From Talk to Action: Community Input into the District Budget

Presentation/Conversation with the Upper Darby School District Community

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Director, Center for School Study Councils
November 27, 2012
Overview

- The project: Goals and Outcomes
- Basic perspectives
- Kinds of forums
- Leadership situations
- Information vs. Learning Models
- An example
- Project timeline
- Expected Outcomes
- Discussion
“Outwitted”

He drew a circle that shut me out-
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in!

- Edwin Markham
Where wisdom comes from …

- “None of us is as smart as all of us.” – Japanese proverb
- “Together we can come to find a wisdom that we could not find alone” – Michael Sandel
- “Your audience is always smarter than you are” - Dan Gillmor
Buy-in/Ownership/Cooperation

People work hardest to implement that which they had a hand in planning.
Kinds of Forums

- To Tell/Inform
- To Learn/Get Feedback
- To Build Common Ground
## Types of Leadership Situations: Technical and Adaptive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Problem Definition</th>
<th>Solution &amp; Implementation</th>
<th>Primary Responsibility for the Work</th>
<th>Kind of Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>Technical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type II</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Requires learning</td>
<td>Physician and patient</td>
<td>Technical and adaptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type III</td>
<td>Requires learning</td>
<td>Requires learning</td>
<td>Patient more than physician</td>
<td>Adaptive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heifetz & Sindor’s Types of Situations
Information vs. Learning Models

- The Traditional “Expert Information” Model

- The New “Public Learning” Model
The Traditional “Expert Information” Model

- Favored by experts, the government and the press
- Top-down and one-way
- The public is expected to learn, not contribute
- Focuses on information rather than values
- Focuses on creating awareness
- Assumes awareness leads to resolution
- Assumes that a well-informed public is the “Holy Grail” of democracy

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A Nest of Flawed Assumptions

The traditional model falsely assumes that:

- Information is the key to public learning.
- People make up their minds once they receive relevant information.
- The public interprets information in the same way that experts do.
- Experts know what information the public needs and how to convey it.
- Experts who debate their opposing views help the public to learn.
- Technology can compensate for deficiencies in the model.
- There is no need to base the model on how people actually make hard choices.
Conclusion

The traditional model works only when there are no hard choices to make.
The New “Public Learning” Model

I. Opinion Formation (media-driven)

II. Working Through (dialogue-driven)

III. Resolution (advocacy and law-driven)

1. Raw Opinion
2. Urgency
3. Choices
4. Resistance to Choosing
5. Choicework
6. Unstable Resolutions
7. Public Judgment

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BELIEFS
opinions
ideas
feelings
POLLs
HOPEs

deliberation
"working through"

common ground
"values" based

JUDGMENT
Major Features of the New “Public Learning” Model

- Requires three stages rather than two
- Accounts for how people actually resolve hard choices
- Interactive
- Takes time
- Requires people to struggle with conflicting values
- The public’s wisdom adds value to the experts’
- Different communication strategies apply to each stage
Choicework Dialogues

- **What they do:**
  - Help people work through the hard choices phase.
  - Help people confront painful tradeoffs and conflicting values.
  - Are the most efficient method for moving people through this stage.
  - Compress into a short period a process that might otherwise stretch over months and years.

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An Example:

The City Budget: Tight Times, Tough Choices

- Context
- Goals
The City Budget: Context

Calvin and Hobbes comic strip:

1. It's an outrage that six-year-olds can't vote!
2. Here I am, a U.S. citizen, with no voice in our representative government!
3. You're concerned about the direction the country is headed?
4. No, I just want a bigger piece of the pie.
The City Budget: 
Tight Times, Tough Choices 
Goals

- Inform participants
- Inform the city
- Build common ground for action
The City Budget: Tight Times, Tough Choices
The Workshop Structure

