



Civic Engagement Commission Meeting Notes

4/6/2022

Attendees: Charise Canales, Ama (Amanda) Hapke, Debi Hunter Holen, Sean Moore, Angela Lawson, Alison Coombs, Kelli Kelly, David Corbari, Tristen Sheptock

Meeting Purpose and Objectives: Provide recommendations to Council and City management regarding the development and implementation of civic engagement programs, which may include recommendations regarding best practices for outreach and education. Recommend to Council new initiatives to support and partner with community-based organizations, institutions and civic leaders in the public and private sectors in their civic engagement efforts. Coordinate with Council Members, community boards, and other City agencies in the development and implementation of civic engagement programs. Work with City staff and Council to plan and implement a Civic Engagement Academy.

Discussion Topics:

1. CM Lawson: 2016 initiated Civic Engagement Academy to help people get more involved.
 - a. Used to have a Civic Engagement Academy before that ended.
 - b. Restart the Academy – need more bandwidth. Get the Commission involved in supporting.
2. CM Coombs: Purpose of Commission, expand impact and get info out to more people (Academy has limited #'s of participants). Use the Commission to get more info out on how to get involved. People need an outlet to have these conversations and get more educated. Hear directly from Commission members on what their ideas are for how people will respond best to getting involved.
3. Tristen: Presentation on Commissions, Terms, Bylaws, etc.
4. Ama: Went through Civic Engagement Academy, loved it, told her network to participate in it. Did Aurora Police Academy. Lack of understanding of what the city does, different departments. Learn what the city can do for them, or what they can do in the city, get involved. Got neighbors to apply for Beautification Grant. Neighbors much more active after completing the grant, hold regular block parties, do a little garden.
5. Sean: Got involved with Ruben Medina's trainings when he was getting involved in civic engagement. People are uninformed/misinformed. Coined the term: Community business and policy, bridge gaps. Need to work to bridge the gaps. Sparks Report – top 5 issues to address in community. For Black community, Brother Jeff was main media voice. Very tied with black community in CO, especially in political scene.
6. Debi: Figure out ways to go into community and share the city with them, not ask community to come to us. Many small groups get together and WANT to do something but don't know what to do, how to do it, find money. Need to build relationships in the

community. Make sure all communities are represented, help spread the word to those not at this table.

7. Sean: People don't always go on the website to get the most updated info. They go to The Sentinel, etc. Trying to reach a broader audience, use his own social media to get the word out. People are tied down with bread and butter issues of life, don't have the capacity to get as involved. We need to share info on a broader perspective, especially critical information. We have a real divide in our community. Asked people in faith community, etc. what they think we'll get out of the CEC. Need to have straight talk and make real change. We have the responsibility of showing up and being transformational for those that don't have a voice.
8. Ama: We should be working more with other organizations that other people trust. People have no idea of the wealth of resources Aurora has. Work with people where they feel comfortable (sporting groups, churches, etc.) Website isn't user-friendly, too professional of a language. Especially if English isn't first language, it's very intimidating. Keeps people from getting involved. Style of language. Not being able to find things on the website. Structure of the website. Need to simplify the website! (Had hired a consultant within the last year to overhaul.
9. People don't know if things are a county, city, state, federal issue. At local level, we should help with referrals and connecting people.
10. Conversations/meetings with council, state, federal in the same room to work collaboratively to tackle issues together. Used to hold those but isn't happening much anymore. Important for making policy.
11. Concerns about autonomy of the Commission. Want to make sure we can go out to community and make recommendations to the full Council.
12. Make Civic Engagement Academy more transformational and get feedback from Commission.
13. CM Lawson: Wants to make sure we engage youth, especially in Academy
14. Sean: Focus on youth violence, need to captivate attention of youth but hard with access to guns/drugs. Created Dallas Street Opportunity Center – create space for the youth. But need the follow-up programming and opportunities like the academy. Get academy filled and successful
15. David: Simplify down process of pipeline when people experience an issue and want to engage, then getting them to know how to talk to, who to ask. Many cities, it's intentional to keep distance between people and the city. Use existing tools like Access Aurora, Engage Aurora – tweak to get people interacting more with the city. I got in trouble, I'm mad about something, I need something, or there's a new program – how people interact with the city. Identify anchor points within the community – could be a physical structure where people frequent. Table at those places as resource navigation.
16. Many siloes and differences between the different areas – could have community boards to talk through the big focus areas in each areas. Bridge the gaps, see the similarities.
17. Could have Policy Projects to Council if a constituent is facing an issue and needs a solution.
18. CEC to better support and enhance other Commissions and the wider organization.
19. Could create two Academies – one for youth, one for adults. Youth Commission could lead it. Change the structure so it's not all listening to presentations.
20. Go to give presentations at schools (go to community instead of coming here). Do that with Civic Engagement Academy as one of the sessions. Connect the Youth Academy to the Adult Academy in some way.
21. Creation of bylaws – want to get to action right away too.
22. David – make sure we're an open-door Commission. Equitable approach to interactions. Make sure there are opportunities for people with only a few minutes to get involved.

23. Teaching people how to speak to Council/connect to them, differences between at Large and Ward seats. Speaking at Public Comment, all the different ways to participate.
24. Commission to take field trips – city tour? Get a better sense of the city and all the elements.
25. Fact sheets about the city of Aurora – don't have those anymore.
26. We need some small victories right now, share the good news because we just hear the bad in the news.
27. Pop up engagement from staff like PD – go out to community and ask them these questions.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 4, 2022