

Summit for Environmental Action

Progress Report -
Implementation
Committees

From 1/12/2009 Meeting



Released 1/21/2009



**Implementation Meeting
January 12th 2009 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
SCOPE Office Conference Room**

Context

The Summit for Environmental Action Implementation Meeting was on January 12, 2009. For an hour and a half, the group discussed specifics about improving our local environment with other community members. This report chronicles the meeting and is a tool for Implementation Committee members and the wider community to learn and get connected to the issues.

Structure of the Meeting

At the beginning of the meeting, a representative from each group gave a short presentation that answered the following questions about the group's progress:

1. What is the paragraph long "sound bite" about your group?
2. What special skills does your group need?
3. How can the general public support your group?

After each group's presentation, the audience asked questions and discussed the issue.

The second part of the meeting was a group discussion exploring Sarasota County's reputation for being ahead of the curve on green/sustainable issues.

PLEASE NOTE - After reviewing the feedback from the November 10th meeting, SEA Planners have committed to a SEA Follow-up event. This event will be in May 2009. Please visit www.scopexcel.org/data/sea_event.html for more information as the date gets closer.

Alternative Water Use

&

Low Impact Development

Presenter: *Suzanne Dameron*

SUMMARY

Sound Bite: The Alternative Water Sources & Uses committee explores sustainable water usage on behalf of Sarasota County residents in an effort to restore more natural hydrology. We look at ways that all of us can recycle, reduce and reuse water. To this end, we are working on a case study at Pelican Cove; our goal is to design a blueprint of Best Practices for Effective Water Conservation & Usage for existing condominiums. The blueprint will provide a synopsis of what we did and how we did it as well as a guideline for everyone to better their water practices. As we explore the various resources in rain-, storm-, grey-, potable, well- and reuse waters, we strive to create systems that promote the “Right Water for the Right Use.”

What Specific Skills Could Your Group Use?

One project not mentioned in the above paragraph is our water equivalent of the energy efficient light bulb. If anyone has any suggestions in this, please send them to us as well.

How can the general public help?

Please send any practices that you or someone else has discovered that you think effectively recycles, reduces or reuses water.

SMALL GROUP CONVERSATION

- The group announced that they had just found out Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice would fund \$1400 towards purchasing well water meters for Pelican Cove. The meters would allow the group to study how much water Pelican Cove uses in total in order to help them use the “right water for right use.” The total cost for the water meters is \$7,000. Other funders of the initiative include: Pelican Cove (\$3,000) and SCOPE (\$1,000). Sarasota County government may be the final funder, pledging \$1500 toward the effort.
- The group was asked how their case study at Pelican Cove related to the larger goal of promoting alternative water sources and uses for the whole of our area. The response was that the goal of supporting and learning from Pelican Cove’s projects is to get high-quality data. With this data, the group could begin to match the ‘right water to right use.’ This process would allow the group to begin developing questions (to be asked of communities) that would allow any community to reduce their water use. Because the questions are scalable, the same questions asked about Pelican Cove could be asked about any other development. The answers would vary, but they would lead to sets of actions that each community could take.
- The group also has a member who is working on developing a system of storing different types of water in the same cistern. This would use bladders to keep the different types of water separate.
- The water committee has had a good relationship with the City of Sarasota and County staff, which is encouraging because so many of the water issues are regulatory.

Group Members:

Grant Beatt, Jack Burden, Chuck Butterfield, Theresa Conner, Suzanne Dameron, Charlie Fellmeth, Leann Fellmeth, Nick Gladding, Chuck Henry, Claire Kanter, Dick Kanter, Roger Landry, Ellen Maloff, Jack Merriam, Nina Powers, Gary Raulerson, Tim Ramage, Steve Suau, Rob Wright

Presenter: Jennifer Shafer

SUMMARY

Sound Bite: The group is working to invite people to a Community Forum in May 2009. The forum would focus on transit oriented development improvements along Bee Ridge Road and the group encourages participation from residents, workers and business owners along the corridor. The goals of the committee are to listen to participants about what they want and need from their roadway. The group hopes that this forum will help to learn from the users of the road, invite community collaboration in design, ensure open, fair and predictable development decisions, introduce the concept of transit oriented development and why/how it could transform Bee Ridge, emphasize sustainability and meeting local needs, explain why now is a good time to plan for a better future for Bee Ridge, and provoke a ripple of conversations about Bee Ridge that could lead to change.