At each forum:
- Panel discussion with city officials
- Small group works – 20-25 people per group
  - Work through a list of more than 30 actions to close a $200 million annual budget gap
  - Differentiate “low hanging fruit,” “no way, no how,” “shared pain” and “gut wrenchers”
- Individual input:
  - 2 Minute video testimonies – 160+
  - Short written statements on “Wailing Wall”– 440+
## Sample from worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICE</th>
<th>What it means</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce budget by 10%</td>
<td>Lay off or leave unfilled 929 sworn officer positions (14 percent of 6,624 total). Lay off 73 civilians (9 percent). Shut down 10 specialty units, reduce size of 9 units.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce budget by 20%</td>
<td>Lay off or leave unfilled 1,755 sworn officer positions (26 percent of 6,624) and 87 civilian positions (11 percent). Close four more specialty units, reduce 15 others. Patrols down 7.5 percent in each district.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC HEALTH ALTH</th>
<th>What it means</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce budget by 20%</td>
<td>Close nursing home, one health center. No longer dispense OTC meds for free. Lose 58 positions.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce budget by 30%</td>
<td>Close nursing home, three health centers. Lose 157 positions.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue option</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charge co-pays for uninsured visits; fees for physicals</td>
<td>Some clients may not seek treatment because of cost. Clients would also have to begin paying for over-the-counter meds.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTION - POINTS</td>
<td>LOW HANGING FRUIT (# of Groups PLUS Groups voting for different point levels)</td>
<td>NO WAY NO HOW (# of Groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) ADMINISTRATIVE - 5</td>
<td>17 PLUS 3 @ 2.5 PTS A) RECORDS FEE - 1 7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) COURTS - 10</td>
<td>1 PLUS 2 @ 5 PTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) DROP - 4</td>
<td>27 PLUS 1 @ 3 PTS</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) PARKS - 1 OR 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) FIRE - 10 OR 20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) LIBRARY - 1 OR 3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) HOUSING - 7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) HUMAN SERVICES - 9 OR 19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) LAW - 2</td>
<td>7 PLUS 2 @ 1 PT</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) L &amp; I - 4</td>
<td>2 @ 2 PTS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) POLICE - 26 OR 52</td>
<td>2 @ 13 PTS</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) PRISONS - 10 or 21</td>
<td>5 @ 10 PTS, 1 @ 21</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) PUBLIC HEALTH - 5 OR 7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A) CO-PAYS, FEES 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) RECREATION - 2, 3, 5</td>
<td>1 @ 2 PTS</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) STREETS - 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A) BUSINESS FEE - 2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) $5 TRASH FEE - 13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) VEHICLE FLEET - 6</td>
<td>36 PLUS 3 @ 3 PTS, 1 @ 5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17) AMUSEMENT TAX - 2</td>
<td>31 PLUS 3 @ 4 PTS, 1 @ 3, 1 @16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18) BPT GROSS - 2</td>
<td>3, 1 WITH SMALL BIZ EXEMPTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19) BPT NET - 2</td>
<td>2, 1 WITH SMALL BIZ EXEMPTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20) EAGLES - 4</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21) PARKING - 2</td>
<td>30 PLUS 1 @ 4 PTS, 1 @ 16 PTS</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22) REAL ESTATE - 5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23) R.E. TRANSFER - 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24) SALES - 6</td>
<td>7 PLUS 1 @ 12 PTS</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25) WAGE/ RESIDENT - 1, 12</td>
<td>3 @ 1 PT, 3 @ 6.5 @ 12, 1 @ 24</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26) WAGE/COMMUTER - 1, 5</td>
<td>10 @ 5 PTS, 1 @ 1 PT, 1 @ 10, 1 @ 25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thematic Analysis

- Focus on Increasing Revenue
- Distrust
- Vision
- Minimize Impact on the Most Vulnerable Taxpayers
- Balance Prevention with Safety
- Minimize Impact on the Most Vulnerable Workers
- Overcome Inefficiencies Before Cutting Services
- Tackle Long-Range Issues Now, So They Don’t Become Issues without End
**Time Line**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2012</td>
<td>Initial advisory group meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2013</td>
<td>Start community outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second advisory group meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15 – March 15, 2013</td>
<td>Hold community budget forums/workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Third advisory group meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15-25, 2013</td>
<td>Final advisory group meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 30, 2013</td>
<td>Final report to community and School Board</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advisory Group

- **Role**
  - Identifying potential participants for each of the forums
  - Communicating with your peers in support of the project
  - Helping us anticipate particular challenges, hurdles, etc.
Advisory Group

○ Make up
  ● 12-15 people, broadly representative of stakeholder interests
    ○ Parent
    ○ Student
    ○ Non-parent resident and senior citizen
    ○ Community leader and business person
    ○ Upper Darby "resident" staff

○ How to indicate your interest:
  ● On-line: http://tinyurl.com/UD-BudgetAdvisoryBoard
  ● Call Linda Breitstein: 215-898-1112
What outcomes to expect

○ Products
  ● Priorities from the forums
  ● Values-based principles to explain decisions

○ District response
  ● Tell you how they used the above products
Discussion

- Your questions, thoughts, ideas
Contact

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