicate, local officials can gain valuable information to assist later decision-making. The very act of bringing people together to express their views in a controlled setting begins the process of bridging differences or finding compromise.

Decision maker: Ultimately, local elected officials need to make choices. Exercising their role as policy maker in a representative system is the pinnacle of the democratic process. In fulfilling that role is yet another public education opportunity to explain both the decision and the rationale for the choices made. Stakeholder groups will want assurance of having been heard. The electorate will want the opportunity to evaluate the performance of elected decision makers.

Developing a Public Education Strategy

Many people identify the need for public education as a partial solution to many local issues and problems. Almost every local government department and professional staff person will indicate that public education is a component of their professional responsibilities. The truth is that few departments embrace that responsibility to the degree required to have an impact on the issue of concern, and fewer yet execute their public education programs well.

Public education is a big job. A successful public education program requires a commitment of resources, sustained effort, and a sense of shared responsibility among multiple partners. To have the desired impact of enhancing overall community understanding related to an issue requires coordinated and persistent efforts in varied formats. This section discusses some of the elements of a successful public issues education strategy.

Development of a strategy begins by articulating the issue, situation, audience, and goals. It may seem basic, but a sound strategy leaves little to chance.

1. Identify the issue or concern. Document the issue clearly and specifically. Assess the relationships involved. Determine whether the issue is actually a problem, or a symptom of something else to be addressed.
2. Document the history of the issue in the community, including who has been involved in the past, who is likely to have useful background information, and who is likely to be most affected by the issue. Identify organizations that have been formed or have expressed interest in the issue, including those currently defunct.
3. To the extent local government will be taking some action related to the issue, determine who will be making decisions and when.
4. Identify information relevant to the issue and its resolution. Analyze the information to determine any value positions or potential myths or misunderstandings that may hinder a factual discussion of alternative solutions.
5. Consider the consequences of the choices, recognizing that decisions relating to who pays and how enforcement occurs may be controversial.
6. Establish a clear statement of what the educational program would seek to accomplish. Is the program intended to clarify the issue? Build consensus? Share information? Challenge values? Break down myths and misunderstanding? Render some sort of a solution?
7. Determine the degree of legitimacy and trust local government or its agents have in representing the issue. Determine whether an intermediary may be needed, or who may be in the best position to represent the issue.
8. Identify trusted local experts who may be of assistance, and determine their willingness to become involved.
9. Identify the resources needed to carry out the public education program, including financial and staff resources and the time frame for the effort.
10. Develop a media strategy, identifying background information useful for reporters, deciding who will serve as spokespersons, and determining how press releases and other communication will be distributed.
11. Make a clear statement of the potential problem points and other disadvantages that may accrue to the local government or its agents.

Perspectives on Public Education

Once an overall strategy has been developed, specific events and activities should be organized. Over time, people experienced with public speaking and outreach education learn what makes a public meeting more or less effective. Following are a few practical points for the person who will serve as the speaker or educator at a public meeting. While the focus relates to a public meeting, the principles also apply to other educational activities and methods.

1. When planning a meeting, be clear about what is to be accomplished. The goal of the meeting should be explicit and limited. Frequently, too much is expected from one meeting. It is difficult and ill-advised to mix too many purposes within a single event. It is generally better to keep educational objectives separate from citizen input objectives. Keep both separate from decision making.
2. Recognize the limits of events. A single meeting is unlikely to be successful in reaching the full target audience. Similarly, one approach will not be sufficient. An effective public education program will employ multiple methods and opportunities over a sustained period of time.
3. Target the audience. Issue invitations where possible, and always target the audience by the message. Identify the stake a given audience is likely to have, and focus on their concern. Provide an overview of important points as appropriate but focus on the concerns relevant of that audience.

4. Select the right person/organization for the job. When an issue is controversial, it is often helpful to have respected intermediaries who are perceived as impartial leading a discussion.
5. Give the target audience a reason to care; use a "hook." The issue has to be made personally relevant for an individual to invest the time and energy to attend a meeting or read a newsletter. For those directly affected, no hook may be needed. If the target is more general, lead with the point likely to have personal relevance to capture attention.
6. Don't try to cover too much ground. It becomes difficult to cover vast expanses of information in a single, brief meeting. An educational communication should be specific and have limited objectives.
7. Be explicit at the start of a meeting about what will be dealt with and what will not. Provide an overview of what to expect, and be explicit about the limitations. If the purpose of the meeting is to provide information, people should not assume decisions will be made.
8. Impressions count. Attractive materials and lively presentations are more effective.
9. Never bluff through a point when uncertain, and never make things up. If the answer to a question is unknown, say so. It is better to get back to a person with accurate information than to be known or suspected as untruthful or ignorant.

Educational Outreach Techniques

The goal of a public policy education program is to convey information to a segment of the community. Specific objectives and target audiences can vary. Objectives might include creating general awareness related to some need, informing stakeholders about a specific proposal, or increasing general knowledge regarding a topic. The target audience may be broad or narrow. Regardless of the objective and target audience, there are a number of methods useful for public education.

Following are the more common educational outreach techniques available to local officials, together with a few points regarding their effective use. The flow of communication is generally one-way, from decision makers to an external audience.

Public Presentations

Public presentations can impart a great deal of information in a short amount of time. With flexibility and imagination, there are a wide variety of groups, meetings and organizations willing to learn about community issues.

Presentations work best if kept short and limited to three to five or six main points. Most people lose interest in a lecture and retain only a small percentage of what was heard. So, it is imperative to find the point of relevance for the audience and to keep the presentation short, to the point, lively, and attractive. Presentations are enhanced with visual aids, handouts, or other ways of mixing the mode of information delivery.

It is best not to read a presentation, but instead to use eye contact to connect to individuals in the audience. Use hand gestures or feel free to move, but be aware of nervous mannerisms that may be distracting. Preface important points by saying what is coming next is important.

Radio and TV Interviews

Interviews can highlight the critical areas of importance. The interviewer will generally provide an indication of the subject to be addressed and how the interview is likely to be used. It also can be helpful to the interviewer in some circumstances to be given a list of questions or talking points.

It is imperative to be concise and to the point for a news interview. Replies should be free of jargon or technical language. Comments are typically in general terms rather than detailed specifics.

Think about the two or three important points to make and get them out quickly. A good technique to avoid having only a partial quote used is to lead into a response with pointed language such as, "The three things we accomplished tonight were ... ," or "The three important things to remember are ... "

Newsletters

Newsletters can be an informative and useful means of communication if they are well-written, timely, and of importance to the audience. A written communication of this type can be used to keep stakeholders updated and to dispel misinformation and rumors. A newsletter may be among the best tools to communicate with those who have an expressed interest in a sensitive topic.

A newsletter will only be of use if it is read, meaning there must be information of value and relevance to the reader. It can require a significant amount of staff time to do well. Newsletters also can be expensive to produce and mail.

Information Brochures

Often displayed in public places or inserted into billings, brochures can reach an audience particularly interested in a topic. If the need is for broader dissemination of information, a more general communication

approach, such as a speakers bureau or media releases, is advised.

Local Access Television

Not much is known about how successful local access television is in reaching a target audience. Many public access cable stations will televise significant local government meetings. Some also produce and/or air feature shows, providing an opportunity for in-depth discussion of complex topics. Effective use of television, however, requires significant preparation and a camera-savvy visual sense.

Internet and World Wide Web Pages

New communication technologies are growing rapidly. Increasingly, local governments are taking advantage of this technology by developing "home pages" on the Internet. This technology is a good way to provide information about upcoming business and access to information and documents. In addition, many communities are using e-mail to send out meeting agendas and community newsletters.

Of course, the Internet only works for those who have access and know how to use it. Similarly, good Web page design requires skill, but new software is making the task ever simpler. The site also requires maintenance to keep it current.

Displays

Tabletop or freestanding displays for use at public events are often popular, but people will seldom spend more than 60 seconds observing them. A few key points need to be presented in a graphically pleasing manner to be effective. A well done display can convey memorable imagery that may help create a positive image of the project or topic. It can also be an effective "hook" to encourage people to talk about a topic or pick up printed materials.

