

TAMA COUNTY EMPOWERMENT AREA

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Tama County Empowerment Board SPECIAL Meeting
Wednesday, July 22, 2009 – 12:00 noon
ISU Extension Office Meeting Room

Voting Members Present:

Larry Vest, Board of Supervisors/Citizen
Karen Christensen, Citizen
Annette Dunn, Department of Human Services

Joyce Legg, Tama County Public Health
Richard Arp, North Tama School District/Citize

Others Present:

Representative Lance Horbach
Lori Johnson, Empowerment Coordinator
Laura Kopsa, Tama County Auditor
Gretchen Hageman, IDPH/TA Team/Early Childhood IA
Sheila Hansen, Child and Family Policy Center Every Child Counts

Senator Tim Kapucian
Royce Hickie, Mid-Iowa Community Action
Linda Rosenberger, Tama County Public Health
Jessica McNaul, Mid-Iowa Community Action

Apologies:

Michelle Gethmann	Marisue Hartung	Lindi Roelofse	Rudy Papakee
Mandy Lekin	Teresa McCall	Angie Knowles	Jill Herink
Deb Schlichting	Rick Vesely	Jenn Stover	Angela Dreesman
Jana Enfield	Frank Albertsen	Rachel Porath	Cindy Skopec
Jerri Leighton	Darla Thiessen		

Larry Vest, Chair, called meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

Introductions - were made.

Lean Design – Discussion was held with the following dialog and points made.

Why this process?

- Conditional designations, other Empowerment Boards are not able to be in compliance, and decrease in funding are some of the reasons driving the process of Lean Design. Need to look at how can Empowerment improve what they are currently doing.
- Currently local departments are working together and are communicating well together.
- State funds are used to deliver current services.
- When the services are closer to the people the better the services tend to be.
- Need to continue to talk to legislators. Any changes do require legislative action to make the changes.

What is best for Tama County?

- Unique needs of Tama County and need to be recognized – ie: culture - in consolidation.
- Local collaboration has been done with current Board and school districts.
- Preschool tuition funding was discussed and wondered how this would be impacted with schools incorporating preschool into their schools. It was shared that 3 year old preschool opportunities would still be needed, to give those children a socialization experience.
- Discussion was held regarding funding being based on the community needs assessment. There are considerable needs in Tama County unique with our population, possibly too high of needs to be a multiple county. Historically, concerns regarding multiple counties taking away funding from Tama County services. Surrounding counties use Tama County as a “need” to apply for grants and then do not provide services or provide minimal services, ie: ½ day a month.
- We utilize current resources that are available in the county.
- Transportation issues are more of a need when services are provided outside of Tama County.

Would we get more attention at the legislators/legislative session if we are bigger?

- Suggestion was made to receive input from citizens in multiple counties.

Restructuring

- Fight for local control 1st.
- Volunteers are giving their time, and would have to drive to other counties to participate in a redistricted Board.
- Felt they are totally informed with current structure, and want to maintain what we have.
- Lance Horbach shared with current Board make-up there is peer pressure when members come to board meetings, when the boards are smaller. With the regional concept – board members won't feel like they have to come to a board meeting because it's so big. They won't be missed if not present.
- Services and resources would be lost if regional concept was implemented. Would still need local level input.
- Mrs. Christensen stated that with AEA267 restructuring, decision making was slower, travel increased, and were further away from those served. Some of the positives they saw were access to technology, and capability of bringing in trainers.
- Best method to provide services to needy families – this is the optimal goal and if a proposal is presented and it makes this outcome then Lance could vote for it.
- Senator Kapucian asked “how is this going to help financially?”

What are the projected savings? How are we going to save money? Are we going to give more money directly to people in need? Have they shown difference in cost saving? Were questions asked.

- Need to save local control, since this was the basis of Empowerment initially.
- Need to know what it is going to do for the kids in Tama County.
- Show us the positives of this.
- Senator Kapucian echoed importance of local control and said “show me the savings”, black and white figures.

Levels of excellences – like the idea of using levels of excellence to talk about leveling Community Empowerment Areas.

Need to focus on local structure 1st.

- Next years legislative budget is going to be more of a deficit than this year with possibilities of \$1 billion dollars in cuts that will need to be made.
- Suggestion was made, if there is a huge cut in funds, think about a balance and maybe put a hold on regionalization
- Review of staff salaries – education level, core competencies

State Structure was briefly discussed. It was felt that if the local level is to restructure then there should be restructuring at the state level as well.

Levels of Excellence were discussed. It was felt that models/standards are not always followed and should be striving towards evidenced based proven programs.

Overall comments: What is it going to do for the kids in Tama County, and what is the projected savings on an annual basis?

Everyone was thanked for their participation in this overview and discussion. The legislatures and state team members will take this information back and this process moves forward.

Adjournment - Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Johnson, Tama County Empowerment Coordinator

Reminder: Next Regular Empowerment Board Meeting will be September 1st at ISU Extension at 12:00 Noon

Note: Iowa, Jasper, Poweshiek and Benton County Coordinators were invited, but did not attend.