

Meeting Notes
Southside Green Zones Council Meeting
July 18th, 2019
5:30 - 8:00pm
Open Arms of MN, 2500 Bloomington Ave

Southside Green Zone Council Members in attendance: Scott Hergarten, Megan Kuhl-Stennes, Samara Adam, José Luis Villaseñor, Karen Clark, Kowsar Mohamed, Ashley O'Neill Prado, Jodi Vermillion, Cassie Holmes, Viviana Rodriguez, Joe Golish

Guests in attendance: Dominic (?), Rory Wakemup (concern about costs pushing residents out of the city), Teeko Yang, Shirley Heyer, Cassandra Meyer

Facilitators and staff in attendance: Alejandra (Tobar Alatriz), Shalini Gupta, Kelly Muellman, Kennedy Kruchoski

5:45 Welcome & Intros

The meeting began with facilitators leading a grounding and centering exercise, honoring the work that came before the group and recognizing that the meeting was taking place on indigenous land.

Members and guests introduced themselves, sharing their names, pronouns, and organizational affiliations. One CM acknowledged the work that has led to the creation of the meeting location, Open Arms, which used to be a bar.

6:00 Green Zone Philanthropic Activity

Report Back from Southside Green Zone Council volunteers assisting with review of Minneapolis Foundation's Climate Action and Racial Equity Fund

At the June meeting of the Southside Green Zone Council, the Council voted to have two council members review applications for a new Climate and Racial Equity fund on behalf of the group. When the opportunity to review these proposals was presented at the previous meeting, council members voiced concern that none of them had been aware of the funding opportunity in the first place. Kowsar Mohamed and Ashley O'Neill Prado reviewed a total of 13 proposals, all of which would have some impact in the Southside Green Zone. They shared what they learned:

- That the request for proposals was created and released without much engagement. According to the City of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis and McKnight Foundations – the collaborative that created the Fund - they chose to limit the amount of funds used for outreach and communications to save as much as possible for funding proposals.
- Notice about the opportunity was only spread by that collaborative through word of mouth, emails to previous applicants and grantees, and Facebook.
- The Southside Green Zone Council can recommend to the Minneapolis and McKnight Foundations how to better go about this process for the next round of applications, which are due in September.
- Of the 13 proposals reviewed, many seemed to lack engagement or an equity framework, and didn't seem to be active in the communities they identified.

- In many cases, applicants seemed to be using the right jargon that sounded nice, but not doing the actual work. Some applicants seemed to be looking to add funding to an already large project, and others were on a smaller scale.
- In their review of the proposals, the two Southside GZ Council members tried to be mindful of the level of engagement and community involvement in the plans. For one, institutional agencies as contacts weighed lower than community/ neighborhood ones. Ashley and Kowsar both ranked proposals similarly. They shared that they learned that the foundations and city would be averaging their scores, and weren't sure how that would impact the strength of their votes.
- Topics covered by these proposals were varied, and included youth and energy efficiency, preserving indigenous seeds, and more. They shared their reviews and comments with a staff person at the Minneapolis Foundation, and can follow up with that person by the end of the month with feedback from the whole Southside Green Zone Council.
- The date for the selection of proposals wasn't yet known. According to the foundation consultant, there will be a quick turnaround between the selection of the first round of proposals and the release of the second round in August.

Discussion by the Council: The processes used by the Foundation for this first round of proposals seemed to be within a western framework. Responses referred back to academic and institutional jargon, including the Climate Action Plan. However, this needs to reach people who are doing this work in their communities, many unpaid. Options for reaching these communities could include local radio stations, news and organizations, and making use of the Neighborhood and Community Relations department at the City of Minneapolis.

Concern was voiced again about not knowing the context of this fund prior to the last meeting. While members appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback about what is happening in their community, there was an issue with the process.

Next Step: Using the thumb method Southside Green Zone Council members unanimously voted to review and make edits to a drafted letter to the City of Minneapolis, McKnight Foundation and the Minneapolis Foundation prior to the next meeting. Prior to the August meeting, members will provide their comments and feedback, and a final draft will be brought to the next meeting to approve.