Newspaper Columns/News Releases/Letters to the Editor

Most communities have a core of local residents who read the newspaper daily. A well-written column, news release, or letter to the editor can reach a fairly large segment of the community, but not necessarily key stakeholders. Other local media also read the newspaper and may pick up the story. Columns and letters related to sensitive topics have the potential to rouse great response.

It is important that news releases and columns be accurate, well-written, and unbiased. They also need to be free of errors in grammar, spelling, and syntax.

Conclusion

A key element to the resolution of any public issue is the capacity of community leaders to communicate effectively with constituents and interest groups. This publication suggests ways to foster a knowledgeable discussion of the issues.

In addition to the ability to communicate effectively, other elements to resolving public controversies include demonstrating leadership capacity and the ability to resolve conflicts and disputes. These topics are included in the other editions of this series.

This is one in a series of publications dealing with the issue of managing controversial public policy. The entire series includes:

- Leadership in the Public Arena
- Informing the Public Debate: Public Education Strategies
- Meaningful Input to Public Policy: Citizen Participation Strategies
- The Public Relations of Public Policy
- Successful Negotiating Skills
- Resolving Multiparty Disputes

Individually or together, these resources are intended to help local officials and others develop greater leadership capacity.

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The Office of Local Government is a unit of K-State Research and Extension, housed in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Kansas State University. The Office of Local Government provides educational outreach, technical assistance, and applied research services to Kansas local governments in areas related to community and economic development, local public finance and public service provision, and environmental and natural resources management. Dr. John Leatherman, director of the Office of Local Government, can be reached at 785-532-2643 or olg@agecon.ksu.edu

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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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Meaningful Input to Public Policy: Citizen Participation Strategies

Part three of six

K-STATE Kansas State University

In the 1960s and '70s, many federal grants mandated public participation in planning and community redevelopment programs. More recently, federal monies have been reduced, but the demand for citizen involvement has continued as a strong force in local policy making.

This publication deals with the flow of information between public officials and the public. It examines the flow of information from the public to decision makers, as stakeholders provide input into policy-making processes. The strengths and weaknesses of alternative public participation techniques are discussed, together with suggestions for managing the process to ensure meaningful and controlled stakeholder input.

What is Citizen Participation?

Local officials rely on citizen input to stay informed about public concerns as well as to gain insight into citizen preferences. When the flow of information is from the electorate to the decision maker, citizen participation is occurring.

There are many examples of citizen participation in everyday life. It may be informal communication with local leaders at church, voting in local elections, supporting organizations that represent particular views, or sending e-mail to local officials.

When well-organized, citizens and interest groups can have a powerful influence on the outcome of decisions. Access to information and electronic communication are making citizens more effective in getting their views across. While some view this as troublemaking, others hail a reawakening of civic involvement. Whatever the view, skillfully managing citizen participation in the decision-making process is necessary to progress.

About this Series

Public issues are matters of widespread concern in the community. They are resolved by group decision processes that create local public policy. We often assume the responsibility for resolving public issues is in the domain of government. But as society becomes more complex, and we acknowledge the limits of what government can achieve, we recognize the need for public and private interests to work together. Involving diverse interests in public issues, however, can often heighten local conflict and make the resolution of community issues more difficult.

Keeping on Track, a series of publications for local officials and community leaders, deals with managing controversial public policy. The issues vary, but all too often the problem is the same. Whether it's corporate farming, school bond issues, or new development proposals, communities often get bogged down in controversy, and nothing seems to get done. This series of publications presents strategies local leaders can use to navigate the minefield of controversial public policy so the community can resolve the issue and keep moving forward.

Goals of Citizen Participation

Citizen participation helps achieve outcomes beneficial to local decision making. Not all of the outcomes are necessarily for high-minded purposes. Most reasons for implementing a citizen participation program can be classified as relating to one or more of six general goals:

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- to further democratic values by ensuring the interests of the majority of citizens are at the forefront of local government decision-making;
- to achieve planning that is more attuned to the needs of different groups by recognizing diversity within the local community;
- to educate the nonparticipating public by reaching out to them;
- to bring about social change by enacting policy that ensures equal access to services and opportunities across the spectrum of the local population;
- to recruit support, obtain legitimacy, and avoid opposition by including citizen groups and stakeholders in some aspects of the decision-making process; and
- to promote a particular perspective or bring about change in the political order by informing like-minded citizens of opportunities for involvement.

Identifying the Goal of a Citizen Participation Program

The six general goals provide a broad sense of what a citizen participation program can accomplish. However, a given citizen participation program cannot, and should not, attempt to achieve all goals. Different techniques are better at achieving some purposes than others. Thus, building a strategy related to the use of a citizen participation program begins by identifying what it is intended to accomplish in relation to a particular issue. There are a number of questions that need to be answered at the start:

- Is the participation intended to generate ideas?
- Is it intended to help identify attitudes?
- Will it be useful in expanding the community's base of knowledge about an issue?
- Can it help resolve a conflict that is impacting the community?
- Is it intended to measure public opinion?
- Will it be used to review an existing proposal?
- Will it be used as a sounding board for local decision makers?
- Will the involvement be advisory or have some binding impact on local decision making?
- How will those involved know when they have completed their task?

Developing a Citizen Participation Strategy

To create an effective citizen participation process, it is important to decide several issues at the start.

The first consideration is the nature of the issue for which citizen participation is being sought. The stakes are greater for some issues than others. This will influence the scope and extent of the citizen participation strategy. Where emotions run high, where potential impacts are substantial, or where the number of interests are large, a more extensive effort will be required.

Local decision makers need to clearly identify what citizen input is needed and desired. Is the objective to mold a new strategy, to respond to an issue, or react to a proposed solution? Is it for the purpose of learning the preferences of affected citizens, or to meet the requirements for decision making? Being honest and clear about what type of input is necessary and sufficient will forestall generating unrealistic expectations and the potential ill-will that results.

The strategy must be specific about who in the community constitutes the "affected" public. This will help determine the effort required for outreach. It may be input is only sought from those concerned enough to identify themselves. What about groups traditionally underrepresented in decision making, who often bear the brunt of negative impacts?

Of course, anyone dealing with the realities of political life recognizes the need to assess the power relationships at work. An amount of deference must be conceded to those in a position to force their will or create repercussions for decision makers. This does not necessarily mean the most powerful should automatically win or even unduly influence the outcome, but such recognition acknowledges the need to implement strategies to minimize potential negative implications.

More specifically, a determination should be made about what point in the decision-making process the input will be most useful. Obviously, to invest heavily in crafting detailed plans only to have them "shot down" is a waste of time and resources. It may be preferable to invite input earlier in crafting a proposal more sensitive to potential citizen objections.

Acknowledge the need for resources at the start. If an issue is controversial, an information meeting followed by a public hearing may be insufficient. In such a case, an extensive public education program may be needed before soliciting citizen input. Citizen participation methods could provide opportunities to help forge compromise solutions.

Finally, it is imperative to be explicit about what citizen input is needed, how the information will be used, and when the process is over. Unrealistic expectations are easily generated when citizen input is solicited. Some will believe solicited input will have decision-making authority, only leading to anger and disillusionment if this is not the case.

Matching Citizen Participation Method to Purpose

Once the goals of the citizen-participation program have been established and the desired citizen input identified, the methods are selected. Choice of method should directly reflect the type of information needed and the purpose to which it will be used. Following are common purposes for which citizen input is sought and the methods generally effective in achieving the task.

To gain ideas and input from the public ...

Community meeting/public hearing: an open gathering of people from the community who wish to be heard about a topic or issue. A public hearing is often formal, with statements going into an official record of the meeting. A community meeting will often be an informal gathering where people come to share ideas with local officials. Two-way discussion is generally kept to a minimum to give citizens the chance to speak.

Focus groups: a small gathering of stakeholders who meet in a confidential setting to discuss an issue or react to a proposal. These meetings are often facilitated by a trained individual. Participants are typically asked to respond to open-ended questions intended to initiate a discussion among the group. The assumption is that through discussion, new information will emerge that would not otherwise come to light from individual questioning. Sometimes local officials sponsoring the focus group will actively participate in the discussion and other times only observe.

To complete a specific task with citizen input ...

