

Council Resolution

Presented By Robert Sylvester 

Referred To _____ Committee: _____ Date _____

Out of Committee By _____ Date _____

WHEREAS, the City Council fully supports the goal of improved citizen participation for the City of St. Paul, and

WHEREAS, the City Council has been able to reach fundamental agreement on a policy statement for and definition of citizen participation, and

WHEREAS, there is a need to adopt a citizen participation policy statement and definition,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council does hereby adopt the following policy statement:

"Citizen Participation is a process, not a structure. The City has a responsibility to develop a process that will insure that everyone has the opportunity to communicate with city government, and further, that everyone is assured that they will be heard. This process can not guarantee that there will always be agreement nor is it a substitution of one level of government for another or any other transfer of power."

COUNCILMEN

Yeas	Nays	
Christensen		7
Hunt Hunt		
Levine		0
Roedler		
Sylvester		
Tedesco		
President Hozza Hozza		

Adopted by Council: _____ Date OCT 9 1975

Certified Passed by Council Secretary

By 

Approved by Mayor: _____ Date OCT 10 1975

By 

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Requested by Department of: _____

By _____

Form Approved by City Attorney

By 

Approved by Mayor for Submission to Council

By _____

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

On July 22, following a lengthy debate on citizen participation, the City Council adopted a resolution which accomplished five things:

- (1) It adopted the concept proposed by the Citizen Participation Forum delineating seventeen neighborhood districts in the city.
- (2) It directed the Office of the Mayor to use these districts singularly or in combination as a basis for citizen input for community development programs.
- (3) It allowed the initiation of an early warning communications system between the city and the neighborhoods.
- (4) It allowed the initiation of a general district planning process now under way.
- (5) It provided a cooling off period to allow further discussion of the resolution of disagreement on the issue of citizen participation.

While I believe there are still points of contention and a total consensus is yet to be reached, I do feel that there is now more awareness of the issue, a better understanding of it, less emotionalism about it, and more general agreement on the major objectives of a citizen participation plan for St. Paul.

On August 29, Councilwoman Ruby Hunt wrote to Mayor Lawrence D. Cohen her feelings on the general district planning process and its relationship to citizen participation. In this letter Mrs. Hunt outlined eleven points which she felt the general district planning process effectively addressed.

These eleven points were:

- (1) Broad representation on District Planning Committees -- method of

appointment by community organizations assures that a variety of interests and viewpoints will be represented in committee discussion, and not merely a majority opinion.

- (2) Retains effectiveness of existing community organizations and avoids effort and expense of neighborhood elections.
- (3) Time schedule -- Proposal states that a plan for each district can be prepared in one year -- if this commitment can be met, a year from now we will have greatly improved our capability to handle city development on an orderly basis. This will be a concrete accomplishment in city planning.
- (4) Emphasis on tailoring plan for each district to meet specific problems and needs of the district is a practical approach and will produce prompt results, prevent bogging down on unproductive efforts.
- (5) Separates functions that can best be performed by district citizens (communication, organization, and problem identification) from duties of professional planning staff.
- (6) Coordinates private and public development proposals and provides a basis for reacting to new proposals and compromising neighborhood and city-wide interests.
- (7) Meets need for planning in every city neighborhood so that we can be aware of creeping blight and take steps to turn it around.
- (8) Will help focus attention of city officials on incipient problems before they become crucial.
- (9) Addresses both long-range and short-range planning objectives -- orderly city development and CD Year II and CIP Programs.

- (10) Provides the broader citizen input promised for CD Year II and a way to inform citizens on the status of their neighborhood, and get their involvement in planning and evaluation of progress in their area.
- (11) After the district plan has been adopted by the HRA Board, Planning Commission and City Council, the district will have some assurance that the plan will not be arbitrarily violated by new development.

I believe that implicit in Mrs. Hunt's suggestion is the concept that a citizen participation function will grow more or less naturally from the general district planning process. Essentially I agree with her.

However, because the general district planning process is not in and of itself a citizen participation process, certain problems will develop in certain neighborhoods unless some additional steps are taken to assure adequate citizen participation in the City of St. Paul.

The first step that needs to be taken is the adoption by the City Council of a policy which defines citizen participation. I would suggest the following language for consideration of a formal definition of citizen participation:

"Citizen Participation is a process, not a structure. The City has a responsibility to develop a process that will insure that everyone has the opportunity to communicate with city government, and further, that everyone is assured that they will be heard. This process can not guarantee that there will always be agreement nor is it a substitution of one level of government for another or any other transfer of power."

