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Public Engagement: Moving to Partnership

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Agenda for Today's Seminar:

1. Introductions
2. What is "public engagement"?
3. Why engage the public?
4. How do we do it?

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Group Exercise #1:

Building or Strengthening Relationships:

✓Tell your table something interesting about your family name **or** something interesting about your family history.

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Views of Civic Engagement:

1. Institutional Control Model/ Moynihan
2. Neighborhood-Organizing Model/ Alinsky
1. Is there a "Third Way"?

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Public Engagement is not…

- Selling the public on…
- Convincing the public to….
- A meeting to complain/find fault with…
- A process where staff/non-profit controls outcome
- A process for council meetings

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Council Meetings & Public Engagement

- PE: Cannot; Does Not; Will Not ever happen in a "regular" council meeting.
- 3 mins at a mic. & a public hearing are not PE
- A Council meeting is the Community's Public Business Meeting.
- If you do PE outside of the council meeting you will have a better Community Business Meeting

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The Essences of Public Engagement

- Citizens talking to citizens
- Staff or elected posing the right questions
- Staff and elected officials listening and learning not talking

NOT

- Staff or elected officials answering questions in the front of the room.

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Why Civic Engagement is Tough…

- Distrust: Experience with "old" models
- New set of skills and leadership mindset – requires "internal" and "external" agreement.
- Attitudinal and behavioral changes: By Gov't and Citizens
- Perceived loss of control

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Promoting Public Engagement Internally

- May take longer to make decisions (short run)
- May be more expensive (short run)
- Council may not understand/support civic engagement
- New to residents and staff

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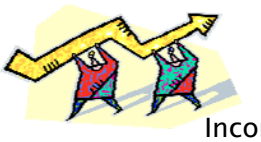
Civic Engagement is a SPECTRUM and Hierarchy of Processes…

Any process you choose contains some aspects of the lower level processes

Empower>



Collaborate >

Incorporate>

Consult>

Inform >

(Increasing the level of engagement and influence)

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Definition of Stages…

Inform: Providing info only to the public

Consult: Asking the public for input

Incorporate: Involving the public in developing alternatives or "forced choices"

Collaborating: Work with public to frame the issue as well as develop alternatives to be discussed

Empower: Asking public to make the decision/solve the problem within council guidelines

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Purpose Determines Process

- **Purpose**: Inform => collaboration
- **Role of Government**: Decision maker => equal partner
- **Timeline**: Limited time => necessary time
- **Discussion Structure**: Inform/Q.A. => Dialogue
- **Facilitation**: Not necessary => Essential
- **Conclusion**: Public informed => public recommends/ decides

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- **Questions for Staff/Elected's *Before* Beginning a Public Engagement Process ("DIY Assessment"):**
  - Are we ready?
  - What are our goals for this public engagement?
  - Does the issue have either a "timeless" or "urgent" quality?
  - Can you "take hands off the wheel" of engagement results? (Control moves from *outcome* to *process*.)
  - Are we going to the public early enough in the process?
  - Budget, outreach, preparation of information?

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- **Benefits of Civic Engagement: What's Possible?**
  - More credible decisions - "buy in"
  - Provide cover
  - Faster program implementation (long run)
  - Lower chances of "blowback"
  - More creative decisions
  - More informed residents
  - Opportunity for community building

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Group Exercise #2

Sharing our opinions, biases and stereotypes city staff and city officials.

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- A Quick Historical Overview: Gov't/Citizen Relations

Time Period	Governmental Form	Public Involvement
Founding Period	Town Hall	Community-Minded/Involved
mid-1800s to 1930s	Political Bosses	Controlled by Bosses
1940s, 50s, 60s	City Fathers	Passive Acceptance
1970s to Recently	Vending Machine	Customer/Client
Recently to Future	Gov't as Convener	Citizen as Partner (and Customer)

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"Customer" Characteristics:

- Give away power
- Allow others to define their needs
- Consumers not creators or problem solvers
- Think in terms of "I"/"me"
- Entitlement mentality

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"Citizen" Characteristics:

- Accountable
- Committed
- Determines the future
- Exercises ownership
- Acknowledges change through citizens

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"Old" Stakeholder Model: Gov't at Center

From: Ray Patchett,
Retired CM, Carlsbad

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Partnership Wheel – Issue at Center

From: Ray Patchett,
Retired CM, Carlsbad

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Necessary Changes:

- Change the discussion
- Staff and council must change the way they perceive and engage the public…
- Citizens must change how they see their role

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Important Tips…

1. Citizens talking to citizens and we listen and learn
2. Always use round tables, never a head table
3. Not about us, electeds or experts lecturing to folks
4. Staff never speak for more than 15 - 20 min
5. All discussion happens at round tables
6. Randomly assign people to tables
7. Always provide food

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Suggested Meeting Steps

1. Framing the issue
2. Set "Ground Rules"
3. Build relationships
4. Discuss hopes and dreams
5. Focus on possibilities (and "assets")
6. Have real conversations
7. Don't push for resolution prematurely

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Staff Behavior Changes:

- Partner/consultant
- Open to alternative ideas
- Understand the importance of citizen values
- Let go of being in control of outcome…move "control" to *process*
- Listen, listen, listen

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Council/Board Behavior Changes:

- You don't have to know all the answers
- You don't have to control the outcome
- Your role should be to listen and not talk
- Yes you are the "Decider" but there is more than one way to "Decide"
- Be open to the ideas of others-- Be curious
- Good Leaders know when to follow

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Citizen behavior changes

1. Be citizens not customers
2. Accept responsibility and accountability
3. Give up the "blame game"
4. Move from "I" to "Us"
5. Be open to new ideas
6. Understand the issues
7. Give up lobbying as initial approach

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Group Exercise 3:

Sharing Our Civic Engagement Stories

Why Did It Succeed or Fail?

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Case Study

Redwood City: Recycled Water

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Civic Engagement

Community Building

(Flip side of the same coin)

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On Line Tools:

Civic Engagement: Open Town Hall
peakdemocracy.com

Community Building: Nextdoor.com

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Q & A