

Inclusive Community Task Force
Minutes
February 13, 2008

Present: Denise Denton, Cherie Wandling, Mary Kitchell, G.P. Foote, Deb Lee, Linda Butler, Cheyrl Inyang, Chris Rehmann, Randy Podhaski, Bobby Hunter, Barbara Woods, Jane Acker

Absent: Betsy Hoffman, Mike Myers, Amber Corrieri

1. Minutes of the January 23 meeting were approved as submitted.
2. The group divided into two subgroups to discuss the elements of a welcoming community.

Group 1:

A welcoming community:

- Is one characterized by acceptance and respect for all individuals regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion.
- Has a common sense of purpose, demonstrated by events and activities that bring all community members together.
- Ensures that the “doorways” through which new residents enter the community (when they rent apartments, sign up for utilities, register for school, etc.) are staffed by courteous, helpful, well-informed people.
- Has public amenities (parks, library, etc.) that are accessible to all and of high quality.
- Has shopping, dining, personal care, gathering spaces, and entertainment options that appeal to people of all ages, interests, and income levels.
- Offers safe and decent housing for all income levels.
- Offers quality affordable child care, pre-school programs, and before and after school programs that are accessible to all income levels.
- Works to ensure that community activities, especially those for children, are accessible to all, particularly by assisting with transportation and fees.
- Actively offers opportunities for involvement not just to homeowners, married couples with children, and those with church affiliation, but to apartment dwellers, singles, and all other groups.
- Provides a civil, safe and secure environment for all.

Other observations from Group 1:

- Information about community resources, especially those for low income residents, should be highly visible and widely available in the community.
- A welcoming community offers a wide variety of human services that are readily accessible. Their employees are respectful and resourceful.
- Interchange among elements of the community—different neighborhoods, socioeconomic groups, elementary schools-- should be actively encouraged.

Group 2:

A welcoming community:

- Has easily accessible public amenities.
- Makes an effort to include those who speak languages other than English.
- Provides convenient public transportation to major employers.
- Understands and honors different cultures and customs.
- Does not make assumptions about people based on appearance.

- Treats all with trust and respect.
- Has equitable laws and enforces them uniformly.
- Is culturally sensitive.
- Caters to all segments of the community in local businesses.
- Is made up of citizens who want to be welcoming!

Other observations from Group 2:

- Both new and more established citizens should attempt to ask questions and make sure they understand the full story before jumping to conclusions. People need to meet each other halfway.
- The implicit rules that govern how things work in a community need to be made explicit for a community to be truly inclusive.

Other points:

- If you come to Ames with limited financial resources and no familiarity with community institutions, how do you find out what's available? Resources should be available not only at City Hall and at the library, but at ethnic specialty grocery stores, places of employment, information kiosks etc.
 - Ames might seem more welcoming if it had prominently located "Welcome to Ames" signs!
 - MICA maintains a very up-to-date resource directory. Other directories are not always accurate, and it is not always easy to determine how to be included or how to update an entry once it is published.
 - A central human services campus would be a big help for new residents!
3. Some adjustments were made to the proposed meeting schedule. Jane will prepare a revised schedule once room reservations have been made.
 4. Next steps: Deb Lee will review the Appendices from the January 23 meeting as well as comments from the February 13 meeting and categorize them by theme. Linda Butler and Chris Rehmann will assist her in this task. Denise Denton provided a model of an organizing framework which they might wish to use for this purpose. They will circulate their work to all task force members prior to the next meeting if possible, otherwise, at the meeting.
 5. Using this material, the task force will proceed to a consideration of aspects of a welcoming community that are present in Ames as well as those that are lacking. Our goal is to have a working document ready for public input at the end of the March 26 meeting.
 6. Jane will contact appropriate city staff about publicity for the April 3 and 5 public input sessions. We hope to have flyers ready for the March 5 meeting, so that task force members can circulate them to the various groups of which they are part.
 7. For your further consideration, here is the link to ISU's diversity climate survey: <http://www.provost.iastate.edu/reports/universitylife2007/UnivLifeWebRep.pdf>
Very thought-provoking reading.

**NEXT MEETING:
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 4:30 – 6:00 PM
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**