



Central Place Council Minutes for January 24, 2011

In attendance: Cathy Beck-Cross, Shirley McClelland, Elaine Collet, Kelly Sievers, Pam Freeman, Tom Downs, Rachel Buntenbach, Michelle Broshar, Randy Mohning, Barb Bolt, Sally Duer, Margaret Ludington, Janet Chelsvig-Brommel, Heather Nell, Jennifer Wing, Terri Walker, Sheila Aukes, Mandi Palmer, Tim Hummel, Judy Hamlin, Jeff Longman, Brett Handy, Norma Teuber, Sheri Vohs, Catherine Jarmofsky

- Cathy Beck-Cross welcomed everyone, then introduced Central Place's intern Mandi Palmer, who is working on her associate degree in human services from DMACC. Two guests were present, Sheri Vohs, Learn Associates LLC, and Norma Teuber, former council member.
- Cathy provided an overview of the meeting, which had the goal of providing members with an overview of the results of the stakeholder interviews, the rationale behind the realignment proposal to the board of education, and discussion about next steps.
- Sheri provided an overview of the interviews with 17 opinion leaders. The goal was to obtain feedback and direction regarding options for a realignment proposal to the school board. These interviews resulted in three main conclusions:
 - Opinion leaders supported realignment and targeting students and school-based services.
 - Interviewees did not support the idea of reinvention of Central Place as a separate agency from the school district. This was seen as a good idea, however not practical.
 - Opinion leaders were concerned about fragmentation and unmet community needs.From these conclusions, Cathy put together a report for the school board given the reality of the budget.
- Cathy reiterated that as she prepared her realignment report she kept in mind that the school board wants Central Place to focus on serving student needs, not those of the community as a whole. She shared the realignment proposal to the board on January 6, 2011. The board liked the proposal, however was still concerned about Central Place's trajectory of growth. Cathy said she reminded the board the two most recent positions, for community education and facilities, were positions that serve the district as a whole. She also told the board that currently there is no overlap in staff duties and that losing one or two staff members would affect the work of the rest of the team. For example, in the new proposal to be more student-focused, Central Place would no longer have a family support specialist because it is community based. Because the district is concerned about mental health needs, the revamped position would have someone with clinical mental health experience with youth. After listening to Cathy's options, the board suggested pursuing PERL (Physical Education and Recreation Levy) funding, which can target community education expenses such as Central Place and would generate around \$158,000 by levying \$0.135 per \$1,000 assessed valuation. These funds would go towards the realigned version of Central Place which would need around \$310,000 total.
- Superintendent Tom Downs reported that the school board took seriously the Learn Associates report. He also reiterated that everything is on the table for the school board to look at regarding cuts; the board has made it clear they want to cut as far away from the classroom as possible; Central Place's realignment met with favor with the board; and the sales tax vote was planned and orchestrated for Central Place. He explained sales tax is for infrastructure, technology, and community education and if Southeast Polk had not passed the sales tax referendum, Central Place would have closed two years ago. He also explained that the general fund is the check book of the district and if Central Place funding goes under the general fund, it will not survive, which is why board members are pursuing the PERL. The vote will be in the form of a special election on April 5, 2011. Tom read the petition to the council:

Shall the Board of Directors of the Southeast Polk Community School District, in the Counties of Polk, Marion, and Jasper, State of Iowa, be authorized to levy a tax upon all the taxable property within the School District of not to exceed thirteen and one-half cents (\$0.135) per thousand dollars of assessed valuation of the taxable property within the School district for public educational and community education purposes, including funding the Central Place Family Resource Center?" YES or NO.

Tom said the vote will need to pass by a simple majority and if it passes, the board will fund the rest. If the community votes no, he warned, Central Place could close by July 1, 2011. He reiterated that he and Cathy can only answer questions, give talks, and remind people to vote. They cannot suggest to constituents how to vote.
- Margaret Ludington questioned what would stop the board from changing funding from Central Place to another program and she wanted to know how TIF affected the assessed evaluation. Tom said the board restricted the wording to just Central Place, community education, and educational activities despite the attorney's recommendation to not restrict the wording. Tom also stressed the funding stream is to perpetuity. The community education and Central Place realignment reflects district mission and goals which he said acts in Central Place's favor. Additionally, he stated funding the new Central Place, (not the old Central Place) is supported by the board and if the vote passes, it is a mandate to the board to fund Central Place.
- Tom urged Central Place staff to present information on the impact of Central Place. He suggested the council form a subcommittee to plan campaign strategy and involve the Altoona Herald to help provide voters with information on the PERL vote. He suggested the faith community be part of the strategy and that they know the consequences if the vote fails.

- A lengthy discussion followed. Elaine stressed that district sales tax money (58% of the Central Place budget) provides for salaries of staff to run programs, however the other 42% of our budget comes from grants and donations to carry out the programs. If the vote fails and Central Place is not here, then funding for programs like School Supply Giveaway in the form of donations and grants will be lost. She noted a corporate donor is ready to give \$10,000 to this summer's School Supply Giveaway however the donor has already said the money will not be provided if the corporation cannot go through Central Place. Elaine also explained that if Central Place does not exist, there won't be anyone to coordinate the donor or volunteer relationships required to carry out a program like Season of Sharing [or Kids' Café or School Supply Giveaway].
- Elaine reported it was a banner year for Season of Sharing. A total of 280 (660 children) families signed up. This year, the focus was entirely on children (as opposed to gift ideas for parents, too). The program was carried out with the help of 115 volunteers who worked a total of 396.5 hours (the equivalent of ten 40-hour work weeks!). Elaine was also excited about donors' willingness to take on more than one family and their initiative to solicit co-workers to do the same. Because of such generosity, Central Place had only to shop for 17 families; down from 90 the year before. Barb Bolt commented on how smoothly the distribution went and how roomy it was to work in the annex.
- Cathy reported on Central Place's annual planning session, and said it was very difficult to discuss upcoming projects because of all of the uncertainty. She also reminded the council EPIA will be held March 11, 2011 at Adventureland Inn. Dr. Christopher Okiishi from Iowa City will speak on mental health and its impact on student's success in school.
- Tom thanked Sheri Vohs for her work. She in turn wished the council well in the efforts to pass the vote of the PERL levy. Terri Walker then thanked Cathy for her work on the realignment report for the board.

Submitted by Judy Hamlin,
Administrative Assistant

**Upcoming meetings will be:
March 21, 2011 ♦ May 9, 2011**