6:15 Community Agreements

Member Commitments

Decision-making process

Facilitators led a discussion about defining group norms or community agreements for use during these meetings. These working rules or ways of being can relate to decision making, communications, quorum, respect, and more.

Defining working together respectfully:

- One supported the idea (found in the Mpls City Council resolution) that if someone doesn't show up for three consecutive meetings without letting facilitators know, they

lose their membership. Scott also suggested reaching out to anyone who is at risk of missing their third consecutive meeting.

- another included language about “no call no show”.
- Another CM emphasized that being on time if possible should be prioritized. The group has a lot to cover, and people have busy schedules.
- WAIT (Why Am I Talking/Why Aren't I Talking) was suggested that the group should be asking this of themselves, as opposed to asking facilitators to check folks.
- Someone else stated that it's important to ensure that everyone feels valued when speaking.
- One member has often used [Jemez Principles](#) – be inclusive, bottom up organizing, let people speak for themselves, etc.
- Step up/Step back was brought up. If members feel comfortable speaking in large groups, they might consider holding back a bit, whereas if a member is typically quiet, they might push themselves to speak up more than normal.
- Ensure that the group navigates situations where some people might be very direct and others might be traumatized as a result.
- Provide multiple opportunities to provide input, for example writing something down, individual brainstorming, pair sharing, speaking in the larger group, etc.
- Explore the possibility for establishing a “community safe word”.
- Consider the acoustics of the meeting spaces that are selected, so that folks aren't missing anything. Suggestion: MN Chippewa Tribe building
- Readjust the room setup if there is less attendance than expected.

Communications

- Members supported using email as a means of communication with facilitators, staff and each other, and discussed the parameters of those emails.
 - Topics should be related and relevant.
 - Emails should include Southside Green Zone in the subject line.
 - Two CMs suggested that Council members set the agenda instead of facilitators. Shalini clarified that the agenda is designed based on feedback from Council members and topics that members have expressed interest in. Alejandra mentioned that it is their intention to only include in the agendas what is requested by workgroups or Council members.
 - A CM contributed that having facilitators helps with the process of getting the members' ideas out, resulting in larger scale discussions and better results instead of what would be possible if the group just took everything on themselves. He mentioned that contributions should come from each member's area of expertise. Facilitators help the group create working structures.
 - Another CM mentioned the importance of all being on the same page. If the group were to establish leadership of some sort aside from the facilitators, she expressed the desire to get to know each other better before that happens.
- A CM expressed concern about seeing concrete results from the Council, and about the processes used by the group.

- The facilitators expressed that their goal is to set up this framework and process and then take a step back and allow the Council to start getting real work done. In their experience, this process is helpful to build group structure and make real actions happen.
- One CM expressed that he does not want facilitators to be doing things for the group, and would rather see a chairperson appointed for each meeting who writes each agenda. Another responded by reminding folks of the amount of work that goes into facilitating these meetings and to consider their own personal capacities before taking on more work.
- The suggestion was put forward on establishing a leadership team, no one felt they had the capacity to join it. Shalini and Alejandra suggested that the facilitators draft an agenda that then is distributed online for the council member to review, and is only finalized after that. The council members agreed to this process as a way to move forward.
- The group expressed agreement with the process of using quorum to make decisions. Quorum is 9 voting members.
- The group discussed their decision-making process, and confirmed that the thumb method that has been used so far has been working well.
- The group voted to adopt the written “ways of being” based on respect. All members voted with a thumbs up other than Scott, who voted with a thumb to the side.
- *Clarify with Shalini and Alejandra if there was a decision on decision-making*

6:45 Southside GZ Community & Art Brainstorm

Creative City Making artist Rory Wakemup

Rory introduced his motto “together we paint the world”, and gave examples of screen printed shirts (worn by him and another CM). He talked about work he has done on organizing for marches, as well as training people how to screen print and working with Anishinabe Academy and Indian Education. Rory’s purpose is to engage the community in the Southside Green Zone.