Workshop: a meeting focused on a predetermined task to be accomplished. Primary stakeholders are often involved because of a high level of interest in the issue. To be most effective in addressing a public issue, the full range of interests should be represented in the workshop. Rather than soliciting general opinion, workshops are intended to focus on specific concerns and produce a predetermined product. The benefit of such meetings is that those most directly affected by an issue are directly involved in addressing it.

Task force: a small (usually 8 to 20 people) ad hoc citizen committee to complete a clearly defined task in the planning process. A task force is often appointed to study a particular issue and offer a report of findings and recommendations to the policy-making body. They will often function under a deadline.

To have a discussion about citizen priorities associated with community projects ...

Priority-setting committee: citizen group appointed to advise local officials regarding citizen ideas and concerns in planning community projects. Participants would be trusted to represent the concerns of citizens and sometimes function as a "go-between" with residents and the local government.

To discuss citizen priorities associated with community projects ...

Policy Delphi: a technique for developing and expressing the views of a panel of citizens chosen for their knowledge about an issue. The objective is to work toward a consensus of opinion that can be used by policy-makers for decision making. Successive rounds of presented arguments and counterpoints move the group toward consensus, or at least to clearly established positions and supporting arguments.

To quickly and quietly ascertain public sentiment about an issue ...

Interviews, polls, and surveys: a potentially less threatening means to provide a chance for citizens to speak directly with someone about their views. Detailed information can be gathered. While confidential, the information can be informative both in content and overall emotional/political reaction to an issue. To be valid and representative, this method generally requires a trained survey-taker to maintain confidentiality and statistical reliability.

To gain input about the alternatives and consequences of an issue ...

Media-based issue balloting: coupled with a media-based effort to discuss alternatives and consequences of potential solutions, citizens are asked to respond through the local media. Letters to the editor or radio call-in shows are monitored to gain a sense of public reaction. Unscientific and not a reliable indicator of overall community sentiment, it can be a good way to gain a quick reaction to proposals by those most likely to be active on an issue.

To give citizens broad decision-making powers ...

Citizen advisory boards or councils: appointed representatives of one or more community interests. An advisory board studies an issue and makes recommendations to policy makers. The range of decision-making authority can vary and, in some cases, may be binding.

Referenda: direct and binding decision-making authority by the electorate. For highly controversial issues or where uncertainty exists about the overall sentiment of the community, decision makers sometimes leave it to the voters to decide. Protracted campaigning leading to a referendum can become a divisive force.

To stay informed about the needs of certain neighborhoods or interest groups ...

Group or neighborhood planning council: organized by the citizens themselves, this council serves as advisory to policy makers. Such councils keep decision makers informed about neighborhood or group concerns, formulate goals and priorities on behalf of the neighborhood or group, and evaluate plans and programs affecting the neighborhood or group.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Citizen Participation

In assessing a citizen participation exercise or program, both content and process are important. Both what

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Citizen Participation Goals and Methods

Quick Reference Guide

Goals:

1. To gain ideas and input form the public
2. To complete a specific task with citizen input
3. To create a dialogue about citizen preferences
4. To quickly and quietly ascertain public sentiment
5. To gain citizen input about alternatives and consequences of a proposal
6. To give citizens wide decision-making powers
7. To stay informed about the needs of certain neighborhoods or interest groups

Methods:

A. Community meeting
B. Focus group
C. Workshop
D. Task force
E. Priority-setting committee
F. Policy delphi
G. Interviews, polls, surveys
H. Referendum
I. Media-based issue balloting
J. Citizen advisory boards
K. Neighborhood planning council

Goals	Methods										
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓				
2		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
3		✓			✓	✓					
4						✓	✓				✓
5	✓	✓			✓				✓		
6								✓		✓	
7							✓				✓

was achieved and how it was achieved are equally valid dimensions to consider. In addition, there are usually important interactions where the quality of one dimension affects the quality of the other. Taking an assertive, yet thoughtful approach to the use of citizen participation can bring new and useful information to light and enliven civic involvement.

In evaluating the content of a citizen participation program, the key question is how useful and practical the output from the process was to decision making. Did the input help decision makers make more thoughtful and enlightened policy? Were citizen recommendations feasible? Would decision makers invite citizen input into future policy debates?

In evaluating the process, the focus shifts to the participants. Did everyone potentially affected have the opportunity to be heard? Would participants describe the decision making as open and fair? Would participants be willing to do it again?

The interaction between content and process can also be a powerful force toward the implementation of the new policy. People who feel involved and responsible are more likely to be committed to seeing a new policy in place and working. New relationships in the community are forged, leading to important interactions between community leaders and organizations.

Conclusion

A key element to the resolution of any public issue is the capacity to solicit meaningful information regarding constituent and interest-group preferences. In this publication, a number of ideas about how to gather input from the community have been presented.

In addition to the ability to communicate effectively, other elements to resolving public controversies include demonstrating leadership capacity and the ability to resolve conflicts and disputes. These topics are included in the other editions of this series.

This is one in a series of publications dealing with the issue of managing controversial public policy. The entire series includes:

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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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The Public Relations of Public Policy

Part four of six

Public relations is an important part of public communication associated with controversial local policy. The application of public relations principles in the context of policy debate is for the purpose of creating an environment where decisions can be made and issues are resolved amicably rather than allowing acrimony and debate to drag on. In this publication, public relations principles, techniques, and tips are discussed in the context of public policy making.

What is Public Relations?

Public relations generally refers to efforts to communicate information to the general public in order to win interest or support. Traditionally, it has been a tool used by private corporations to enhance their image, frequently through the mass media. Many federal and state government agencies also have realized the benefit of a strong public relations program.

For many, public relations has a negative meaning. In truth, it is often used to minimize negative perceptions and accentuate a positive interpretation of events. Public relations, however, also can be used as a tool for positive change. It can help focus attention on a community issue and create an environment of constructive collaboration.

Given the busy lifestyle many people lead, there is no shortage of events and messages to compete for attention. In this environment, even important public business can get lost in the jumble. Taking a public relations perspective, the task is first to package the message in a way that communicates how the issue is relevant to the public.

The second task to which public relations can be applied is the creation of an environment where stakeholders with competing interests can communicate and forge an agreement amicably. How a message is communicated is often as important as what is said.

About this Series

Public issues are matters of widespread concern in the community. They are resolved by group decision processes that create local public policy. We often assume the responsibility for resolving public issues is in the domain of government. But as society becomes more complex, and we acknowledge the limits of what government can achieve, we recognize the need for public and private interests to work together. Involving diverse interests in public issues, however, can often heighten local conflict and make the resolution of community issues more difficult.

Keeping on Track, a series of publications for local officials and community leaders, deals with managing controversial public policy. The issues vary, but all too often the problem is the same. Whether it's corporate farming, school bond issues, or new development proposals, communities often get bogged down in controversy, and nothing seems to get done. This series of publications presents strategies local leaders can use to navigate the minefield of controversial public policy so the community can resolve the issue and keep moving forward.

A Public Relations Perspective

Public relations is the act of conveying information in an attempt to influence perceptions. While many equate such efforts with the desire to deceive or "spin" negative news, there is nothing inherently wrong with attempting to influence perceptions.

As applied here, the notion is one of the application of a clear and consistent message in public and private settings in an effort to create an environment where progress can be made and solutions found. Sometimes this

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will consist of a firm attitude that change is inevitable or a positive view that compromise can be reached. Such attitudes can be quite influential in making a desired outcome a reality. Further, there is nothing wrong with admitting the effort. The skilled use of these ideas can enhance effective public leadership.

Thus, public relations efforts are used in all settings to influence an outcome. It certainly applies to media relations and major community events. It applies equally to the "tone" of a meeting and warmth of a professional relationship. The important point is to be cognizant of the use and utility of a public relations perspective in helping to achieve positive outcomes.

Public Relations Strategies

When a controversial issue creates a volatile atmosphere in the community, an astute and well-coordinated communications strategy can make a difference in diffusing tensions. When controversy can be anticipated, it is helpful to devise a strategy in advance. The strategy begins with a clear statement of what the message needs to be. The message should be clear, simply stated, and consistently applied. Closely tied to this is an explicit recognition of what it is hoped a public relations program will accomplish. Is the goal to inform, to influence, or both?

