

**Advancing Our Community
Steering Committee meeting
December 8, 2008; 1:30 pm**

In attendance: Chris Baumann – SAFV, David Voluck – YAS, Sheldon Schmitt – SPD, Curt Ledford – Community Schools, Gordon Blue – SCPS, Doug Osborne – SEARHC Health Promotions, Matthew & Kayla – AOC facilitators.

Introduce Doug Osborne as new committee member – Kayla and Matthew have been helping with the Sitka Health Summit, which operates under the theme of inter-agency collaboration and community planning. Because the Health Summit has become so integral with AOC, we've invited Doug, who is one of the key Health Summit leaders, to join the AOC Steering Committee.

2008 in review: What AOC has been involved with

Health Summit – collaboration of Sitka Community Hospital, SEARHC, and the City, but it encompasses a broad spectrum of the community and brings in “unusual suspects”. It brings in a high-end public speaker, offers a community halibut dinner, recognizes local “health champions,” and facilitates community visioning of 4-5 goals to achieve in the next year. Some of the goals from the last two years include: nutrition in schools, bicycle friendly, supporting Hames, employee health, pedestrian friendly, Farmer's Market, and Community greenhouse. Dates for 2009: April 29-May 1. Intentional focus on getting businesses engaged.

Regular meetings & networking for AOC – no matter how many people show up, something good always happens.

Behavioral Health Academy – sprung from the Behavioral Health committee, who said there are not enough up-and-coming BH specialists, so we've helped the Sitka Job Center to develop an academy to attract more young people to that field.

Behavioral Health committee has been very active.

Minor Consuming forum in April, 2008 – brought together a wide representation of entities involved with MCs to discuss the current procedure.

Work with SAFV and SEARHC on a community-wide prevention plan.

Community Indicators report – by the end of spring, pull together an updated Community Indicators report; we plan to host series of meetings around different topics, decide on the data that indicates long-term

Funding

Current funding source is dried up; Curt reports that the grant program officer has not communicated much in the last 2 years and the grant is officially over, but there are some leftovers running us through June. As of June 30, no more funds.

The contractors' workload varies, and is somewhat dependent on what's going on. It's about \$35,000/yr at current level of activity; could pare it down to just hosting regular meetings.

Have Kayla and Matthew searched for other funding sources? AOC exists for the greater good, and the Steering Committee represents that greater good. Direction and sources need to come from the Steering Committee.

State/Fed funding often requires a collaborative, but they always assume that group doesn't already exist. What's happening here now is Sitka has "facilitators-at-large", available to take on projects as they become available. But it's difficult to get funding for that, without a specified project or outcome.

Options for funding:

1. State/Fed Behavioral Health grant, but that would likely be more constraining and require a specific focus.
2. Funding through City – working as community organizers at large for the greater good of the city; but if this happens through the regular grant cycle, then AOC is in competition with its member organizations, and the members need to apply for their own agencies to show city support for other groups.
3. Could somehow secure basic funding to hold regular meetings (perhaps through membership fees?); then members who want services for more specific projects have to pay in
4. Or decide it's not worth having the collaboration, and Kayla & Matthew are still free-lance and available for hire for special projects.

Comments from Steering Committee members:

It would be nice to get \$10-15,000 from city to cover core costs; then pursue grants for special projects.

I'm pessimistic; money's going to get tight – state money with oil falling, not seeing much coming down from feds; local businesses say sales have been lower

AOC has kept a low profile – it wouldn't be obvious to public or funding sources that "of course we need to fund you!"

AOC is unique and important; nothing else like AOC exists. I think it's really important. Another idea is to charge an annual fee for membership, based on size of organization. We may also get a stronger commitment from members if they pay. The community greenhouse has found private foundations are more flexible and willing to fund these kinds of things. Also, my brother is an economics guy – he says it may be a stark time now to ask for money, but it's not going to last forever. I think the 3rd Health Summit has potential to be a huge success and AOC has been huge part of that; may be better to make an ask for money after the health summit and see what economics are doing then.

If AOC wasn't around, not as many chances to meet together and think about community wellness together.

I'm in support of a membership fee, and I don't think the city is hurting for money right now – we could get something from them.

We've asked for a contribution from members to support it in part; also gives important footing that they say this is important.

Bringing this forward now may be good time for agencies to build this into next grant requests.

We may want to host community event, a fundraiser, or whatever, to show community support (before approaching Assembly for money). (Doug has a fundraising idea; he didn't tell, but said it's a guarantee for raising money.)

I like the idea that spin-off projects need to provide some extra funds. It's not fair for agencies to shoulder all the cost for special projects they may not be involved with.

Funding plan

The committees seems to be in agreement about exploring a membership fee. There are lots of questions, though, basically about what the formula and minimum fee would be, and how fees would be collected and where the money would be held. Other questions focus on what membership privileges would be. (ideas: different communication levels, facilitation for boards/staff)

The group thinks there should be a minimum amount, but someone also mentions the potential for free membership if necessary. Maybe a breakdown based on employee size; and make it a range instead of just one minimum number.

One person suggests that AOC could develop some common language for non-profits to include in grants listing AOC as an in-kind donation for community organization; likely to be successful, at least for BH agencies.

CHARR, White E, and the Rotary are mentioned as possibilities for special project grants.

It's also pointed out that AOC may need more visibility – everybody knows what the Chamber is, but their meetings only draw 10-12 people.

The group agrees to meet again on January 8 at 12:30. Matthew and Kayla will prepare a report on how many agencies regularly represented, a breakdown of their time per project, and ideas for how to structure this.

Prevention Planning

SAFV and SEARHC have grants to do prevention planning, related to DV in some ways, but that could be broadened (substance abuse, abusive relationships); had a brainstorming session, came up with a very broad vision for making it a great place; but needs to be pared down, goals/actions delineated, and then a structure for seeing it through.

Chris will send around the rough draft to the SC for them to review, but seems like a certainty; one committee member said, "if we don't do it, we need to reexamine why we're here."

There is some concern about doing this if there's no money for funding AOC, however.