

Executive Summary

Winnebago County

Focus Group Sessions

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NOTES.....about the Executive Summary

Participants

Approximately 50 people participated in this series of Focus Groups. Many participated in several of the focus groups.

Focus Group Format

The focus groups were designed to provide participants with the greatest amount of flexibility still produce written results.

Disclaimer

These Focus Groups were not intended to produce any scientifically measurable data.

Purpose

The purpose of these focus groups was to provide Winnebago County citizens with the opportunity to speak to their concerns regarding the County's Comprehensive Plan and the Planning Process. In addition the purpose was to distill essential direction from these concerns.

The Basics – page 3

What are the basic issue areas? What are the basic issue themes? What are the Techniques and principles that work to address these challenges? And what might success look like?

Concerns and Issues by Subject – page 4

A synopsis of those things that concerned participants about each of the five focus group areas

Concerns and Issues cutting across all subjects – Page 5

Challenges that will require skillful management for a more successful future in Winnebago County

What Works – pages 6 - 8

Those techniques and principles as described by participants that seem to work well for successful outcomes.

Success – Page 9

What might a successful planning process produce?

What is Next?

Those who read this report and want to see a successful planning process might consider looking for ways to apply it's learnings: Become personally accountable for its success, Look for opportunities to collaborate and cooperate, Make sure information is correct, Get more information whenever necessary, Show authentic respect for the opinions of others, Remain flexible, Improve leadership skills, and stay focused on the vision.

The Basics

Concerns and Issues by Subject

Open Space
Property Rights
Intergovernmental Cooperation
Development
Farming / Agriculture

Concerns and Issues cutting across all subjects

Finance
Strife
Planning
Jurisdictional Prerogatives
Leadership & Cooperation

What Works ... to address these challenges?

Collaboration
Skillful Deliberation / Communication
Reliable Research
Diligence
Paying Attention
Personal Accountability
Skillful Leadership
Education
Full Involvement
Vision
Flexibility
Organization
Best Practices
Publicity
External Forces
Respect
Eventfulness

Success – what might it look like?

More skilful leadership
More cooperation
Win/Win conclusions
Readiness for the future

Concerns and Issues by Subject

What areas related to County Planning particularly concern us?

Open Space

Finances
Usage
Threats
Water
Planning
Leadership
Public Opinion
Connectivity

Property Rights

Compensation
Inequity
Jurisdiction
Predictability
Divisiveness
The Constitution
Market Drivers
Land Value

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Public Engagement
Trust
Cooperation
Innovation
Leadership/Vision
Jurisdictional Prerogative
Power

Development

The Market
Planning
Environmental Effects

Farming / Agriculture

Paradox
Development
Vision
Planning/Government
The Price of Land
The Economy
Conflict
Loss

Concerns and Issues cutting across all subjects

What Challenges must we successfully address for the future of Winnebago County?

Finance

Compensation
Market Drivers
Land Values
The Market
The Price of Land
The Economy

Strife

Paradox (want our cake and eat it too)
Conflict
Loss ... of tradition, landscape, farms
Divisiveness
Inequity

Planning

Water
Predictability
Development
Environmental Effects
Connectivity

Jurisdictional Prerogatives

The Constitution ... & its interpretation
Government Planning ... & the citizen

Leadership & Cooperation

Innovation
Power
Vision
Trust
Public Opinion
Public Engagement
Cooperation
Leadership

What Works

What do we know that works based on our successful experiences in other areas of our lives?

Collaboration

- Practice building Consensus / Compromise.
- Everybody worked together.
- Operated out of self-interest that also benefited others.
- Costs/benefits of cooperating not cooperating...
- A believable small group...
- Creating one mind...
- Mutual decision-making...
- Make everyone look good...
- Solicit Cooperation (ask).
- Look for people who understand the need

Skilful Deliberation

- Allow others the opportunity to speak their minds
- Willingness to communicate
- Stay open (to others and their ideas)
- Say "it" with a smile.
- Learn to accept guidance without resentment.
- People speak their own mind (safely)...
- Honest discussion and debate...

Reliable Research

- Find and provide more and better information...
- Mailing out questionnaires and surveys – summarizing the results.
- Started by "discovering" the interests of our constituency.
- Knew the psychology of the person challenging my interests.
- Reliable / Respectable / Understandable data...
- Get the precise information (measure it).
- Backed up request with solid information.

Diligence

- Long Term Commitment -
- Persistence -
- It took over three years (time).
- Meetings, Meetings, Meetings -
- Homework -
- Passion, Commitment -
- Follow-through -

Paying Attention

- Noticing / Paying Attention...
- Pay attention to what we are hearing.
- Listen to understand.
- Windshield survey...
- Observed system practice.
- Observe...

Personal Accountability

- Personal Investment...
- It's us/me who must take responsibility.
- Take Personal Responsibility.
- Get...involved in ... important issues.

Skillful Leadership

- Town / Official Action...
- Manage power interplay.
- Spoke to people of influence regarding the unpredictability of the rule.
- The leadership of best interest...

Education

- Help constituents to understand why.
- Use education skills...
- Information provided openly...

Full Involvement

- We invited people and they came.
- Meeting with groups and individuals...
- Leadership from the grass roots...
- Diversity of interests...
- Assemble a cross/interest group

Vision

- Take future considerations into account...
- Focused Aim...
- Being ready for things to fall into place.
- Articulate a clear vision for the project.

Flexibility

- We developed a plan and didn't back down / We did edit & change it / It worked at the local level.
- Got over my skeptical attitude and approached the warden for help – he responded.
- Asked for change.

Organization

- The issues/answers are well laid out/organized.
- Make a list of what needs to be done.
- Identity sign (focused project) ...
- Create lists of what needs to be done.

Best Practices

- Did a "Plus and Minus" paper.
- Provided opportunities outside of the meetings for people to add to Plus and Minus sheet.
- "Dumbing down" information

Publicity

- Distributed petitions
- Contacted the media

External Forces

- An outside critical issue
- External requirement mandate

Respect

- Hold respect for the views of other people...
- Trust, Empathy, Respect, and Integrity...

Eventfulness

- (Celebrating) making progress...
- A "landmark" happened.

Success

What will happen by applying these “best practices” that we know work?

We will have more skilful leadership

- Leadership will operate with integrity.
- Leadership will put aside past personal baggage and do the right thing.
- Leadership integrity = being able to speak credibly with people who differ.
- Our communications will be clear, simple, understandable and on their (the citizens’) turf.

We will have more cooperation

- City planning departments will talk to towns.
- Suspicion that prevents us from cooperating could be reduced or eliminated.
- Small improvements/steps could happen that lead to big positive differences.

We will have Win/Win conclusions

- There will be a belief that outcomes benefit all parties.
- We could get an answer to urban sprawl that is satisfactory to cities and rural people.
- There could be more boundary agreements that hold.

We will be ready for the future

- We will be ready when a/the crisis happens.
- We will be ready with well-researched information that anticipates new questions.