Rory’s questions:

- What would members like to see accomplished?
- Does the group have any ideas on messaging? (each point made by a different CM)
 - One CM suggested that the group figures out what the Southside Green Zone message is first.
 - Another suggested that all members and guests share why they are part of the Green Zone. She joined the green zone because she wants the community to be heard about what they want to be a healthy environment for themselves.
 - How does community get heard? By knowing each other and our neighbors. Not just the Council. Everyone needs to know each other, and recognize the importance of community building to get voices heard.
 - Another CM agreed.

- Power should be a word that is upfront. Otherwise things won't change. Power must come from the bottom up. This Council must take power for themselves.
- Always envisioned community as a catalyst of change. Work needs to come from the younger generation, and youth needs to be more part of the narrative. Youth can see blind spots. However, youth are generally unaware of processes at City. Engagement through art (such as screen printing or water ball fights) shows youth that they matter, and provides them with space identification.
- Unhealthy environments of all kinds (mental, environmental, physical, etc.) are no joke and should be addressed with urgency.
- Youth can make a lot of good changes. Social media can be a good way to reach youth. Does this group have a social media strategy?

The group formed a workgroup to assist Rory and inform his work. Members interested in participating in that workgroup are Cassandra, Samara, and Scott.

7:00 Policy Odyssey: Working Group Grounding Discussions

Highlighting how to advance this work in order to present actions to City Council and the Mayor.

- Green Economy & Anti-Displacement
- Self-Determination & Accountability
- Health & Energy in Housing
- Land Use: Air & Soil
- Healthy Food Access

Council members split into topic area groups, and reviewed a list of priorities [see meeting policy packet] within each of the topics listed above that had been compiled by the facilitators based on the input from past resident engagement and community input documents of the Green Zone Council and the 2017-2018 Southside Green Zone Taskforce. The lists identified key community identified problems as well as solutions. Facilitators asked members to reflect upon whether these lists reflect their own experiences, and whether there is anything missing from those lists that they would like to add. Members rotated through all of the tables, with the intention to result in a concrete work plan for the group as a whole.

Facilitators asked members to share their responses to and reflection about the activity. Their responses below:

- One appreciated being reminded of details attached to the ideas that have already been worked on.
- Another felt it was good to absorb the work that's been done prior to the existence of this group, and to come together to input their own thoughts and solutions.
- Felt it was nice being able to interface with different pieces of this work, although the process was confusing at first. This activity provided clarity on why the group is here and the work that has been done before this group.

- Found this to be interesting – when reading this at first it sounds nice, but it seems that people don't know what they're asking for. In regard to “healthy food” or “affordable housing” the City already has their own definitions for these types of things. This group needs to think about these topics at a more impactful level than just the language and jargon that sounds good. How does this group define “affordability”?
- Liked that this process sharpened what has already been worked on, and wants to use that sharpened weapon to take specific actions.
- Liked this activity, and that it got everyone talking.
- Noticed that this gets everyone more comfortable, after it seemed awkward in the beginning. Mentioned not having all positive experiences with facilitators, especially hired by the City, but appreciates the knowledge the facilitators bring to this group.
- Appreciated seeing different ideas.
- Reflected on sitting in self determination over the past month through the passion for environmental issues. Wants the good things, but also to keep people here and bring people back to the community that have been displaced. Wondered how to do that in the context of the group's other work.
- Reflected that nice things aren't usually made for poor people. Nice things and amenities in the community leads to people being kicked out.
- Recognized eagerness to get actions going. Expressed appreciation for the facilitators. Felt like a lot has come out of individual conversations. Desire to learn how to make people feel attached to this work.
- Expressed the need for a sense of urgency around these topics. Reflected upon the enthusiasm and commitment that was present during the meetings of the Southside Green Zone Task Force.
- Liked the activity, and hearing the perspectives of others. Everyone's backgrounds and experiences brought a lot of information to the table.

Shalini re-iterated the group's ask of the facilitators to draft and revise letters, based on the council's discussion, related to the Council's feedback to the Minneapolis Climate Action and Racial Equity fund and the MPCA Volkswagen settlement Phase 2 funding. Facilitators will create Google Docs of these drafts so members can make edits and review as they see fit. A vote will be taken next meeting on the final drafts.

Alejandra asked that all members affirm which workgroup they would like to join.

8:00 Closing / Adjourn