With the goal and message clear, the task becomes one of identifying who can accomplish what aspect of the program. Public educators schedule presentations to generate awareness of the issue; elected officials formulate plans and a time line for deliberation and decision making; community planners begin structuring public participation opportunities. In some cases it may be best to seek an impartial mediator to provide leadership.

The target audience(s) and their interest in the issue need to be identified. The nature of the message to be delivered must be made relevant to the audience.

Resources will be needed to implement the program. When using public funds, it becomes important to be sensitive to perceptions about the appropriate use of tax dollars. In some cases, a partnership with a private group may be needed. Such a group can solicit private donations to pay for such things as paid advertising to influence an upcoming referendum.

Finally, the public relations campaign needs to be coordinated with the public education and citizen participation elements of an overall communications strategy. Again, the difference in intent and function between the three types of communication should be clear and separate. However, the potential interaction and overall effect of the judicious and targeted application of all three elements should be considered.

When Controversy Erupts

When an issue reaches the point of active controversy, public officials need to take action. In general, it is best to respond quickly and repeatedly. Too much communication about an issue is not nearly the problem that too little information can be.

The message needs to be clear, succinct, and compassionate, as appropriate. Reasonable opposing views should not be dismissed without expressing empathy or indicating the legitimacy of an opposing view. If a mistake has been made and the consequences of acknowledging it are acceptable, it is usually better to admit it openly rather than stall or deflect.

In explaining the reasons for a given position on an issue, it is sometimes helpful to draw on concepts associated with the alternatives and consequences model used in public education. This is to minimize the values-based reasoning and focusing on the likely consequences of one alternative versus another. Usually, a reasonable explanation based on a rationale of maximizing the positive and minimizing the negative consequences will suffice.

Building a Positive Relationship with the Media

Much of local government's public relations strategy is tied to local media relations. A positive relationship with the media can result in a powerful ally in creating a positive community environment. To be sure, the media focus on news, and controversy and conflict make interesting news. The first step in maintaining positive media relations is to not disapprove of local media for occasionally publishing or broadcasting news that may be perceived as negative. The longer-term objective is to foster a positive and cooperative relationship.

Perhaps the most powerful inducement local officials can offer media is information. By making information available and being honest and accessible, the local official can encourage more comprehensive coverage. The extremes of an issue are easily identified. Sometimes it requires more effort to recognize the existence of areas of agreement and common ground. With a positive relationship, local officials can encourage the media to present a more detailed picture of events and will be in a position to recruit the media as an ally in educating the public about complex or technical issues.

Common Public Relations Techniques

Most of what has been written about public relations deals primarily with media relations. This view is somewhat constricting insofar as effective leadership requires the application of these ideas in many settings involving public and interpersonal relations. With that caveat, some of the more common media relations techniques are discussed.

Press Releases

A press release is a written summary of the key points to a story or event, usually used to persuade the press that the story or event is worth publicizing. It must be well written, with no grammatical or spelling errors, factually accurate, and exhibit a sense of what news organizations can use. It should be written on official letterhead and marked "press release" at the top. The date, name, phone numbers, and title of a contact person should be easy to find.

Provide sufficient details about the story or event — who, what, where, how, why, when — so a story can be written directly from the release. The most significant information should always come first, followed by less important details.

Put -30- at the end of the release to signify the end. The Associated Press Style Book can be helpful in answering questions about writing press releases well.

Broadcast News

Electronic media differ from print media in placing a greater emphasis on immediacy and quick sound bites. Few stories are more than 30 to 60 seconds long, so the approach is more direct than a newspaper article. A person being interviewed needs to hone the presentation to fit this format if the interview is to be used.

Broadcast media (television or radio) news is managed by news directors. Local officials should strive to build a positive relationship with this person. A reporter may be sent to do a live story, or tape one for editing and later use.

A good interview technique is to use directed language when being interviewed to avoid having only partial information used. For example, a person can begin a response by saying "... the three things we did tonight were ..." This helps keep thought focused and makes partial information unlikely.

Alert broadcast media to potential story ideas with media alerts — brief one-page outlines of significant upcoming events. A media advisory would use a similar format, but is usually faxed or e-mailed to notify the media of serious, late-breaking news such as a major disaster or resignation.

Press Conferences

Used to make an important announcement and answer questions, a press conference should be called only for something truly noteworthy.

Be aware of media deadlines when setting a time for a press conference. Make sure the setting has ample light, electrical outlets, and seating. Check microphones ahead of time. Be aware of the backdrop for television and photographers.

The local spokesperson should have all the relevant information. After the formal remarks have concluded, reporters are typically allowed questions. At the beginning of the questions, state any ground rules, such as time or topic limits. It is often helpful to provide reporters with a packet of background information to help fill out a story or dress it up with photos or illustrations.

Direct Mail

While often viewed as "junk mail," direct mail can be an effective public relations tool if a few basic principles are followed. First, the purpose of the mailing should be clear. The mailing should have a clear and explicit message, whether it is to convey information, call for action, or do something else.

Second, the appearance of the mailing is important. Image is critical because it helps make the initial impression. The impression is what will prevent the item from being treated like trash. It takes only a few seconds for the impression to be formulated.

To save money, consider mailing alternatives. A flyer can be inserted into a utility billing at little additional cost. There are also volume reductions for bulk mail. An accurate mailing list also is essential.

A mailing makes a statement about the sender as well as the issue. A mailer that appears sloppy or contains errors does not help the message or the sender's image. If public funds cover the cost of the mailing, it must appear to be important and an appropriate use of tax dollars.

Advertising

Many of the principles that make direct mail effective also apply to advertising.

There are also many choices for alternative advertising outlets. Newspaper, radio, and television are common. Yet billboards, flyers, or local magazines also may provide an effective means of reaching a target audience.

Unless the staff needed to create graphics and write copy are available in-house, advertising can be quite costly. An issue will need to be of significance to justify the cost of media advertising. It may be possible, however, to secure private funding to support paid advertising.

Advertising can be effective when correctly located relative to the target audience. Newspaper ads tend to reach more highly educated members of the public, while radio and television audiences are more diffuse. Advertising in the newsletter of a particular interest group can be highly effective if that is the target audience.

Public Service Announcements

Public service announcements can be a cost-effective method of using television and radio to inform the public about an issue or event.

In meeting requirements to provide public service, many broadcast stations will air PSAs. However, the type, timing, and frequency is up to the station's Public Service Director. Once again, having a positive relationship with this individual may be helpful.

Each station usually has a preferred format for PSAs. Using that format will increase the likelihood the PSA will be used. Some stations want written copy, while others prefer a taped message with a simple written introduction.

Written information should be on official letterhead and include a contact person and telephone number, the start and stop dates, the length of the PSA in seconds, and a copy of the PSA, on tape if necessary.

In general, a 30-second PSA contains about 75 words. To have an impression, a PSA needs memorable language and repetition. It should focus on one message. The use of jingles, alliteration, or slogans can help make the message memorable.

Public Relations Pitfalls

The local media often serve as the conduit for information between local government and the public. The tone and content of news coverage help shape perceptions of stakeholder groups. When local officials begin receiving calls and complaints from constituent groups, they become much less likely to support new initiatives. This makes it all the more important to work carefully with local media to ensure the messages conveyed are clear, accurate, timely, and positive. To avoid problems that sometimes occur when working with the media, there are a few pitfalls to avoid. **Do not:**

- try to tell journalists how to do their jobs;
- complain about unfair coverage or mistakes unless they actually make a difference in perceptions or understanding of fact;
- pester the local media about running a story;
- overuse news releases, letters to the editor, or other communication;
- tell a reporter something "off the record" unless it is agreed to in advance;
- speak to a reporter in casual conversation about anything that cannot appear in print;
- send out written materials that contain factual, grammatical, spelling or syntax errors;
- comment on topics about which little is known or where the authority to comment is lacking;
- delay in responding to a reporter's inquiry; or
- prohibit any local government staff person from talking to a reporter, but do have a clearly identified official spokesperson for potentially controversial issues.

Even in smaller units of government, it is important to establish guidelines for media relations and to communicate them to elected and appointed officials and staff. The work of local government is too important to allow carelessness, mistakes, or errors in judgement to cause unnecessary problems.

