Dialogue

Community Relations Committee

Occupy Charlotte

Community Stakeholders

Meeting

January 17, 2012

Occupy Charlotte

Community Stakeholders Meeting

Tuesday, January 17, 2012

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center

Room 267

In its role as a provider of channels for communication and dialogue among the City's and County's various stakeholders, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee invited 100 stakeholders to attend an Occupy Charlotte Information and Dialogue meeting, Tuesday, January 17, 2012 from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. in room 267 of the Government Center, 600 East Fourth Street.

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Provide an opportunity to learn more about Occupy Charlotte and the Occupy Movement;
- Share information on the proposed City Council ordinance prohibiting overnight encampment on public property and guidelines for public demonstrations; and
- Solicit thoughts and ideas about how to collaboratively address such issues as public safety, health, and free speech, as the City prepares for the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in September 2012.

Given Charlotte's history for collaborative problem-solving, CRC believed that the issues raised as a result of the Occupy Movement provided an opportunity for the City and County to again build broad-based strategies to honor the needs and values of the various stakeholders. CRC also believed that the level of engagement would not only support us as we prepare for the DNC, it also had the potential for creating a model for successful engagement around difficult and often competing community interests.

The Meeting

Approximately 45 persons attended the meeting, including CRC members/staff, residents, and Occupy Charlotte persons.

CRC Chair Angeles Ortega Moore and CRC Executive Director provided opening remarks and introduced the meeting facilitators, the Occupy members, and the meeting planning committee.

Occupy members presented information on the occupy movement nationally and internationally, Occupy Charlotte, and why the Occupy movement is important for Charlotte and the Nation. An opportunity for questions and answers followed.

City Attorney Bob Hageman provided an overview of the proposed City Ordinance on Encampment and Public Demonstration. An opportunity for questions and answers followed.

Feedback Process

The meeting participants were divided into 3 groups. Each group was given newsprint and markers to write down their responses to the question: **"What are your thoughts and ideas about how to best address issues of public safety, free speech, and health as the City prepares for the DNC and beyond"?**

Each group reported their answers and responded to questions from the larger group. The following recommendations were suggested:

Recommendations:

City Council should delay the vote on the ordinance and conduct additional public hearings to get more public feedback - more community conversations with neighborhood associations, churches; and community and business organizations.

Individual Council members should conduct town hall meetings in their respective districts regarding the ordinance, including question and answer sessions – take the show on the road.

Develop a training guide for Law Enforcement personnel on how to deal with the public once the DNC is here and if the ordinance is passed.

Include a time limit or sunset clause in the ordinance such that the new provisions to the ordinance will expire once the DNC is over.

Consider the necessity of the amendments/revisions to the ordinance if you already have laws in place that will address the targeted behavior – if the laws already exist, then the ordinance is not needed.

Include a grace period after or if the ordinance is passed.

Revisit the decision to consider the ordinance and ask if the ordinance is being considered for approval due to fear and if it might have unintended consequences such as infringing upon the rights of innocent citizens.

Next Steps

CRC staff will transcribe information from the group report outs to the question and send that information to the City Attorney and the City Manager and recommend that the City Manager share it with the City Council. The intent being that the information be timely shared with the City Council prior to the Council meeting on January 23.