

Blue Ribbon Commission II Meeting Summary
03/12/09

Members Present: Susan Graf, Tom Hagerty, Suzanne Jones, Dan King, Beth Pommer, Dorothy Rupert, Jeff Wingert, Rich Wobbekind

Members Absent: Michelle Krezek, Michael Leccese

Staff Present: Peggy Bunzli (HHS), Bob Eichem, Paul Fetherston, Stephanie Grainger, Brad Powers, Karen Rahn (HHS), Maureen Rait, Jim Reasor

Public Participation

- None

Welcome by Deputy City Manager, Paul Fetherston

- Paul introduced the agenda and then discussed schedule issues:
 - Possibly adding meetings to the schedule or lengthening individual meetings
 - The intent being to give Council enough information to prepare November ballot issues upon return from recess in July.
 - A BRC2 update to Council tentatively scheduled for the June 9th Study Session
 - There is a City Council compensation committee forming, for which City Manager Jane Brautigam will be seeking three volunteers from BRC2.
 - Follow-up information was provided on the humane society. The consensus is that the arrangement is good for Boulder—the contribution of \$895k towards the building (out of \$5M total) secured 20 years of animal services from the humane society.

Housing and Human Services (HHS) presentation by Acting Director, Karen Rahn

- Specific questions/follow-up items arising from the presentation included:
 - Descriptions of the various HHS programs
 - Management metrics on those programs
 - How are both efficiency and effectiveness measured/managed?
 - Funding source by HHS division and by program—how much of it comes from the city, from property taxes, etc.
- The group also discussed the following topics:
 - Outsourced services/partnering possibilities
 - How specific committees encourage social/civic engagement in human rights and anti-bias issues, though that is supported throughout the organization and does not reside in a single FTE
 - Intervention specialists at schools are paid by consortium of the city, BVSD & Boulder County public health. While the funding is prorated by population served, city of Boulder funds only serve city of Boulder schools. This led to a broader point that even where HHS services are direct, the funding may be collaborative.
 - The mediation program - 1.75 FTE - helps keep landlords/tenants, neighbors, etc. out of civil court. Other mediation programs keep kids in school,

producing long-term results and, ultimately, savings from reduced social program outlay downstream. Mediation is fee-based, totaling about \$10k/year on a need-based sliding scale, using 100+ volunteer mediators, including some CU resources.

- Other programs discussed included: food tax rebate program, asset management, wage recovery, and the HOME consortium (a pass-through of Federal funds to local municipalities/jurisdictions)
- How and why the \$6M housing project funding is distributed between essential, desired and discretionary.
- Confirmed that HHS does not make any use of the city's lobbyist in Wash, D.C. for grant funding
- HHS and the general fund provide funding to Boulder Housing Partners, along with some unallocated administrative services.

Discussion of group process and progress

- Are the tiers of city services still relevant? Yes, the team still felt the idea was relevant to informing future citywide decisions.
- Alternate presentation formats were discussed, including having a brief overview from Bob or Paul on each department beforehand, which could allow the BRC just to focus on questions. However, the group generally stated that individual departmental presentations provide valuable information that will help inform the Commission's recommendations.
- The group believes that peer city information could provide valuable context and benchmarking for expenditure levels. For example, does Boulder provide more affordable housing program than other cities? Yes, we think so, but perhaps not out of line with the relative value that Boulder attaches to affordable housing.
- The team spent time discussing the ultimate goal for BRC2. The consensus seems to be that the output should include: guiding principles for budgeting/financial management, identified possible efficiencies and suggestions for further explorations.
- Key principles should include: the importance of trade-offs and that changes should be policy-driven and not ad hoc. (For example, suggestion could include items like dropping age-based subsidies for city programs, stopping publications by individual departments, etc.)
- Another key principle discussed is that the budget should reflect community values and that the BRC2 would like more of that information. The team does not want to assume that something is valued just because it has become institutionalized in the budget.
- The team was interested in seeing each department's efficiency and success measures, and felt they should be published every year. The team also explored measuring the effects of a program's progress, but also of its absence.
- The committee asked to get a complete list of subsidized programs and an indication of which were age-based, income-based, etc.
- Committee members sought greater consistency in the department presentations: each should provide Sources/Uses information and peer city metrics.
- Other suggestions to achieve greater efficiency included:

- Sending department Powerpoints along with the agenda.
- Having 3 or 4 standard questions that the BRC2 should discuss at the end of every presentation, to catch issues as they happen.

In closing, Paul invited BRC2 committee members to join other city officials in a presentation on Monday, April 27th by David Osborne, the author of “The Price of Government”. More details to come.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:25 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for March 26th, 2009, at 6pm, in the Twenty Ninth Street Mall’s Community Meeting Room.