

## Community Aspiration Forum Notes November 17, 2009 at Runnells Hall

### Summary of Meeting Outcomes

52 people gathered at Runnells hall to build upon the conversation started with the community during the September forums in Ossipee, Conway and Wolfeboro. In September, the community began to discuss the questions: Do we want to work together in Carroll County at a regional or county level? Would this help us achieve things we can't when working town by town? If yes, what should that community look like? Is it the county or something different? And most importantly, what do we aspire to achieve for ourselves? The November forum took the conversation forward the next few steps firming up answers to these questions and exploring what working together might look like.

The group landed on the choice that it does indeed make sense to work together at a county level to achieve some of our goals. They specifically preferred the language of 'Carroll County' over 'Greater Carroll County'. There was an expressed understanding that the geographic boundaries of the community working together at any given time will flex and there was agreement that the 'people of Carroll County' is what matters most.

A vigorous discussion ensued about what *do* residents aspire to for the community. The group determined that the elements critical to include in the aspiration statement are:

- Emphasize people of Carroll County (not necessarily the geography)
- Thriving
- For all generations or everyone
- Working together (didn't like the 'working differently' language)

The immediate next step is to do some additional work finalizing wording to match the group's desire, send the aspiration statement back out to the attendees for input and then announce it to the community.

Action Teams: Areas of work needed to reach the aspiration were identified. The group also began to explore some possible measures that the community could use to know whether it was making progress. Four areas of work were proposed by the Steering Committee from the input at the September forums. Community members at the November forum confirmed the four areas made sense and proposed that a fifth action area be added. The second breakout session was devoted to thinking about possible measures that could be used so that the community can see its own progress. The Action Teams are:

- Childhood Readiness and Success – Pre K to 3
- Aligning Education to Careers – 4 to 12
- Balancing Economic Development & Environmental Stewardship
- Self Sufficiency
- Health & Wellness (added by forum attendees)

### Structure:

The aspiration will be at the center of all efforts. Action teams, a community roundtable, a steering committee and a mandate to continuously increase community engagement will be the structure to move the work forward. Any individual or organization in addition to the formal partners is invited to look at the aspiration and community work and decide how they can best help the community to meet its goals.

### Next Steps:

- Form Action Teams with a chair and co-chair for each team. The first task of the Action Teams will include firming up desired outcomes aligned to the aspiration, measures that will let us chart our progress together and strategies to get there. A member from each Action Team will be added to the Steering Committee.
- Continuously reach out to engage more of the community.
- Communication

<b>Meeting Notes</b>
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The forum opened with a review of “Working Differently”

### Key themes:

Silos or stovepipes occur in communities largely as an unintended consequence of how work is funded in communities. Each source, whether government (local, state, federal), foundations, grantors, etc., comes with its own set of priorities, limitations, expectations and mandates which nudges organizations in a particular direction.

All communities have a wealth of resources in the form of programs and people working toward the well-being of the community.

Strong, well-funded organizations don’t necessarily lead to stronger communities (e.g. reducing poverty, improving literacy rates, improving health, etc.). Communities that are the most successful at getting strong results:

- Are clear about what they want to accomplish
- Are clear about measures that allow them to track their progress
- Hold themselves accountable to reach their goals
- Have multiple sectors working together

### **‘Definition’ of community and Aspiration discussion (breakout session):**

This portion of the forum opened with a steering committee panel presentation by Nancy Clark, Howard Cunningham, David Rudewick, Mike Lancor and Bert Astles. Members described that they ‘loved the idea’ of working differently/ working collaboratively rather than in silos and that there is so much power and energy when you do. In their experience, the efforts that have succeeded beyond their expectations are those that reached out to the community. They also described how they listened to and processed through the input from the September sessions in order to put together a draft aspiration statement, draft definition of community and a beginning work plan for the community to build upon at the November session.

**The first breakout session** focused on the questions: Do we want to work together in Carroll County at a regional or county level? Would this help us achieve things we can't when working town by town? If yes, what should that community look like? And most importantly, what do we aspire to achieve for ourselves?

As indicated in the summary above, the group discussed that it does indeed make sense to work together at a county level to achieve some of our goals. The group expressed an expectation that the geographic boundaries of the community working together at any given time will flex depending upon the particular goal to be achieved and expressed that their definition of community was more concerned with the 'people of Carroll County' than the geography.

Here are the themes or elements that came out strongly from participants regarding what was important to them to include in the aspiration statement:

- Emphasize people of Carroll County (not necessarily the geography)
- Thriving
- For all generations or everyone
- Working together (didn't like the working differently)
- Carroll County is the area (understand/expect this will flex)

### **Establishing work teams discussion (Breakout Discussion):**

Forum participants looked at the action teams suggested by the steering committee as a result of the community's input at the September forums. They agreed with the four suggested action areas but proposed adding a health and wellness team as a fifth area.

Participants broke up into groups for each action team topic and talked in more detail about each action area and brainstormed possible ways to measure progress in each area to answer the question, "How we will know if we are reaching our goals?" Action Teams will be formed in the weeks following the forum and will build upon this initial input.

### **Childhood Readiness and Success Team – Pre K to 3**

The intent of this team is to focus on making sure children are coming to Kindergarten prepared and ready to learn and that children are successful in their early school years. Establishment of this team was driven by the knowledge that students who are not reading on grade level by the end of third grade are at great risk of never catching up. Some states plan future prison needs based on this number.

#### **Beginning suggested measures:**

- Reading levels/experience
- Math levels/ experience
- Health measures
  - Eating regularly & nutritiously
  - Sleeping – warm & safe
  - Breathing – allergy free
  - Healthy Kids enrollments
  - Survey health care providers

### **Education 4-12 Team**

This team was suggested to focus on the educational needs of our young people. Discussion at the September forum expressed concern about two issues: (1) number of young people leaving the county and (2) whether youth going directly into the workforce are prepared to do so.

#### Beginning suggested measures for aligning education to careers:

- Increase percent of high school graduates
- Decrease # of young people in the Juvenile Justice Systems
- Align education to available careers for graduates who go straight to into the workforce.
- Increase career explorations and job mentor programs for HS students (eg: service jobs, construction)

### **Balance Economic & Environmental Stewardship Team**

This team was suggested as a result of significant discussion in September around the mix of jobs available to residents and a concern that many do not provide a livable wage.

#### Beginning suggested measures:

- Growth of technological infrastructure → environmentally friendly and will lead to growth in good jobs
- Service industry, nonprofits, educational jobs need wage growth
- Broadband availability

### **Self-Sufficiency Team**

This team was suggested as a result of discussion about the number of working people, young families and seniors struggling to make ends meet.

#### Beginning suggested measures

- Home ownership
- Wealth
- Health
- Employment rate
- Underemployment rate
- Jobs available
- Job creation
- Basic needs met & money for recreation

#### Suggested beginning actions:

- Gather data on current levels of self-sufficiency
  - Housing
  - Fuel
  - Income
  - Transportation
  - Meals on wheels
  - Food pantries
  - Free/reduced lunch
- Survey to define 'self-sufficiency'
- Do we have services for the "hard times"?

**Health & Wellness Team (added by attendees at forum)**

This team was suggested by November forum participants as another component needed to reach the aspiration.

Suggested measures

- Decrease obesity rates
- Increase physical activity
- Increase community awareness of health choices
- Reduce access to alcohol and drugs by youth
- Improve access to health & dental care