

**NOTES**  
**POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, December 9, 2008

555 N. Wabasha Street

4<sup>th</sup> Floor Boardroom

St. Paul, Minnesota 55102

**8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.**

*Members present: John Adams, Janna Caywood, John DeSantis, Scott Halstead, Dave Hutcheson, Paul Taylor, Donna Zimmerman*

*Staff Present: Bob DeBoer, Annie Levenson-Falk, Erin Sapp*

**Outcomes:**

- Refine the guidelines for Policy Review Groups.
- Complete Policy Review Group objectives and process.

1. Introductions.

2. Review and approve agenda and outcomes.

- Scott interested in reviewing the Met Council, perhaps as a Policy Review Group
- Outcomes and agenda okay; no changes

3. Discuss and agree to proposed guidelines for Policy Review Groups.

- Janna, Paul and Sandy drafted proposed guidelines for review today (in meeting materials)
  - The guidelines are deliberately not prescriptive – these are suggestions, but groups should be able to do what works best for them
- We're going with name "policy review group" now instead of "short-term policy group." A better description. Staff's amendment of Janna, Paul and Sandy's suggestion of "policy review action team"
- We are starting up 3 PRGs now: aging services, energy efficiency and CO2 emissions, and charter schools
- Could we set up an evaluation of these 3 pilot PRGs at the end, for the purpose of learning about and improving the PRG process?
- Where do PRG assignments come from (#2 on guidelines document)
  - PAC has seen a lot of proposals that have come in through the study proposal submission web form, other ideas come up in suggestions to staff or in Policy Advisory Committee meetings
  - Hard to tell at this point how much interest these groups will get, but we currently have about 50 volunteers signed up for the 3 groups that are getting started.

- What does PRG do? (#3 on guidelines document)
    - Goals:
      1. Group of members now understand a policy area and made Citizens League able to have a position on an area where we didn't otherwise have time to do that research
        - Building capacity of our members and citizens is part of our mission
        - Education members about Citizens League positions
        - Could also learn about how the process of having influence on public policy works – Many new people getting engaged in Citizens League don't have understanding of how Citizens League reports have an impact
        - Learn what worked and what didn't – in reporting about Citizens League history, we always highlight the big success. This might be a chance to learn more about what made them successful while a lot of others didn't really go anywhere?
      2. Those members become engaged over long-term to help Citizens League follow that policy issue – expand our capacity as an organization to be involved with a variety of issues
        - Members can represent Citizens League at outside meetings and report back to the Citizens League
      3. Timing – we want to have more positions ready to go so we can move more quickly when policy issues arise – you never know how long it will be until an opportunity arises
    - Need to keep PRGs distinct from study committees
      - Study committees produce well-honed report intended to have influence – more careful about vetting members, more research, more staff-intensive
      - PRG is based on Citizens League policy history. If group finds that there's not enough policy history to recommend a current position, or if current situation is too different from context in which past reports were written, they have the option to recommend a study committee be formed.
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- Roles (#4 on guidelines document)
  - Executive sponsor from the Board
    - Their role:
      - Stay engaged and monitor work, though don't need to regularly attend meetings
      - Work with co-chairs to make sure that PRG is following civic operating guidelines
        - Make sure that we don't get to the end of the work and have a bad outcome because of bad process.
      - Don't want them to micromanage – they are not the co-chairs
      - Be available to adjudicate disputes if necessary
      - Provide the group with status and access to resources- can help to get interviews, etc.

- Connection between the PRG and the organization
  - Show that CL leadership is engaged
  - Could be responsible for bringing PRG product to the Board, though we might find that PRG co-chairs would be better
  - We'll get a big variety on how much time a Board member is able to spend on this
  - If we have trouble getting a board sponsor, we may not want to hold up a PRG on that basis
  - Follow the example of HealthPartners executive sponsor, on projects designed to get short-term action:
    - Executive sponsor goes to 1<sup>st</sup> and last meetings and none in between
    - Check-in in the middle to update the sponsor but otherwise a pretty hands-off role
    - Sponsor has nothing to do with the recommendations
    - We can use PRGs as a way to test out executive sponsors. May later consider adding them to study committees
    - We'll bring idea of executive sponsor to next Executive Committee meeting
  - Co-chairs
  - Active members
  - Subject matter experts
    - Don't necessarily have to come to regular meetings, but can make themselves available as resource to the group
  - Main staff job: orientation for PRGs at the beginning of the group process – review mission, civic operating guidelines, guidelines for PRGs and expectation that PRGs are about Citizens League policy history; empower group leadership with that common understanding
  - Need to get back to the people who have volunteered for 3 current groups with these roles, and let them start thinking about what they want to do
  - Aim for 8-10 core members, so start with more than that because of natural attrition
- PRG brings their findings and recommendations, if any, to Policy Advisory
    - If it rises to the level of needing Board action, that could be the next step
    - Policy Advisory will need to take a critical look at PRG work – need to be able to say if they left out a big chunk of the picture, etc.
  - Need to worry about today's culture of politics (pick your position then spend the others into the ground) – how do we keep that out of our process?
    - Many people call the Citizens League because they want Citizens League endorsement of what they're doing – that's very different from careful research then deciding what's the best solution
    - Making sure that the process is fair and balanced is a responsibility of the executive sponsor