What Specific Skills Could Your Group Use?

The May forum will be an in-depth conversation about how residents, business owners and employees use Bee Ridge road now, and how it could be used in the future. Dr. Brain (from New College) and some of his students are helping to organize the forum, but the group would welcome the brainpower of someone who knew about presenting these issues to the public in a way that would ward off “sticky points.” The group could also use the help of a web designer to develop an online ‘home’ for the initiative.

How can the general public help?

The general public can help by attending our focus groups, recruiting citizens to learn about transit-oriented development, and by building ‘buzz’ around what our group is doing.

SMALL GROUP CONVERSATION

- Someone wanted to hear more about the potential “sticky points” the Transit group was trying to stay away from. They would be arguments over issues such as density, landowners’ rights and concurrency, among others. The transit group wants the May forum to be about listening to public opinion, not arguing about a few hot button issues.
- Dr. Brain announced a relevant event. On February 7th from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm, there will be an event in downtown Sarasota (near the site of the farmer’s market) that will focus on transit. The focus of the event will be on hearing from the public how they would like transit oriented development to occur and educating the public about the issue. There will be workshops, mock charrettes, and walking audits, among other activities.
- Roger Landry announced another relevant event. On Sunday, January 18th at 2:00, a representative from the Tampa Bay Regional Transportation Authority TBARTA will be speaking to the Alliance for Responsible Transportation (A.R.T). TBARTA has also identified Bee Ridge Road as a viable corridor for their group to look at.
- Someone mentioned their hope for a trolley that would run from Anna Maria Island and eventually hook up to the City of Sarasota Transit system.

Group Members:

Millie Headdy, Julie Morris, Terry Osborn, Susan Scott, Jennifer Shafer, Linda Spivey, Frank Folsom Smith, Del, Raymond Kaiser, Kate Irwin

Presenter: *Tim Dutton*

SUMMARY

Sound Bite: The group is currently focused on ways to generate high quality green jobs which would benefit the local workforce. High quality jobs pay self-sufficiency wages and include the concept of the green collar jobs ladder (i.e. – moving from an unskilled, lower paying green job to a skilled, higher paying green job). The group has a budding project – they just contracted with a company called DwellGreen to do high quality energy audits on two houses in Newtown. These audits will produce a list of return on investment for different dollar amounts. This will allow the group to put together a proposal for a pilot project to create green jobs that would include a training component.

What Specific Skills Could Your Group Use?

The larger issue is how to increase demand. The avenues to create demand include local government public policy or financing or job training. Anyone who has a way to jumpstart demand would be welcome in the group.

SMALL GROUP CONVERSATION

- A participant mentioned that green manufacturers (or any manufacturers) will not locate in Florida due to the high taxes. If our area created an Industrial Development Agency (IDA), Florida based green manufacturers would be on a more even playing field as related to other states.
- It may be possible to work with landlords to create an incentive to retrofit rented housing, because landlords are in a position to retrofit multiple houses. A possible way to stimulate demand here would be to create a landlord rating system to be used by renters.
- The federal government stimulus package may produce retrofit money for foreclosed homes. This means that locally, we may only need to train people, and not lay out a large number of dollars.
- The city of Sarasota now has a green jobs initiative. They are trying to market it so that the next jobs to be created are green jobs. One of the issues in the city of Sarasota is that even with this policy; there is little demand for green jobs. The group's energy audits will help to show the low hanging fruit that will in turn help produce this demand.