If this is an acceptable definition of what citizen participation is and should be, then it becomes apparent that recent efforts to establish a citizen participation program have emphasized structure rather than process. This emphasis has created much confusion, disagreement, and ill will. There doesn't seem to be much disagreement on the need for citizen participation; the disagreement always seems to occur on the form that the process will take.

It seems clear to me now that the City has an interest in the process but it has little or no interest in the structure or the form in which this process takes place. Therefore, I think that the city should say little more than the following about the structure of citizen participation:

"Each district shall determine for itself the structure for the process of citizen participation. This may involve the creation of a new organization, recognition of an existing group, or a cooperative arrangement among existing groups, however, this structure shall be one that will insure that the process is broadly based, democratic, and nonexclusionary."

Not everyone, of course, will accept these definitions of citizen participation, or its structure. Some neighborhood groups and some individuals will view this definition as leaving the neighborhood group powerless. The real power of neighborhood groups, however, does not derive from any policy, contract, or structure. The neighborhood groups real power derives from the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and is essentially political power.

The fact that an organization meets regularly and is interested in matters pertaining to city government provides more real power than anything else. That is not to say that there should not be any formalization of the relationship between the city and the neighborhood group.

As Mrs. Hunt suggests, where the district planning process is effectively proceeding, a natural conclusion of a planning process is that some group of citizens must monitor the implementation of the plan. If we have any faith in democratic processes we can presume that when the neighborhood reaches this conclusion it will suggest a fair and open process that will maintain citizen input into the implementation of programs.

At this point both the city and the neighborhood group will undoubtedly want some kind of formalized outline of their respective responsibilities. In

the past we have discussed this largely in terms of contract, a word which places, I think, too much emphasis on division of powers rather than emphasizing cooperation. I think what we are really talking about at this point is not so much a contract but a work program which emphasizes neighborhood priorities and commits the city to providing sufficient resources to address those priorities.

During the cooling off period, it has been suggested that the city consider funding on the basis of project and that it be possible to contract with a neighborhood group for a specific function covering a specific period of time. There are cases where this has already been done, for example, in the Lexington-Hamline area, and it may be the most appropriate way to work in other similar situations that may develop.

Another suggestion has been that the city pay a portion of a community organizers' salary already working for the neighborhood organization. The rationale for this is that the city's planning and participation programs will take a considerable amount of the organizers time and it is only fair that the city pay a portion of this salary. This again seems to be a reasonable way to proceed in this particular situation.

These examples suggest that just as the citizen organization will probably be unique in structure, so too the formal relationship between the city and the neighborhood group will be unique.

In summary, then, in those areas where the general district planning is now proceeding, it seems to me that we can expect that the following steps will occur:

- (1) The city will establish a working arrangement with known neighborhood groups and proceed on the district plan.
- (2) At the conclusion of the planning process, the neighborhood and the

city will recognize the need for some formalized relationship between the city and the neighborhood group.

- (3) The city and the neighborhoods will work together to see that an appropriate structure already exists or that a new structure is created in the neighborhood and a reasonable work program will be agreed upon so that the neighborhood and the city can implement the plan.

However, there are some areas where difficulties are arising with the general planning process because there is no clear organization or combination of organizations that speak for residents of the area. Since planning can not take place in a vacuum this not only hampers the plans to be developed but will probably make the legitimacy of these plans open to question when the implementation phase begins.

In these cases it would seem more logical to emphasize the development of a citizen participation process prior to completing the district planning process. Unfortunately, the action of July 22 did not give the administration the authority to proceed on this basis. Therefore, I would suggest that the next logical step in dealing with citizen participation is to provide the administration with the authority and the guidelines for this process.

The citizen participation process outlined in these guidelines could be activated in one of two ways:

- (1) The city planning team may recognize the need for increased citizen participation in order to promptly bring about the completion of the general district planning process. In this case the administration would begin the citizen participation process using whatever steps necessary to make the planning process viable.

- (2) The neighborhood itself may recognize the need for a broader based citizen component and request that the administration implement the necessary steps to bolster the citizen participation process.

