WHAT'S NEXT

ALEXANDRIA

#WHATSNEXTALE

WHAT'S NEXT ALEXANDRIA

Community Dialogue

June 24, 2013

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA VIRGINIA

William D. Euille

Mayor, City of Alexandria

Welcome

What is What's Next Alexandria?

A City initiative to begin a community conversation about civic engagement and planning for the future.

How Alexandrians can best participate in the public decisions that shape the City.

The Goal: Principles and a Framework that will guide future civic engagement processes in Alexandria.

Introductions

City Council

Members of ACPS School Board & all City of Alexandria Boards Commissions

Deputies, Department Heads, Staff

Members of the Community

Chris Lewis

School Board Member,
Alexandria City Public Schools

Introduction

Ground Rules

- Stick to the task at hand – follow the agenda
- Treat each other with respect
- Only one person speaks at a time
- Listen as an ally not an adversary
- Ask for clarification, don't assume you know what someone means
- Give everyone a chance to participate equally; avoid dominating
- Avoid side conversations
- No one will characterize other people's view in or outside of the meeting

What We Heard: 4/30 Evaluation

- More outreach/diversity of involvement in this process – not just cultural; also, age, economic status, community groups, etc.
- Accessibility – i.e., make it less complicated; simplify language; need more documents translated into Spanish; different locations for meetings; more access to information
- The clarity of the process needs improvement.
- students in the city want to be kept informed of local issues/what is happening in their city government.
- How will all of this work be communicated to the public-at-large and implemented? Are all city organizations working together toward a common goal?
- Community ambassadors will help with neighborhood/city communications.
- Everyone's participation will bring success.

Where We Are

POLL
September - October 2012

1 **COMMUNITY DIALOGUE 1**
November 15, 2012

Online Interaction and refinement
January 4 - 14, 2013

2 **COMMUNITY DIALOGUE 2**
Refine and confirm civic engagement principles and create process framework
January 29, 2013

Online Interaction and refinement
March 19 - April 9

3 **COMMUNITY DIALOGUE 3**
April 30, 2013

Online Interaction and refinement
June, 2013

4 **COMMUNITY DIALOGUE 4**
June 24th, 2013

NEXT STEPS

Goals for Tonight

- Review Progress to date
- Review Timeline for adoption
- Work Together to Create Strategies for Communication and Engagement that are Shared by Citizens and the City

Paul Smedberg

City Council

Progress to Date

Civic engagement principles: What standards are we *all* going to follow?

Civic engagement framework: What process we can expect for *every* project?

Guidelines for successful implementation What do we need do to make this work?

Progress to Date

- Principles (standards)
- Framework (roadmap)
- Guidelines (actions that ensure success)

Tonight: *Communication Tools and Strategies* to expand the number of people who participate

Handbook for Civic Engagement

Why a Handbook?
What's in it?
What's the timeline?

WHAT'S NEXT ALEXANDRIA

HANDBOOK FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

DRAFT

This June 2013 Preliminary Draft includes the proposed elements and outline of the What's Next Alexandria Civic Engagement Handbook for community review. This preliminary document represents the next step in the community's work to develop a handbook to guide civic engagement. The complete draft of the handbook will be released in July 2013 after incorporation of further detail in each section, including content created at the 4th Community Dialogue on June 24th, as well as input from the community and broad City staff review. The community is invited to provide suggestions and comments on the preliminary draft at alexandriava.gov/whatsnext.

Handbook – Principles

EASY PARTICIPATION
EARLY INVOLVEMENT
EVALUATION
INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUITY
MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT
MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY
RESPECT
SUSTAINED COLLABORATION
TRANSPARENCY

Handbook - Framework

Why it's needed:

- Consistency throughout City government
- Shared understanding of what to expect (phases, engagement strategies, tools, deliverables)
- Build trust and transparency

How it will be used:

- Each project has a *Civic Engagement Framework* that the community helps to create
- Content includes: Project goal, timeline, deliverables for each phase, and tools and activities required to accomplish goal

Civic Engagement Framework

City Department: Project: Goal : Overall project timeline:

Phase 1 Information *(Gathering, Organizing, Understanding)*

Key Principles:
Meaningful Engagement
Mutual Accountability
Early Involvement
Easy Participation
Inclusiveness and Equity

Engagement Activities:
- ☐ Hold public meetings that are well-organized and include group work to hear community opinions
- ☐ Collect research and identify community concerns
- ☐ Educate community on important issues about the project (online and in person)
- ☐ Reach out to the community to encourage participation (phone calls, door knocks, flyers, online)
- ☐ Visit a project location as a group

Tools:
- ☐ Offer online participation (surveys, forums, social media)
- ☐ Use graphics, maps, 3D models, & pictures to explain project

Products:
- ☐ Community engagement plan
  A preliminary report that describes the project, schedule, tasks, and budget
- ☐ Clear goals for each step of the process that must be met before moving to the next step
- ☐ Community's list of issues to address and their view of what we should be working toward

