

SWNI Board Retreat Notes

April 29, 2017

SWNI Communications and Outreach

What communications-related focus will help us increase civic engagement in our community? What are our strongest resources? Greatest challenges? Where can we make the greatest impact?

- All the focus areas are about communications – getting people aware and involved
- Meeting renter/vulnerable populations where they are
- Utilizing existing networks made by the organization and committees.
- Review communication outreach methodology (social media outlets), actively addressing perceptions of SW Portland demographic makeup.
- Use Nextdoor
- Ask Communications Committee for their expertise on how to use all communications platforms
- Expand social media and learn how to reach younger people – but don't forget the importance of face-to-face communication
- Expand the word "livability" beyond property value
- Listen
- Learn how people get their information
- Leverage SWNI's relationships with other groups to get the word out to their members/constituents
- Building relationships outside SWNI is key to communications
- SWNI board and others can leverage their individual contacts in community to spread communications and engagement

SWNI Organizational Support and Skill Building

What leadership or organizational development support is most critical for assisting all community members to effectively participate in civic affairs? What are the primary organizational/structural barriers facing neighborhood associations? What are the critical gaps in skills for neighborhood associations?

- Better data on who is in our community and why people aren't coming to meetings
- State our intention on racial equity policy (we could use some help from the City)

- Describe and account for how SWNI relates to the rest of Portland
- Meet with city decision-makers and community leaders
- Use Google Group for information sharing among board (make opt-in)
- Make more use of collaborative tools for vetting ideas
- -Possible staff member working with NA for NA retreat, Action Planning, Review of Bylaws
- Understand better how to deal with most vocal or dominant in meetings
- Spend half day on women's leadership – will provide learning and motivation among peers, relationship-building and support (will broaden participation in SWNI among women)
- Consider meeting times to encourage broader participation by women
- Capture and share case studies with examples of Best Practices that effectively support change, success stories, lessons learned from neighborhood associations; for example, approaches or materials used, successful ways in communicating with City Hall
- Provide civic lessons on City structure
- Provide orientation and history for incoming association chairs
- Provide material repository or training on how a chair can enable and lead a successful association
- Keep educating local community on why and how to get involved
- Dedicate months to a focus on a single committee in communications and outreach (feature in SWNI News)

Build skills in community organizing, how to involve and reach more people, how to understand and use technology in areas such as transportation, watersheds and land use (i.e. "ABC's of Land Use" "Traffic Safety Action shop")

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SWNI Advocacy

What advocacy support is most crucial for assisting community members to effectively impact public decision-making? What would make your neighborhood association a stronger advocate for community needs? In light of our "everything for everyone" charge from ONI, how can we effectively utilize our resources to get the most out of our advocacy efforts? Who or what do we want advocacy to impact the most?

- Engage property owners to reach renters
- Meet the renter population where they are at, especially renters who are longer-term and invested in neighborhood and wish to be engaged
- Gather stories on how different neighborhood associations have reached out to renters,
- Get a list of different organizations in the neighborhoods and reach out to them



- Development of better relationships with Business Associations and large institutions such as OHSU
- Check with PSU institute on city demographics and find other source of residential data
- Use methods that draw people in
- Reach out to the small organized groups (that may be less visible)
- Need to broaden our understanding of livability
- SW Portland is stagnating, fights against need for change (bar set higher on the east side)
- Notice the areas or waves of advocacy that are present in SW Portland and determine how to get involved or weigh in
- Understand all sides of an issue and invite and gather various perspectives prior to staking out stances
- Focusing on having renter/vulnerable population represented on SWNI Board and Committees.
- Place representatives on various city advocacy committees
- Understanding decision makers process: Mapping out Overview of City, State, and County decision making structure/timeline, identifying available intersections for advocacy.
- Relationship building, reaching out to other decision makers: Metro, City Bureaus, State Legislation

Feedback to Committees on Preliminary 2018-19 Priorities

- All committees should consider conduct polling/surveys to take the pulse of what neighbors care about and want to prioritize (coordinate on distribution so neighbors aren't hit with a number of surveys to close to each other)
- Create action plans asap and make them public (on website)
- Kudos to Jan on all her hard work with the Land Use Committee, including coordinating training from City
- For Equity & Inclusion Committee:
 - ◆ How can SWNI board members help?
 - ◆ Generate and provide ideas for SWNI on actions and next steps
 - ◆ Try to integrate efforts overall with all committees
- For Parks Committee on equity concerns:
 - ◆ Some individuals and groups are afraid of using public open spaces; parks are at the heart of discomfort for people of color
 - ◆ How can the committee help in making spaces more welcoming?
 - ◆ SWNI should demonstrate on how parks can be more welcoming to people of color



- ◆ Develop more collaboration between Parks and Equity committees
- For Transportation Committee:
 - ◆ Help neighborhood associations advocate for their issues
 - ◆ Approach City about unpaved roads and rights-of-ways

Equity and Inclusion

What are your neighborhood association's or committee's best practices today for welcoming and including all community members? How is your association or committee reaching into the community to learn about the full breadth of people living in your community and their issues and concerns?

- -Addressing vulnerable communities concerns over the use of public spaces due to concerns over discrimination
- -Parks: provide programs and activities to engage vulnerable communities.
- -Coalition support of Ethnic Diversity programs and events
- Focusing on specific local or national issues as a way of drawing more people into a meeting, e.g., the digital divide, mature tree destruction (which led the Tree Team)
- Acknowledge the capability of people you don't see or hear from often
- Listen and acknowledge the emotions and experiences of people of color
- Develop partnerships, e.g., Neighborhood Night Out or technology groups, to draw people who wouldn't normally turn out
- West Portland Park food drives and back pack distribution – partner with those who have established connections. Maintain a long-term commitment.
- Find those in communities of color and other under-represented groups who want to be involved. Remember there is no one-size-fits-all activity
- When people of color and other communities attend meetings, find out why they are attending, what their interests are, make sure they feel heard and their issues are heard
- Leverage opportunities to meet and connect with neighbors in existing community events, e.g., Free Movie Night. Connect, talk, survey etc.
- Ice cream socials draw diverse gatherings
- Avoid the word “association” which can seem intimidating or off-putting; emphasize “meeting” over association
- Some in the community feel bullied; make sure they are welcomed
- Open your doors early for meetings and use the pre-meeting conversations to get to know people who attend



Governance Model

What does “governance” mean to you?

- Who makes the decisions
- Collective good
- What the boundaries are
- How things get done
- Keeping things regular and in control
- Reflection of dominant society values

How is the governance model of SWNI working today?

- Strong influence of the Executive Committee
- Bard works well, deals with issues well
- Informal and formal power – racial and cultural minorities are not well represented in the decision-making. Should evaluate how serious of an issue that is.
- Good board participation: 80-90 attendance each meeting
- Do we know whether we are meeting funder expectations and goals?
- Board respectful of different opinions, e.g., see how fast the board is moving on equity and inclusion. We are doing well juggling a lot of things.
- The board tone can be biting and mean-spirited. There is a lot of conflict and disrespect for the chair. This might turn people away.
 - ◆ The board could consider conflict training by Resolutions Northwest
- We aren't always quick to make decisions but are slow on purpose to make sure full consideration is given
- We should include an equity statement in our bylaws purpose
- Committee members should have voice on who the committee chair is
- Board decision-making should better reflect the needs of the neighborhood associations

Next Steps

- Gather input from board members on bylaw changes
 - ◆ Get all to weigh in, especially with written opinions
 - ◆ Make bylaw changes a board agenda item

