

MINUTES

Inclusive Community Task Force January 10, 2008

Present: Jane Acker, Linda Butler, Amber Corrieri, Denise Denton, Bobby Hunter, Cheyrl Inyang, Deb Lee, Mike Myers, Randy Podhaski, Chris Rehmann, Cherie Wandling, Barbara Woods

Absent: GP Foote, Betsy Hoffman, Mary Kitchell

1. Mayor Ann Campbell welcomed the group and thanked them for their willingness to participate. Copies of the task force mission statement and meeting agenda were distributed.
2. City Attorney Doug Marek provided an overview of Iowa Open Meetings Law. Most pertinent aspects:
 - Meeting agendas must be posted at least 24 hours in advance. No decisions may be made on topics that are not noted on the public agenda.
 - Minutes and work products of the task force are public documents.
 - Notes and related documents kept by individual task force members are also considered subject to open meeting law provisions, but members are not required to keep such documents.
3. Group members present introduced themselves.
4. Ground rules for group meetings were determined by the group:
 - Respect the opinions expressed by others.
 - Listen without interrupting.
 - Come prepared.
 - Keep an open mind.
 - Turn cell phones and pagers off prior to the meeting.
 - Address the topic at hand.
 - Have and stick to a set start and stop time for each meeting.
5. The task force broke into two groups to discuss the mission statement. Each group reported its observations.

Group 1:

We will get information, identify sources of information, pose questions, and build a database of information--including what works well in Ames, what needs to be improved, what works well elsewhere, etc. We will identify opportunities and leadership. Sources of information might include needs assessments from the United Way, YSS, and elsewhere. Denise suggested a "prevention matrix", which we might use to generate our own matrix of services, opportunities, issues, etc.

We will direct questions about the police to the police task force.

We will invite people to speak but we strive for representative issues rather than anecdotes from individuals that may or may not be representative.

We will address problems of communication and getting people to be honest. We will name issues as they are. We will not dance around them.

We will consider issues of economic class, race, ethnicity, disabilities, etc. We will be inclusive in our definition of inclusiveness!

Group 2:

“The problem” is viewed differently by different sectors of the Ames community. Some feel harassed and unwelcome. Others feel unsafe.

The issues the task force is working on are also being addressed by other groups (Breaking Down Barriers, Human Relations Commission, etc.). Communication among these groups, and better public awareness of what they are and what they do, could be an objective of the IC Task Force.

Most newcomers choose to come to Ames seeking a better life for themselves and their families. How can the citizens of Ames do a better job connecting them to the opportunities they came here to find?

6. The composition of the task force was discussed. Task force members were invited because of their connections to various groups in the community, and the group is charged with gathering information that is representative. The task force will ask questions of specific people and invite them to share information. Furthermore, the issue of inclusion deals not only with black/white and rich/poor but also other possible issues and barriers (e.g., different ethnicities, disabilities, etc.).
7. Frustration was expressed by both groups at the lack of specificity in the mission statement. What exactly is “the problem” this group is being asked to address? Discussion on this topic led to the “homework assignment” for the next meeting.

All task force members will use the next two weeks to make their own investigation among the people they encounter in the community. The principle question: What makes you feel unwelcome in Ames? Information gathered will be shared at the next meeting, and will be used to determine next steps. Please make this effort as wide-ranging as you can, and be resourceful in seeking people out!

8. In addition, group members will bring to the next meeting pertinent information for group consideration, i.e., juvenile offender data, the mission statement of Breaking Down Barriers, information about changes at Ames High School, etc. Those who haven't yet seen the DVD of the November 27 public meeting are encouraged to do so—available from City Hall, and possibly at the Ames Public Library.
9. **NEXT MEETING: January 23, 4:30 – 6 pm, Room 135 in Ames City Hall**