2 Options *(Discuss and Evaluate Options)*

Key Principles:
Sustained Collaboration
Easy Participation
Transparency
Inclusiveness and Equity

Engagement Activities:
- ☐ Hold public meetings that are well-organized and include group work to hear community opinions
- ☐ Provide information about options, including what has worked well in other places
- ☐ Research possible options and potential impacts

Tools:
- ☐ Offer online participation (surveys, forums, social media)
- ☐ Hold group meetings with people who are affected by project
- ☐ Use graphics, maps, 3D models, & pictures to explain project

Products:
- ☐ Short term report with realistic options for achieving the shared view
- ☐ Provide tools to help the community choose between the options

3 Recommendations

Key Principles:
Transparency
Easy Participation
Sustained Collaboration
Mutual Accountability
Meaningful Engagement

Engagement Activities:
- ☐ Hold public meetings that are well-organized and include group work to hear community opinions
- ☐ Present final options and how/why they were selected
- ☐ Hold public hearings where community members can make statements for City officials to consider, revise, and/or approve

Tools:
- ☐ Offer online participation (surveys, forums, social media)
- ☐ Hold group meetings with people affected by project
- ☐ Hold meetings open to the public for elected officials to hear comments and make decisions

Products:
- ☐ Report with options that have been reviewed and chosen; Report will show how community ideas guided the final recommendation, and will include the proposed plan and schedule to complete the work

4 Implementation and maintenance

Key Principles:
Transparency
Meaningful Engagement
Sustained Collaboration
Mutual Accountability
Evaluation

Engagement Activities:
- ☐ Offer visits to project sites as needed
- ☐ Evaluate how well the plan is being carried out
- ☐ Identify someone from the City who is responsible for the work and who citizens can call
- ☐ Involve the community in carrying out the plan in each phase of the process

Tools:
- ☐ Provide a schedule of project activities to carry out the plan
- ☐ Notify community about public meetings

Products:
- ☐ Use objective measurements to determine if the community engagement in the decision-making process was successful
- ☐ Provide regular progress reports

Handbook: Tools & Strategies for Meaningful Engagement

- Before event: *early notice*, *clear agendas* and *access* to background information
- Type of event: what's *most productive* for issue at hand? In person or online? Workshop, town hall or open house?
- After event: prompt *follow up*, *show* how *input* is shaping next steps
- Communications *toolbox* – what works best for broad participation?

Handbook: Implementation & Evaluat

Implementation

- Develop first year action plan
- Training for staff and community to improve engagement skills
- Ingrain WNA principles and framework into City government culture

Evaluation

- Evaluate *both* individual meetings *and* overall success of engagement for each project
- Establish criteria, process for annual evaluation

Upcoming projects

Upcoming projects will follow the principles, framework and guidelines in the handbook, including:

- Public Art Master Plan
- Eisenhower West Transportation Study and Small Area Plan
- Stormwater Management Plan
- Bicycle Master Plan

Handbook – Successful Outcomes

- Working together to solve common problems.
- Public is well informed, has a clear understanding of how to participate.
- More people participate in (and benefit from) City decisions.
- Community takes an active role in organizing others.
- City decisions/actions are accepted because they reflect public participation in a transparent process.
- Engagement approach is consistent throughout City government.
- Community and government have mutual trust.

Handbook Timeline

June/July: Preliminary outline for public/staff review

July: Draft for public review

July-September: Outreach, Briefings

October: Council Adoption

Ongoing: Implementation, Training, Monitoring, Evaluation

Chris Lewis

Activities

Activities 1 & 2

OBJECTIVE : Identify your networks and best methods for communication

DIRECTIONS: Fill in your information and responses. Remember that the City and the community share the responsibility for communicating.

NTRODUCE YOURSELVES
and
GET TO WORK

Activities 1 & 2

OBJECTIVE : Identify your networks and best methods for communication

DIRECTIONS: Fill in your information and responses. Remember that the City and the community share the responsibility for communicating.

COLLECT WORKSHEETS

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Activity 3 – Round 1 and 2

OBJECTIVE : Develop strategies for use of specific communication tools with the understanding that everyone shares responsibility for implementation.

DIRECTIONS: Your table facilitator will lead a discussion about your table's communication tools. Think about how these tools can be used, what their advantages and limitations are, and what it would take to create a sustainable citywide system of communication using them.

Activity 3 – Round 1

QUESTION: How can the community and the city use this tool to increase public knowledge and participation in city projects?

Activity 3 – Round 2

QUESTION: How can the community and the city use this tool to increase public knowledge and participation in city projects?

Report Out

Reminder - Next Steps

June/July: Preliminary outline for public/staff review

July: Draft for public review

July-September: Outreach, Briefings

October: Council Adoption

Ongoing: Implementation, Training, Monitoring, Evaluation

Meeting Evaluation

Please complete your evaluation and leave it at your table.

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Thank you!

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