

Meeting Notes
POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

555 N. Wabasha Street

4th Floor Boardroom

St. Paul, Minnesota 55102

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

Members present: Bob Armstrong, Janna Caywood, Adam Chelseth, John DeSantis, Bright Dornblaser, Virginia Edelstein, Jennifer Franklin, Scott Halstead, Dave Hutcheson, Nick Leitheiser, Tim McDonald, Aaron Pearson, Paul Taylor, Donna Zimmerman (co-chair)

Staff present: Bob DeBoer, Annie Levenson-Falk

Purpose:

- Complete discussing and ranking proposals that have been reviewed by Policy Advisory Committee reviewers in the context of ongoing Citizens League work.
- Give direction for recommendations to the Board of Directors.
- Discuss, amend and approve (depending on time) a “first-step” self-evaluation tool to start testing and using.

1. Introductions

2. Review and approve agenda and outcomes

No changes to agenda

3. Proposal Review Process

- Policy Advisory Committee recommendations will go to the Board of Directors at their 12/21 meeting
- Reviewed conclusions from last meeting

9.06 Tools for Promoting Business Growth and Expansion

- Revisited question raised at last meeting and agreed that should this be separate from the energy proposals
 - There was some discussion last time about tying this to the two proposals on energy
 - They are connected in some ways but they are different issues
 - A lot of activity around promoting business growth currently
 - Itasca, Business Partnership, DEED working on it
 - Bob DeBoer and Sean Kershaw have been engaged in some of the discussions and think that we need to be ready for when all these groups come out with their work.

- Should a member-organized group be pulled together to review what is being done by other groups relevant to this topic?
 - Citizens League may not have much past work on this – probably not a Policy Review Group
 - A group of members could keep up to date on what's going on to inform what Citizens League role could be (like a Policy Review Group 2.0)
 - This could be done in full Policy Advisory Committee
 - Agreed not to form separate group

- From what these groups are saying, it sounds like it's a communication issue between them. What they need is a convener so they can discuss among themselves

- CONCLUSION: Convening is a potential Citizens League role in 2010. We'll watch this issue for opportunities. Staff will talk with these groups; bring back to Policy Advisory Committee as appropriate to discuss what our role could be.

9.10 Charter Schools

- Questions arising now about charter schools bonding, how they're being constructed, how charter schools are functioning economically and their impact on total economics of public education

- Are people fatigued by broad discussions on education?

- Two issues: education delivery and economics
- At the Capitol they're talking about a new MN Miracle. Maybe a good time for the Citizens League to get into this. That means going beyond charter schools

- Citizens League was instrumental in pushing charter schools forward. Has had significant implications for all schools
- We could reexamine charter schools: 20 years after we proposed it, how is it doing? And related issues like economics, etc.
 - There are some successes and some failures in the charter school experiment, which was the intent. We should evaluate those.
- Evaluating outcomes is a valid topic but it seems like there are bigger issues on this point right now, like: How do charter schools coexist with traditional K12 schools?
- Policy Review Group recommendation was a study committee to comprehensively look at what education should look like in MN, including but not limited to charter schools
- Capture the full context that touches on charter schools. Charters as a component of larger education system – evaluate the component while keeping the whole picture in mind
- Change is afoot in structure of K12, not to do with funding but the way the system is designed. Instead of a retrospective look at charter school law, look forward: What do we see as good next step of this MN reform? Charters were the first wave in mid 90s, now look to a 2nd wave.
 - Look at proposals that are out there and take a position

- Timeline:
 - Last legislative session, law was passed to allow autonomous schools within districts. That's the seed of an oak tree. It's done, the question is how long before it starts to manifest. Took charters a couple years.
 - Innovative Schools Advisory Council created last session – they'll bring ideas to Legislature this session
 - We could do a study committee without missing the boat – have another year until the next on-session
- CONCLUSION: Recommend study committee, scope needs to be better defined. Charter schools are a piece, but it will also look at the other proposals on the table. Potential focus on outcomes and evaluation of education with an eye towards moving forward, looking at proposed reforms in this context.

9.11 Aging Services

- Current Citizens League work:
 - Stacy Becker working with about 20 organizations on long term care financing (a part of section 1.2 of the proposal). We'll have momentum on that piece but this proposal is broader
 - Held a number of workshops, now the steering committee is taking the results of those and trying to advance ideas for financing reform
 - Health and Medical Care advancement group – working with past and recent Citizens League positions, relates in some ways to aging services
 - Communities for a Lifetime idea from the Sept 2008 Regional Policy Conference ties in here.
- In the context of this other work, should we recommend study committee or another approach?
 - Some members would like to do study committee
 - Could do something like Phase I of the Immigration and Higher Education Committee – drew scope of what study committee would do
 - We could make this an area of focus for the advancement group
 - Lots of work has been done on the pressures created by aging population. Not sure it's worth a study committee
 - Study committee is resource and time intensive. May be able to do work more efficiently with Stacy's group and the advancement group.
 - Reluctant to recommend many study committees. If group is divided, don't recommend study committee on this. Had clear consensus on the other 2 study committee recommendations; recommending another study committee would somewhat dilute those recommendations.
- Choices on the options for policy processes are not entirely clear. In the future, defining on paper how study committees are changing could be helpful

- CONCLUSION: Need to pull the different elements of this work together better for Policy Advisory Committee to understand what's being done.

9.09 Common Understanding of Home

- This is one of the issues being looked at by the poverty committee – not sure there's value in looking at it separately
- Unclear what to do with this.
- Idea has merit; confusion comes in the way it is framed. Text of proposal talks about the housing crisis, how to deal with public housing, etc.
- CONCLUSION: Table for now, will touch on this with poverty work. Further review

4. Discuss, amend and approve self-evaluation tool

- Developed by Janna, Roxanne, Greg, and Acooa
- This is a long version of the tool; there was a short version too
- Originally intended to do very broad evaluation, looking at both participation and final product. That was too much to do at once; focused on the experience of participation
- Tried to look at activities that would be common across study committee, review groups, advancement groups, etc
- Decided not to ask about how participation affected the development of your democratic skills; felt like it would open into whole other area, too much to take on. Perhaps for development of this in the future.
 - Could be helpful, for example to be able to say, "75% of people who participated felt they were better prepared for other policy work"
- Suggested changes (didn't have agreement on these):
 - 2. remove specificity about first meeting – charge can be changed throughout process
 - 3 and 4 are repetitive – 4 is better; take out 3
 - 10 – remove
 - 13 – not everyone takes part in how facilitators get selected, could eliminate this question
 - 21 – change to "was process for changing time commitment a good process"
 - Question asked this way to get at whether activities were timed in a way that's accessible to people who are busy
 - Add: How does this affect your view of the Citizens League? Based on your experience, would you be more or less inclined to participate in a committee in the future?
- Should be a very useful tool. For longer projects like the Water Policy Study Committee, could be useful for midpoint evaluations while there's still time to adjust process
- Do we need to define specific objectives for the different processes (study committee, review group, etc.)?

- CONCLUSION: Will make some changes based on today's discussion and test this with a few projects and we can modify according to what we learn.

5. Evaluate whether outcomes were achieved

Average: 4.8. Good meeting.