Basically, the guidelines that would be necessary are these:

STEPS TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROCESS

- Step 1. The city shall develop an inventory of community groups and organizations. This inventory shall identify all existing groups, institutions, organizations, clubs, individuals, social service agencies, churches, labor unions, fraternal organizations, and business associations.
- Step 2. The city shall initiate contact with groups and individuals within the district and describe to them the citizen participation process and its relationship to community development activities and other programs. In addition to meetings with groups and individuals, the city should use, wherever possible, existing resources within the area such as community newspapers, church bulletins, or community bulletin boards in order to assure broad dissemination of information relating to the program.
- Step 3. Refine designated boundaries. The citizen organizations in the districts should first make every effort to reach agreement among themselves on the boundaries. If there is a dispute, citizen groups should be given a maximum of 45 days to resolve the matter.
- City Planning staff should be requested to analyze the disputed area, taking into consideration such things as natural or man-made boundaries and other appropriate planning criteria. Planning staff should then make their analysis available to the community groups, as well as to appropriate City officials.

If the community groups are unable to reach agreement on the boundaries, the City Council, or an appropriate subcommittee thereof, should schedule a public meeting with advance notice to all interested parties. After hearing the facts of the situation and making use of the planning department analysis, the final decision should be made by the full City Council.

Door-to-door survey within the disputed area to elicit the opinion of the residents should be considered. There may well be areas in which a survey could be used and reasonably valid results obtained. (Step 3 represents policy already approved by City Council.)

Step 4. The City shall establish a working committee to develop structure, by-laws, and functions of the district organization.

All meetings of the working committee shall be open meetings.

Each district shall determine the structure for the process of citizen participation. This may involve the creation of a new organization, recognition of an existing group, or a cooperative arrangement among existing groups. However, this structure shall be one that will ensure that the process is broadly based, democratic, and nonexclusionary.

The by-laws governing the process shall include: the purpose of the organization; the method of election or selection of officers; membership qualifications; duties of officers; the manner of conducting meetings; a regular meeting schedule; boundaries; and an affirmative action plan.

Step 5. Public hearings in the neighborhood on the proposed structure and by-laws shall be held. Prior to the hearing there shall be ample public notice and ample time for groups in the community to discuss the proposal at their regular meetings. The city shall provide groups and individuals with adequate material and resources to describe and explain the process.

- Step 6. Following the above hearings, the working committee shall refine the proposed structure and make whatever changes necessary in the proposal.
- Step 7. A public hearing in the neighborhood on the revised structure shall be held.
- Step 8. The proposed structure is presented to the Mayor and City Council. The proposal is reviewed by City staff and staff makes recommendation to the Mayor and City Council.
- Step 9. The City Council holds a public hearing on the proposed structure of the community organization. City Council approves, rejects, or modifies the proposal.
- Step 10. The neighborhood implements structure and organization and integrates it with the district planning process.
- If it is desired, the City shall assist the neighborhood in conducting any elections or community conventions required. The City shall also assist the working committee in notifying the residents and distributing election or convention materials.

If the Council were to adopt these guidelines, then I believe that the Council will have taken very significant steps to insure that the City adopts a strong citizen participation program without ignoring the concerns raised by various groups and individuals who opposed the previous citizen participation guidelines.

In addition, the Council must make a determination about the continuing of Project Area Committees in Neighborhood Development Project areas. I would suggest that the Council agree to continue the funding of these organizations at the present level until the end of CD Year I. However, this funding would be contingent upon the Project Area Committees continuing to fulfill their

responsibilities related to general district planning within the boundaries delineated on July 22, 1975.

In the meantime I think the Council must recognize that no consensus has been reached on the level of funding or the nature of staffing for citizen participation organizations. The disagreement over this issue within the community remains very significant and I feel that final steps by the City Council at this time would be premature.

However, the Council should recognize that we have imposed upon the Office of the Mayor additional duties and that resources must be made available to carry out these responsibilities. Therefore, I would suggest that the remaining funds ear-marked in the CD Year I budget for citizen participation be released to the Office of the Mayor for use in financing:

- (1) The citizen participation elements of the general district planning process.
- (2) The early warning information process.
- (3) The Offices of the Neighborhood Development Program.
- (4) The initiation where necessary of the process for establishment of citizen participation.

These steps will carry out the mandates of the Community Development Act of 1974 and will assure the orderly development of a citizen participation process in the City. It will not, however, force premature decisions about the structure or nature of citizen participation before consensus can be reached or before each neighborhood has had the opportunity to address these issues themselves.