

Welcome Center Coordinator Meeting Notes

These notes are simply what I heard and should by no means be considered conclusive. However, I hope they help to give you an understanding of the discussions that we had at the meetings.

To simplify things I will refer to the Welcome Center Coordinator as WCC.

Meeting with Hispanic Community on Sunday, July 18th

This meeting was scheduled on Thursday, July 15th. There were 15-20 people in attendance.

Here is what I heard:

- The services that the Welcome Center Coordinator performed were highly sought after.
- The Hispanic Community values the WCC position and has a great deal of respect and trust for the individual who filled it.
- The WCC was an advocate and met a variety of different needs in the community.
- Some extra help is needed in certain areas due to the language barrier.

Meeting with service organizations and concerned citizens on Wednesday, July 21st

This meeting was scheduled on Friday, July 16th. There were a total of 13 people in attendance.

Representatives from the following organizations were there: Community Action Center, Growing Up Healthy, Healthy Community Initiative, TORCH, Faribault Welcome Center, Human Rights Commission, and St. Dominics. A representative from the Public School System was invited as well, but was unable to attend.

A group of six individuals are willing to work on this situation further depending on what the Council's decision is on Tuesday, August 3rd.

The conversation/listening time was based on the following two questions.

1. What is the vision/purpose of a Welcome Center Coordinator?
2. If this position cannot be created, what are the services/needs that we should make sure get taken care of?

Here is what I heard:

- The WCC served as a valuable resource for English speakers as well.
- It is important that the city own the Welcome Center Coordinator position. It makes a statement that the city is welcoming to new residents.
- The WCC served as a resource/advocate for people going through difficult situations. It was helpful that it was the same person.

- The Coordinator position is more than just city interpretation.
- The Faribault Welcome Center does many of the same services as Northfield's WCC. Faribault's is supported through the city and grants. They never had the expectation that they would help with city business.
- Because the WCC's position was under the city, it limited what they could do.
- If this position were not funded by the city, there would be a greater freedom to meet more needs. Having some city support sends a strong message.
- Some things that were done were outside the WCC position's job description.
- Many tasks that the WCC did were not city functions but social service functions.
- The WCC really tried to stay within the boundaries/constraints that they were given.
- The WCC spent anywhere from 50%-75% of their time on Welcome Center issues.
- Funding: St. Dominics may be able to do a fundraiser to help support the WCC position.
- Funding: Nonprofits are not a sustainable source because they depend on grants. City funds are not necessarily sustainable either.
- Funding: There may be a possibility of a partnership with the Faribault Welcome Center.
- The Community Action Center has taken on the notary role that the WCC did.
- There has to be community buy in to the position.
- Some would be very upset if the city walked away from this meeting and did nothing because the city saw that other organizations were interested in working on the situation.
- Other organizations are out there that could help with the services that the WCC provided. It would take time to build up trust with new people.
- We would be in this same position in the future of having to build up trust with someone new if anyone who held this position decided to take a job somewhere else.
- Cutting the WCC position damaged the relationship with the Hispanic Community. This will need to be repaired.

Hope this helps.
Rhonda