In responding to interviews, there are a few more pitfalls to avoid. In answering questions, **do not:**

- "stonewall," or refuse to address an inquiry or avoid questions of accountability;
- "whitewash" an issue, minimize the effects of a mistake, or downplay concerns;
- set up a "smoke screen," or hide the truth to buy time or look better; and do not
- "block and blame," or try to distance oneself from an error or seek someone else to take responsibility.

Of course, all of these guidelines assume there is no pending or potential litigation related to the matter being questioned. In such an event, it is best to offer no comment at all.

Conclusion

A key element to the resolution of any public issue is the capacity to present an issue favorably. In this publication, a number of ideas about how to create an environment conducive to the resolution of community issues have been presented.

In addition to the ability to communicate effectively, other elements to resolving public controversies include demonstrating leadership capacity and the ability to resolve conflicts and disputes. These topics are included in other editions of this series.

This is one in a series of publications dealing with the issue of managing controversial public policy. The entire series includes:

- Leadership in the Public Arena
- Informing the Public Debate: Public Education Strategies
- Meaningful Input to Public Policy: Citizen Participation Strategies
- The Public Relations of Public Policy
- Successful Negotiating Skills
- Resolving Multiparty Disputes

Individually or together, these resources are intended to help local officials and others develop greater leadership capacity.

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The Office of Local Government is a unit of K-State Research and Extension, housed in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Kansas State University. The Office of Local Government provides educational outreach, technical assistance, and applied research services to Kansas local governments in areas related to community and economic development, local public finance and public service provision, and environmental and natural resources management. Dr. John Leatherman, director of the Office of Local Government, can be reached at 785-532-2643 or olg@agecon.ksu.edu

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Successful Negotiating Skills

Part five of six

K-STATE Kansas State University

Resolving public disputes typically requires finding compromise between stakeholders who may have competing positions. Bringing stakeholders to the point of agreement can be a challenging task. Doing so requires exerting interpersonal influence and structuring an environment conducive to agreement. This publication, the first of two publications dealing with the resolution of public disputes, focuses on the interpersonal skills required for successful negotiation. The companion publication, dealing with multiparty dispute resolution, addresses ways to structure an environment where negotiation can be successful.

What is Negotiation?

A city wants to annex a nearby subdivision with known water quality problems that potentially threaten the public water supply. Residents want safe and dependable water, but are concerned about the cost of hooking up to sewer and water services. City officials and residents bargain to determine how connection costs will be shared and homeowner financing will be structured.

This is a relatively common situation in many communities — two groups with related but differing interests, and the need to act. Finding a solution acceptable to both sides is what negotiation is about. Negotiation is part compromise, part new solution, and part mutual agreement. It is a blending of perspectives to come up with an answer acceptable to everyone involved. It involves finding a way each party can win.

The bottom line to finding compromise is structuring an agreement acceptable to all parties. The process of getting there, however, can be difficult. Individuals who help secure such agreements can exhibit considerable skill and understanding of human motivation and behavior. Indeed, seemingly irreconcilable differences can be bridged when the parties sincerely want to do so, and someone can help them find common ground. While few local officials may have inclination to assert themselves as expert negotiators, the skills involved are used in many situations. Understanding a few of the principles employed by professional negotiators may help resolve some of the ordinary conflicts common to local government.

About this Series

Public issues are matters of widespread concern in the community. They are resolved by group decision processes that create local public policy. We often assume the responsibility for resolving public issues is in the domain of government. But as society becomes more complex, and we acknowledge the limits of what government can achieve, we recognize the need for public and private interests to work together. Involving diverse interests in public issues, however, can often heighten local conflict and make the resolution of community issues more difficult.

Keeping on Track, a series of publications for local officials and community leaders, deals with managing controversial public policy. The issues vary, but all too often the problem is the same. Whether it's corporate farming, school bond issues, or new development proposals, communities often get bogged down in controversy, and nothing seems to get done. This series of publications presents strategies local leaders can use to navigate the minefield of controversial public policy so the community can resolve the issue and keep moving forward.

Frequently Asked Questions about Negotiation

When is negotiation needed? Negotiation is frequently used when stakeholders to an issue are willing to mutually resolve differences instead of haggle over competing positions. It is a voluntary process where parties sincerely wish to find a solution.

What skills are needed to negotiate? Various interpersonal communication skills can facilitate a negotiated agreement: listening intently to each party; thinking creatively about alternatives; understanding the back-

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ground to the situation; communicating and restating ideas clearly; being diplomatic, yet assertive.

What is the value of a formal negotiation process? It renders a solution that the people most interested in an issue will commit to willingly.

What's the difference between negotiating and old fashioned "horse trading"? Horse trading is a win-lose proposition where one party tries to make the best deal possible without particular regard for the other parties. Negotiation focuses on maximizing benefit to all parties. Negotiation seeks to solve problems, not engage in a competition.

Isn't competition impossible to avoid? Of course, everyone tries to maximize their own benefit in negotiation. In the negotiation process, however, there is the explicit recognition that other parties also have a right to benefit.

A Foundation and Building Blocks for Negotiating

Trust is a significant factor to successful negotiation. A sense of trust determines how much risk individuals are willing to take with one another. Trust is built over time, based on the reputation an individual or group. Once lost, trust is difficult to regain. Being reliable, making intentions clear, and following through on commitments are more important to reaching agreement than whether groups agree with one another's positions. This sense of trust become the foundation for the willingness to enter into a collaborative process.

The negotiation process is as important as the outcomes achieved. How an agreement was accomplished will be remembered by participants long after the agreement. Whether people feel good about the outcome will depend on their perceptions of how meetings were conducted, if trust was established, if interests were combined, and how individuals were made to feel respected, involved, and heard. Thus, attention to the process is critical to successful negotiation.

Negotiation facilitators and participants can do a number of things to enhance the process and make a solution more likely. They can:

- **be conscious** of the difference between a person's interest, or the general goals being sought, and a person's position, or their stated solution;
- **be creative** in seeking solutions, as one idea may stimulate others;
- **be fair** in conducting the process, conceding points or seeking external corroboration of information when needed;
- **be prepared** before committing to an agreement;
- **be an active listener**, focusing on the meaning of others' words;
- **be aware** of the relative priorities of relationships between participants; and
- **be clear** about the alternatives to a negotiated agreement as the option that might be improved through negotiation.

Know Your Negotiating Stance and When to Change

A negotiating stance is the approach or style to be taken in the negotiating process. Choice of the negotiating stance is frequently determined by the desired outcome, whether it is compromise, win-at-all-costs, or forging solutions to maximize all participants' benefits. Each stance has strengths. It may be appropriate to use different stances in different situations, or even to change as the negotiation proceeds. When stakeholders have vastly different stances, a mediator may be needed. Following are several common negotiating stances.

Collaboration: Everyone involved is an equal participant, and the focus is on maximizing everyone's benefit. This approach typically requires a good deal of time and effort, but the outcomes are usually durable, given that all participants had at least some of their interests incorporated into the outcome. Collaboration is used when participants have a mutual respect for one another, and the desire is to maintain amicable long-term relationships.

Compromise: Participants in a compromise situation remain equal, but it is expected that everyone will have to give up some aspects of their desired outcomes. Compromise usually achieves a temporary solution and avoids long-term damage to relationships. A compromise can be achieved without a prolonged process. Here, we make note of the important distinction between compromise of one's principles versus compromise on a choice or a course of action.

Competition: While everyone remains an equal participant in the process, the emphasis here is to maximize individual gain without concern for the collective whole. Some may come out winners and others losers. Competition is frequently used when basic rights are at stake or where precedents are to be set. The emphasis is on winning.

Accommodation: Participants in an accommodating situation are no longer equal. Some participants may have a greater stake in the issue, leading to some sort of concession. A concession can be viewed as goodwill or a sign

of weakness if used too frequently. It can also indicate a lack of interest or preparedness related to an issue.

Avoidance: When an issue is of little concern to some parties or other issues are more pressing, the situation may be avoided entirely. This usually leads to a "lose-lose" outcome or decisions by default. Conversely, avoidance can be used to gain time to obtain needed information or diffuse tensions at times when little constructive discussion is likely to occur. In this case, setting a time and date to resume discussions can be helpful.