- Proposals
  - Should we require all proposals to go through the web?
    - For consistency's sake we've been trying to do that
    - Doesn't mean that at a particular meeting, Policy Advisory couldn't decide to form a PRG – wouldn't have to wait for the annual review process if we have a pressing issue and members who want to work on it
  - Do we put out a call periodically for study proposals? Annually?
    - Initially we put out a call, and when we got to a certain amount Policy Advisory reviewed them
    - The second round, we put an additional call in the email newsletter because we didn't have a lot of proposals – we got more and higher quality proposals
    - Approximately an annual process
    - We may want to publicize more frequently – let members know what's come forward
  - Staff will monitor proposals coming from the web and bring to Policy Advisory proposals that they think should be acted on quickly, most likely to be based on a significant level of interest among members.
  - We should get the next round of PRGs in the pipeline in early 2009 so that they're ready to go when the first round is finished
  
- Length of PRG process
  - Set expectation at 60-90 days
  - Like everything else, it's negotiable – PRG can come back to Policy Advisory
  - We don't want them to go too long, become more like study committee process
  
- RECAP:
  - Not just an annual cycle – staff bring proposals to be considered for PRG between annual study proposal reviews, and additional issues will probably come up at Policy Advisory committee
  - Policy Advisory will get regular updates on PRG progress
  - Bring executive sponsor idea to next Executive Committee (or Board meeting if that is sooner)
  - Updates on PRG would come to the Board via regular update on Policy Advisory Committee, but executive sponsor can also be engaged
  - 3 groups are set to launch now – need to get back to the volunteers with the role categories and let them start thinking about which roles they want to fill
  - 60-90 day expectation

#### 4. Updates.

- Water policy
  - Committee update

- Board approved revised charge on Monday. Had originally approved charge in 2007, with expectation that committee would amend and narrow it.
    - Committee chose to focus on governance, defined very broadly – the roles of government, business, citizens, nonprofits, etc. in managing water in Minnesota.
    - Looking at governance through the example of nonpoint source pollution – not planning on making specific recommendations on nonpoint source pollution, but to use this example to illuminate ways in which governance could be improved
    - Committee also intends to look at water supply/sustainability as a second case study, though may not have time to do that. Will reevaluate at next meeting
  - Member comment: committee should consider mosquitoes and disease as another water-related issue
- Redistricting
  - We're going to the Joyce Foundation for funding in a possible convening role around redistricting
  - Current Citizens League work: looking at what Minnesotan's want re. redistricting, by which principles it should be done
  - A hot topic
    - 3 bills introduced last legislative session
    - MN very close to losing a congressional seat – state demographer Tom Gillespie says margin is under 2,000 people, and likely closer to 300-400
  - Increasingly apparent how important the census is
    - More difficult to count everyone
      - Because of homeland security and immigration issues
      - Foreclosures affect where people live, how they get their census forms, etc. – people may be living in houses against code
    - Without good numbers, lines can't be drawn as accurately
  - Lots of interest among nonprofits, including MN Council of Nonprofits, League of Women Voters, Common Cause – none has funding yet
  - Good opportunity for the Citizens League to step in as convener on both census and redistricting issues
    - Joyce Foundation proposal is a planning grant for the spring
    - In May, hope to have action plan for both issues – separate plans, but would plan them together because they're overlapping, and many of the same people working on both
    - It may or may not make sense for Citizens League to play a lead role on one or both projects after May
  - Aaron Street and Erin Sapp would be working together on this
  - Grant is going out today; will update Policy Advisory when we know more

5. Evaluate whether outcomes were achieved.

- All 5's