Group Members:

Diane Andrews, Brian Bishop, Lee Hayes Byron, Bill Doorman, Wendy Cooper, Kevin Connelly, Tim Dutton, Don Fitts, Nick Gladding, Tim Graham, Kathy Keh, Art Nadel, Peg Nadel

Solar Hot Water Heaters

Presenter: Nick Gladding

SUMMARY

Sound Bite: The SEA Solar Hot Water Heater group has morphed into a Sarasota County Government Task Force. The mission of the task force is to maximize the number of solar hot water heating systems installed in Sarasota County in the next five years, resulting in more renewable energy and more green jobs. They are analyzing which of five or six possible financing and implementation models would be best for our county. Of the SEA group, Raymond Kaiser, Nick Gladding, Bonnie Nickel and Larry Altman are on the task force. The goal is to get a report to the county and city commission by April with their recommendations.

What Specific Skills Could Your Group Use?

People with knowledge about the financial opportunities that would make large scale solar hot water heaters work.

How can the general public help?

All meetings are public, and there is one more meeting before the task force is complete. At some point down the road, perhaps at the SEA May meeting, the committee hopes the public will get an opportunity to vet the recommendations given by the Task Force.

SMALL GROUP CONVERSATION

- A participant mentioned that FPL is actively looking at solar programs. They plan to deliver a report on the issue in June or July. They are responsive to working with governments if they can be helpful.
- Someone asked what the task force was currently working on. As of now, the group is working on a matrix to quantify the different solar hot water heaters model.
- Someone asked if there were there any businesspeople involved in making the components in the Solar Hot Water Heaters on the committee. There were a couple business people on the task force, but because it falls under the Sunshine Laws, the businesspeople bowed out due to concerns about being able to talk freely to their customers.
- This project is an opportunity to put projects on the ground that will create green jobs – this year. The task force is focused on keeping the jobs local.
- Bob Bartolotta asked if the committee could implement a pilot project to get a few heaters in. Nick responded that it is possible, but the Task Force is not quite at that point yet – they are focused on finding the method which would provide the greatest penetration. However, it may be beneficial to work out the mechanics and get some data on a small scale – maybe 20 homes. However, economies of scale demand a certain number of units to be cost-effective.
- Kevin Connelly suggested that the Task Force provide local manufacturers with the specifications to the type of solar hot water heater they are suggesting Sarasota County use. This way, the manufacturers could work on getting the heater made locally before the program begins.

Group Members:

Leo Bellil, Tom Harriman, Joseph Hochadel, Nick Gladding, Raymond Kaiser, Donna Krabill, Bonnie Nickel, Nina Powers, Betsy Roberts, Rich Swier, Gerry Swarmstedt, Bruce Zeitlin

Sarasota County and Green Initiatives

Tim raised the issue that while Sarasota County is ahead of the state and other counties on many green issues, we are not that far ahead – and we may be losing ground each day. We are also not ahead of the rest of the country on some of these issues. The group had a conversation about our local pride in being green and how we can keep moving forward and harness the energy around this issue.

- The topic of the federal stimulus package was raised. The consensus was that there may be a package from Washington that would provide funding for green jobs and infrastructure, but the details were hazy at this point. It seems best to push ahead with local initiatives while keeping an eye toward the federal package.
- Sarasota County has to be sure to talk the talk about being green as well as walking the walk – examples of this include our hybrid buses and the recently developed Low Impact Development (LID) manual put together in this county.
- We are only ½ block ahead of other counties in the state! We must identify projects to put on ground- specific pilot projects. We need programs, even if they only provide five jobs. These programs would allow us to have something showcase when building for community support.
- The LID manual, written locally, is causing things to pick up, both within government and private enterprise. The necessity for jobs tied to this is coming quickly. Retrofitting is going to happen!
- On the alternative water issue, there are no incentives to use less water because of how our system is set up. We need to figure out how to run a system that will incentivize conservation.
- Sarasota County is working on getting retrofit money. They may be able to get energy funding through the Department of Energy as a local government.
- The first priority is to hire local workers – the city recently developed a policy to hire local labor over imported workers. This, or something similar, is going to become a countywide ordinance.