Strategies of Successful Negotiators

A negotiation process usually follows this general format. All parties:

- share their interests and positions;
- brainstorm ideas for potential solutions;
- evaluate the ideas in the context of the broadest range of interests;
- discuss the ideas and trade aspects of the positions in order to make the idea work;
- state a solution;
- evaluate the solution for feasibility, legality, cost and practicality;
- use a decision-making process, such as voting or consensus, to come to agreement on the solution;
- return to the discussion if the solution is not accepted;
- put the solution in writing and sign it, once it is found; and
- prepare for implementation.

The process sounds straightforward enough, but getting to the solution can be a challenge. The objective of each participant is to get as much of their position accepted as possible. So how do good negotiators do it? Following are some of the ideas negotiators use when bargaining a position. Good facilitators of a negotiation also will be aware of these techniques and actually encourage them to get closer to agreement.

Be sincere, upbeat, enthusiastic.

Give the impression from the start that this is a welcome opportunity to work together as collaborators in resolving an important issue, not as adversaries. Exude confidence that a solution will be found.

Look for corollary advantages as the process progresses.

As the interests of various participants are more fully examined, unexpected advantages to your position are likely to emerge. Be aware of this possibility and be prepared to reconsider a position, calling "time out" if necessary to more fully evaluate developments or to communicate with outside partners.

In discussion, push for certain interests that you may be willing to concede later.

Creating "expendables" provides more room for bargaining. This is not unethical or underhanded, only part of the bargaining process. Only you need to know it is something you may later give up or its relative importance to your overall position.

Be willing to engage in trading.

When asked for a concession, routinely ask for one in return. This can have multiple beneficial effects. It can improve your overall position in getting your interests met. The concession you are giving increases in importance. If it wasn't important why would you ask for something in return? Finally, it shows that you take trading seriously.

Don't diminish your interests by selling short.

Assert to the other participants that there are many advantages to accepting your perspective on the issue. All of the potential advantages you offer can be treated as bargaining chips to be asserted at the right time. The right time is that point when the chip can have greatest effect in turning the discussion back to the place you want it to be. Far from manipulative, it is smart negotiation.

Before an agreement is concluded, it is common to get concessions or add to your interests as the negotiations progress, even if these were items initially rejected.

Don't be afraid to suggest that certain issues be revisited. Connect the suggestion to something more you can bring into the discussion. Be willing to relent, but don't be afraid to push a bit. Seeking "add-backs" is common and frequently successful.

Be careful about agreeing to the first proposal on the table.

Experienced negotiators will often send up a "trial balloon" to get a sense of the other participants. It helps them to assess how others are likely to react to future proposals. A good negotiator will use this information to gauge what others are willing to buy into, where there was hesitation, or where others' sticking points lie. This helps them to craft more serious proposals later and provides

crucial information about timing. By agreeing too quickly, others' suspicions will be aroused or they will assume they should have held out for more.

Be aware of, and use body language effectively.

Visual expression is one of the most powerful means of communication. When a proposal is made or a concession suggested, react visually to reinforce your stance. Without being theatrical or condescending, a raised eyebrow, a small gasp, or a slap of your cheek can communicate much more than words. Don't roll your eyes; that would be a condescending gesture. Shaking or a nodding your head, leaning forward to listen, or asking for clarification shows your interest and involvement. These types of gestures can convey an image of involvement, concern, and empathy, all of which will make others more favorably disposed to your views.

Be aware of your own vulnerabilities.

Don't make decisions when tired, preoccupied, hurried, or if you don't fully understand all implications. Having to come back later is better than committing to something out of haste or fatigue. Reneging on an agreement will be much worse than slowing the flow of the process.

Have a last-minute concession prepared in the event the process stalls as it nears completion because of the other party's need to save face.

Sometimes the discussion can reach an impasse because one party realizes their preferred outcome is not going to happen. Sometimes pride or embarrassment gets in the way when a person realizes he or she has to concede. These are natural emotions, and a good negotiator can overcome this by having a concession ready. Even a small concession can break the impasse and get the discussion moving forward. The timing of the concession is key. At the point of heightened tension or pending collapse, even a small concession will appear to be a major breakthrough.

Know your best and worst alternative solutions well enough to know when it is time to leave the negotiating table.

There may be a point where your interests are not being met. Participation in negotiation is voluntary, and nothing prevents a person from walking away. In fact, the gesture of leaving can cause others to rethink their positions. Do not do this as an empty gesture. Do so because your interests are not being met, and let the others know. For greatest effect, this should be done matter-of-factly and not in a fit of anger.

Once an agreement is reached, get it in writing, making it a document that all involved will sign.

An agreement may be made in theory, but until it is in writing and signed by all parties it is not final. A signature indicates a commitment to implement a solution, or at least not stand in the way. Any required follow-up or other future discussions also should be part of the agreement.

Do not make a commitment to begin or implement a solution until the agreement has been signed.

Only a signed agreement, specifying the final solution and the responsibilities of all parties, is a mandate for action.

Decision-Making by Consensus

Many people talk about achieving consensus in decision-making, but few actually understand what it entails. Theoretically easy to understand, it is one of the more difficult decision-making processes. Yet, it is frequently held as the ideal decision-making process in negotiation. While a majority-rule vote may be simpler, consensus is intended to achieve a true win-win outcome.

Using consensus, decisions are made only when everyone in the group agrees to a particular solution. Nothing is considered resolved unless everyone agrees to abide by the solution. Unlike voting, there are no losers or splinter factions. While some will be more enthused by the outcome than others, everyone signs on to the outcome. This makes for the most durable of agreements and builds long-term relationships in the community. A consensus decision-making process involves a number of steps:

- Stakeholders agree to use consensus when it is time to select a solution.
- The problem and various solutions have already been discussed and analyzed.
- Each of the stakeholders needs to voice an individual view regarding a potential solution openly and thoroughly.
- The solutions are then presented to the group, and every member either affirms or denies each alternative by voice or ballot.
- The solution that wins unanimous approval is the choice of the group. To ensure it is the preferred

outcome, the solution is restated, and each member of the group again affirms or dissents.
- Finally, if there is a lack of consensus, discussion starts anew. Periodic restatements are helpful to clarify points of disagreement.

Before the group decides to use a consensus process, members should consider what will happen if there is no universal agreement to an outcome. When a group is not likely to achieve consensus, an alternative plan of action should be ready. Some options include:
- Dissenters will agree to sit out a round of voting. Determine at the start whether dissenters will be bound by the decision of the majority.
- Those dissenting may leave the negotiation entirely. This can throw the entire negotiation off-track and should be avoided, if possible.
- If most people voice disagreement, it is best to start over rather than continue with rounds of voting without reaching agreement.
- If, after several rounds of unsuccessful voting and no one is willing to sit out, it is time to table the discussion of a specific proposal and return to a general discussion of possible solutions.

Strategies to Break an Impasse

In the event an impasse develops in the negotiation process, a number of strategies may still be available.
- Make the solution temporary if it is agreed to by all but one or two dissenters. Implement the solution for a fixed period of time, and agree to reconvene for further assessment and negotiation.
- Divide the stakeholders into subcommittees to work on the issue and devise new solutions. Those disagreeing with the majority should be split among the work groups.
- Take time to have everyone articulate their views on the solution and express why they support or reject it. Everyone listens without comment or discussion. After everyone has had an opportunity to speak, another vote is taken.
- Anticipate the potential for an impasse at the start. Decide if, after all else has been tried, a vote of a two-thirds majority will be sufficient for implementation.

When is Outside Mediation Likely to be Needed?

Mediation is a confidential problem-solving process in which stakeholders meet with a neutral third party who helps guide the process to resolution. It is advised when groups reach an impasse. Mediation revisits the entire decision-making process while also trying to repair relationships that may have been damaged because of the impasse. The mediator is usually a trained professional who has expertise in using structured problem-solving techniques and the skill to communicate effectively with disputing parties. The role of the mediator is not to broker a solution, but to assist parties in achieving their own solution. While a mediator may suggest ideas, the decision is always in the hands of the parties to negotiation.

