Citizen Involvement Committee

March 7, 2012 - 6:30 p.m.
HR Training Room – 3rd Floor

Members Present
John Deer, Vice Chair
Janet Lee
Anne Pobieglo
John Vandermosten, Chair
Cliff Wilson

Members Absent
Sharon Garner
Roserria Roberts
Paul Podett

Staff & Council Members Present
Karylinn Echols, Council Liaison
Teresa Hall, Recording Secretary
Cathy Harrington, Staff Liaison

Visitors/Guests
Mel Harmon

Summary Minutes

(A digital recording of the meeting is available for up to one year on the City's website)

Roll Call/Introductions:

Visitor: Mel Harmon attended to learn more about the group. She is interested in becoming a member.

Public Testimony: None

Minutes: The minutes from January 4, 2012 were approved unanimously

Project Discussion: City of Gresham's Outreach to Cultural Groups Represented in Gresham

Slavic Community Update – Cliff Wilson

Mr. Wilson left messages with the Slavic Ministries pastor at New Beginnings Church, and also the Sulamita Slavic Evangelical Church in Fairview. He will continue his efforts with both groups. He did speak with a member of the Home of God Slavic Church in Gresham and received the following input:

Q) Is there a reason you and your family are not personally involved with the City of Gresham?

A) 1. Lack of interest
2. Language barrier – if items such as flyers etc. are not in your language it is easier to throw away. (There are other dialects but seemingly a commonly used language – Russian)
3. General lack of trust in government especially among 1st generation immigrants and new residents. – (Note: The committee was reminded that the Church is their Community in most of these cultures and they tend to keep among themselves. The Pastor is similar to their Mayor etc.)

Q) How can the City better connect with members of the Slavic community? (This includes Russian, Ukrainian, Bella Russian)

A) 1. Anything in their own language would appeal to them including posting items in their Slavic community businesses.
2. Having a direct phone line to a Russian translator at the City would be helpful.

Q) Do you feel your community has access to services?

A) Yes, newer immigrants are paired with volunteers from organizations such as International Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) or Russian Oregon Social Services (ROSS) who help them gain access to services such as housing, food, welfare.

Ideas for soliciting more participation/involvement included:

1) Youth soccer programs – athletics by nature mixes the parents of various cultures together. Can we use this to do outreach/provide information?

2) Partnering with DES Transportation – they do a good and extensive job of outreach to communicate about City projects. We might ask if we can participate somehow and include information/communications about citizen involvement and services etc.

3) Public Schools might provide an opportunity due to the multi-cultural population of students.

4) Utilizing the language specific community newsletters of other cultures. This might include having a City Column.

El Programma Hispano Update – Cathy Harrington

Catholic Charities (El Programma) is very short on staff at this time but would love to help in the future. Cathy handed out a report (Attachment A) that Hector Osuna prepared before leaving the organization. The report includes responses from surveys he conducted asking the Latino population about their knowledge of the City – it will be very helpful in our project.

Next Steps: Interviewing/Contacting Members of Other Cultures

- Cliff Wilson will continue to work with churches/organizations to schedule meetings with community leaders and/or citizens of Slavic or Hispanic cultures. He will review the questions used to survey El Programma and if he can schedule a meeting, may invite a small group of committee members to participate. (The group will be fewer than 4 to avoid a quorum).
- Cathy Harrington hopes to have something scheduled in May with El Programma after they back-fill their open staff positions.
- Anne Pobieglo will meet with the International Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) in hopes that they will either provide us with contacts, or other useful information to assist us in reaching out to the Slavic, Romanian or Hispanic communities in Gresham.
- Janet Lee will research creating a project to inform students about City Government and the services we offer. Suggestions included;
    - Mayor and Council members participating in a school assembly
    - Creating a video and/or Curriculum on City Government that would be part of a Social Studies class
    - Recognition of students not based on academics but other achievements that would highlight students of other cultures
- Follow-up Meeting with Youth Advisory Committee(YAC)
    - Cathy Harrington will coordinate with the YAC to add the CIC to either their March or April Agenda. YAC is very diverse therefore we would like to receive their feedback on multicultural participation with the City i.e. how to improve outreach to, and encourage involvement in the City of Gresham. John Vandermosten, and Anne Pobieglo volunteered to attend YAC.
- Cathy will forward contact information for the Parent Coordinator (Maria) at Centennial Middle School to John Deer to follow-up with and discuss our research.
- All Group Action Items:
    - Attend a Neighborhood Association Meeting (link to City's NH Webpage is HERE – check for meeting schedule on your NHA's webpage) - Please give Cathy feedback on the Office of Neighborhood's Webpage.
    - View/review the City's website. Bring feedback to next meeting

Follow-up Items for Cathy/Teresa to gather:

- Data related to the Hispanic/Latino population from the previous Gresham Citizen Survey (Laura Bridges-Shepard)
- Data from 2010 Census regarding primary languages spoken
- Program/process information on Great Young Student recognition awards by Mayor/Council
- Cathy will follow-up with Communications/I.T. Departments regarding meeting w/Web design staff members

Meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by;
Teresa A. Hall
City of Gresham
Program Technician/Council Support
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