A number of situations may indicate the need for an outside mediator:
- when strategies for bargaining are conflict-based rather than collaborative;
- when there is a history of past conflict that remains unresolved;
- when mistrust between parties prevails;
- when the number of parties to the negotiation or the number of issues to be resolved makes the focus vague, the discussions circular, and no movement forward seems possible;
- when the parties need assistance in clarifying their positions, as might be the case when individuals are representing large constituent groups;
- when the need to maintain positive relationships is important for future work; and
- when the issues being discussed are sensitive, emotionally volatile, or politically charged.

Conclusions

A key element to the resolution of a public issue is the ability to find compromise between competing interests. In this publication, ideas about how to successfully negotiate a compromise between competing interests were presented.

In addition to the ability to resolve conflict, other elements to resolving public controversies include demonstrating leadership capacity and the ability to effectively communicate. These topics are included in the other editions of this series.

This is one in a series of publications dealing with the issue of managing controversial public policy. The entire series includes:

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Resolving Multiparty Disputes

Part six of six

K-STATE Kansas State University

Resolving a public dispute typically requires finding compromise between stakeholders who have competing positions. Bringing stakeholders to the point of agreement can be challenging. Doing so requires exerting interpersonal influence and structuring an environment conducive to agreement. This publication, the second of two publications dealing with the resolution of public disputes, focuses on structuring a process and shaping the environment needed to resolve public conflicts. The companion publication, dealing with negotiation, addresses the human interaction skills that can guide disputing parties to an agreement.

What is Conflict?

A commercial developer and a neighborhood homeowners association have different views about the use of property adjacent to the neighborhood. A school bond issue has parents and retirees in the community at odds. A city and county disagree about how to share the costs of a joint road construction project. All of these cases involve disputes that can generate conflict, damage local relationships, and create obstacles to getting the community's business done. Everyone knows what conflict is, but understanding its origins and determining how to resolve it may be more difficult.

Conflict arises when the realization of one's goal is blocked or perceived to be blocked by others who seem opposed to the goal. Unlike a disagreement that may occur in a congenial atmosphere, conflict often involves an active struggle. At least one party senses or experiences active interference from others. There is an emotional aspect as well. There may be feelings of anger or mistrust that influence resolution of the conflict.

Understanding conflict is the first step in resolving disputes. Many of the dynamics involved in private interpersonal conflicts also may occur in a public dispute. The situation may be even more complicated, however, in that the dispute can involve multiple stakeholders with widely differing interests.

About this Series

Public issues are matters of widespread concern in the community. They are resolved by group decision processes that create local public policy. We often assume the responsibility for resolving public issues is in the domain of government. But as society becomes more complex, and we acknowledge the limits of what government can achieve, we recognize the need for public and private interests to work together. Involving diverse interests in public issues, however, can often heighten local conflict and make the resolution of community issues more difficult.

Keeping on Track, a series of publications for local officials and community leaders, deals with managing controversial public policy. The issues vary, but all too often the problem is the same. Whether it's corporate farming, school bond issues, or new development proposals, communities often get bogged down in controversy, and nothing seems to get done. This series of publications presents strategies local leaders can use to navigate the minefield of controversial public policy so the community can resolve the issue and keep moving forward.

Understanding Conflict

Conflict can actually help stimulate creative new solutions to problems that have been long entrenched. This happens when (1) the causes of the conflict are understood from each stakeholder's perspective; (2) everyone involved in an issue is willing to listen to others' ideas; (3) no one has a fixed, nonnegotiable position; and (4) no one has a grudge or "get-even" attitude about anyone involved in the situation.

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Turning conflict into a creative solution begins by understanding the source of the conflict. Understanding its genesis makes it much more likely a resolution can be found. Conflict generally arises from one of four sources.

Needs

Needs relate to life's essential requirements, such as water, food, shelter, health, or safety. People can disagree, however, about what constitutes a need. A need is defined by the individual based on what they deem essential. Some people may feel a community *needs* economic growth while others would say the very same development will change essential qualities the community *needs* in order to maintain quality of life. Thus, differences in perceptions related to public and private needs can spur conflict.

Values

Values are the principles upon which beliefs and actions are based. Land use is a good example of an activity about which different people may hold very different principles. Values can be shaped by experience, personal needs, religious beliefs, or background. Differences in value structures also can lead to conflict.

Perceptions

Perceptions are interpretations of events or experiences that are rooted in life circumstances. For example, what may seem like a reasonably efficient operating procedure to members of a planning board may seem perfunctory or curt to a group of homeowners. A key to resolving conflict is being able to understand another's perceptions. Similarly, having a sense of how the ideas and actions within a group may appear to those outside of it, and why, also is important in conflict resolution.

Power

Power is usually considered the ability to inspire or influence others. Being powerful also can mean being able to get things done. Power is important in the conflict resolution process because it can shape the way ideas are presented and the responsibility for implementing an agreement. Conversely, how power is used also can help generate conflict, especially if its application is considered inappropriate or unjust.

Identifying Interests and Positions

An important concept in resolving conflicts has to do with distinguishing between stakeholders' interests versus their positions. Typically, stakeholders will offer their **position**, their desired solution or outcome. Beneath their position is an **interest**, some underlying goal to be accomplished or need to be fulfilled. A position is the proposed plan to meet the goal. While different stakeholders' positions may be incompatible, their interests may not be that far apart.

For example, a developer might want to build a new subdivision. Nearby residents might argue for no development in the area. These two positions seem dissimilar enough that one side will win and one lose. If the motives behind these positions were probed more deeply, however, there may be a way both sides can win. The developer has an interest in generating an economic return from the land. Residents may want to preserve open space and wildlife habitat. Local government is a third party directly affected by the dispute in that its interests are to maximize tax revenues, minimize new service costs, and protect water quality.

When **framing** the issue in terms of the underlying interest, compromise solutions may be feasible. In this example, it may be possible to approve a subdivision plat that includes an area of compact, high-density development and land area dedicated to a park and open space. The developer generates a return on investment. Area residents have a new park and their scenic amenities. The city gets new tax base, an efficient development configuration, and the opportunity to provide sewer in the subdivision rather than to permit private septic systems.

In resolving disputes, it is often helpful to understand the interests underlying the positions of stakeholders before entering into bargaining. In the context of discussing the issues it becomes possible to **reframe** statements to clarify interests rather than positions, and to seek solutions on the basis of the interests. This is termed "interest-based bargaining," and is a technique to help resolve disputes between different groups.

Key Concepts and Definitions

Stakeholder: anyone directly or indirectly connected to an issue or likely to be affected by a proposed solution to the issue.

Situation Analysis: a method of assessing all past and present components of an issue.

Positional Bargaining: a negotiation process where stakeholders sequentially present their respective solutions to an issue and gradually relinquish aspects of their solutions until agreement is reached.

Interest-based Bargaining: a negotiation process that attempts to satisfy as many of the underlying interests or needs of stakeholders as possible.

Framing: a statement or definition of the conflict situation, issue, or interest. Framing a problem is to state it in a way so it can be solved.

Reframing: a process of changing how a person conceptualizes an idea, belief, or situation. Reframing is to restate an assertion or position in such a way as to emphasize the underlying interest.

Mediation: a type of conflict resolution where a disinterested third party helps direct the negotiation process and offers clarification of the issues presented. Often used where tensions are heightened.

Consensus: a decision-making process where all involved must agree to the decision being made. Consensus is different from voting because each stakeholder has a role in the creation of the outcome. Any participant can block the outcome, or can choose to sit out and still abide by the decision.

What is Conflict Resolution?

Conflict resolution is a structured process where two or more stakeholders gather to forge a solution acceptable to everyone. The basic premise of conflict resolution is that parties holding competing positions can usually collaborate when they engage in interest-based bargaining. It tends to be a time- and labor-intensive process, but usually results in mutually acceptable outcomes. It is less costly if the alternative is likely to be litigation. Characteristics of the multiparty conflict resolution process include:

- the presence of multiple interests and a range of positions regarding an issue;
- the stakeholders are usually acquainted with one another;
- participation is voluntary;
- any interests and positions to be considered must be on the table. While outside lobbying and agreements are not uncommon, they must be brought to the table for full consideration to be honored;
- the benefits and costs of the agreement are rarely equally shared among stakeholders. That is, some will likely gain more than others;
- a facilitator may be chosen by participating stakeholders to help organize the process and keep discussion focused;
- implementation arrangements are usually put in writing with various stakeholder responsibilities clearly specified;
- solutions may be gradually phased in or evaluated over time with contingencies for adjustment as needed; and
- the process usually uses the consensus form of decision-making.

Preparing to Participate in a Conflict Resolution Process

Doing some background research and reflection before entering into a negotiation or conflict resolution process will move discussion forward more quickly. It begins by clearly understanding your own side's **positions and interests**. Identify the principles on which the interests are based, and consider the range of options that could be considered acceptable solutions.

Prepare for **positional trading**. This is the idea of coming to the discussion prepared to make concessions as a trade for the other side's concessions. Create a hierarchy of choices for concessions and what might be expected in return. Build **expendables** into your position with the intention of conceding them.

Know the **other stakeholders** in the process. Anticipate others' interests and positions, and develop strategies whereby interest-based arguments can be used and countered. Anticipate the degree of complementariness or exclusiveness across positions, whether alliances are likely to emerge, and whether alliances might be fostered.

Be clear about the **goals** relating to both the process and your involvement. If the involvement is as a representative of a local government body, there are likely to be multiple goals in both the near-term and long-term. These should be explicit to all involved.

Choose the **appropriate representative** to engage in the negotiation. The person needs to have authority and respect, be able to communicate effectively, and be quick-thinking. This person will not necessarily be the chief elected officer of a municipal unit. Predetermine the scope of authority that representative will have. A substitute representative also should be designated and prepared to step in when needed.

The Conflict Resolution Process

There are numerous ways to structure a conflict resolution process. One model is offered here, but not all situations will necessarily need to use the same steps.

Analyze the conflict, background and appropriate role for local government.

Conduct a situation analysis, including identification of stakeholder's positions and interests. Research the history of the conflict. Determine whether to get involved or whether the alternative to a negotiated agreement is a sufficient or better outcome. From the standpoint of local

government, there might be multiple reasons to become involved in a dispute resolution. At times, local government might be an active stakeholder to a conflict, a mediator for other groups experiencing conflict, or supporter of community groups.

Organize and plan the process.

Inform likely stakeholders of the opportunity to participate. Ask stakeholder groups whether any other interested parties have been excluded, including groups traditionally underrepresented.

Prior to initiating actual negotiations, the stakeholders or a subgroup should draft an initial agenda and timetable for completion of the process. The full group needs to clarify what issues are to be discussed, the limits of discussion, and topics that are not up for discussion. Other support (clerical, etc.) or technical assistance (professional staff, experts) also should be secured.

The group will need to agree on meeting times, dates and places. In some instances, it may be appropriate to assist with transportation or child-care arrangements.

The meetings should be planned with plenty of time for informal discussion. Much of the business that may need to be completed is often done informally. Refreshments and breaks can facilitate these discussions.

To the extent local government officials are involved, care must be taken to follow open meeting and records laws. Consult with the municipal attorney in structuring participation and meeting arrangements.

Consider media relations. Generally, it is preferable to have an official spokesperson, and for participants to agree to not speak with the media between meetings. The potential for misunderstandings increases when people speak to each other through the media. If the meetings are subject to open meeting laws, news reporters may be present, but it remains advisable to not speak publicly outside the meetings.

When setting ground rules for conducting the meeting, consider such issues as information notification procedures and responsibility, meeting leadership, participant conduct, decision-making procedures, and when and how the process will be concluded.

Begin the negotiating process.

In the context of multiparty negotiations, a participant should remain alert as the process unfolds. Watch for potential allies with common interests or coalitions that might be advantageous. Make note of the various proposals, keeping in mind the extent suggestions meet multiple stakeholder interests and potential feasibility constraints. Watch for trading opportunities to foster the sense of compromise, keeping in mind the threshold beyond which it is no longer acceptable to give up more.

Finally, watch for signs an external mediator may be needed. As tempers flair or discussions become redundant or unfocused, an unbiased third party may be needed to get negotiations back on track.

Local officials should watch for opportunities to use influence and resources to overcome obstacles or gain advantage for municipal interests. It is important to recognize when the direction of discussions turns in ways that are potentially disadvantageous local government interests. Be prepared to redirect or break off discussions. Note how the process is being represented to the public, and be prepared to initiate public relations or damage control.

Potential solutions will need to be subject to a feasibility evaluation. At a minimum, the evaluation needs to consider economic implications and distribution of costs; potential environmental consequences if any; legal and political constraints; and any unintended consequences that may result. It is generally desirable that all parties should gain as well as share in the costs of implementation.

Bring the process to a close.

To ensure a durable resolution in ending the process, the final agreement should be put in writing and signed by all participants. The agreement should include any contingencies for follow-up, evaluation or renegotiation as necessary.

Upon reaching an agreement, there is ample opportunity to share credit among all participants. In the attempt to use a formal dispute resolution process, a valuable precedent has been set to help resolve future conflicts. The effort to "debrief" participants may help to improve future conflict resolution initiatives.

Situation Analysis for Conflict Resolution

The situation analysis is intended to gather background information that will be useful in negotiation. Following is a list of questions organized by ideas or themes. These may not be the only relevant questions, but can serve as a starting point. While the perspective is representative of a municipality, concepts are more broadly applicable.

- Identify the alternatives to a negotiated agreement.
- If no negotiation took place, would your municipality be in better or worse shape?

- What is the acceptable range of solutions for your municipality?

Conduct a stakeholder analysis.
- Who are the groups involved in the negotiation?
- What is the relative importance of each group to the municipality?
- How are the other groups organized?
- What is the power base of each group?
- What is the relative distribution of power among all the stakeholders?
- What has been the municipality's historical relationship with them?

Clarify the issue.
- How did the conflict arise?
- What are the main and secondary issues?
- Can negative issues be recast to emphasize a positive side?
- Are the issues negotiable?
- Would litigation save time and render a fair solution?
- What positions have been taken, and what are the underlying interests?
- What information is known and needed, and are there experts available and acceptable to all sides?

Consider possible strategies.
- What type of decision-making process should be used?
- Should a mediator be used, and who will pay?

Proposal Evaluation Grid

In the course of negotiation, any number of proposals may be offered. Feasible solutions should be evaluated for actual or potential constraints. Following is an evaluation checklist. It is offered as a sample of the type of constraints that may hinder implementation of solutions and is not a comprehensive list.

Economic Issues
- Does the solution cost money to the public or private sector, either directly or indirectly?
- Is there an allocation in the budget for whomever will be paying for it?
- Can the idea be sustained beyond its initial implementation?
- How will the costs be shared among all stakeholders?
- Are there other potential sources of funding for the proposal, such as grants or other aids? Who can find out?

Environmental Issues
- Will this solution cause actual or potential environmental consequences for anyone?
- Will the solution promote environmental awareness and protection?
- Are there any potential environmental costs that will have to be assumed by either a public or private entity?

Legal Issues
- Has the proposed solution been reviewed for any potential constitutional, or federal, state or local statutory violations?
- Are there any potential loopholes that the designers can anticipate and fix?

Political Issues
- Are there any constituencies who may find the proposal objectionable in any way?
- Does the proposal potentially violate anyone's civil rights?
- Have multicultural, gender, and accessibility concerns been taken into consideration?

Unintended Consequences
- Will implementation of this solution have unintended effects on other people, places or at other times? Should this be considered?

Conclusion

A key element to the resolution of a public issue is the ability to find compromise between competing interests. In this publication, a number of ideas about how to resolve complex disputes between competing interests were presented.

In addition to the ability to resolve conflict, other elements to resolving public controversies include demonstrating leadership capacity and the ability to effectively communicate. These topics are included in the other editions of this series.

This is one in a series of publications dealing with the issue of managing controversial public policy. The entire series includes:

- Leadership in the Public Arena
- Informing the Public Debate: Public Education Strategies
- Meaningful Input to Public Policy: Citizen Participation Strategies
- The Public Relations of Public Policy
- Successful Negotiating Skills
- Resolving Multiparty Disputes

Individually or together, these resources are intended to help local officials and others develop greater leadership capacity.

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