



E-PARCC

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

Syracuse University

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs

Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration

Addressing ELCA: An Exercise in Designing and Facilitating Stakeholder Processes

Summary

The ELCA street contracting company and its property in the middle of a working class neighborhood of the mid-sized older industrial city of Lansdale have become more than an out-of-place neighbor – it has become a noise nuisance, an environmental health hazard and a political headache for city officials. The City Council President asks two mid-level public managers to convene stakeholders for a brainstorming/relationship-building meeting to determine the best use of this property, assuming that both the resources and the authority will be found to obtain, remediate, and redevelop the property. These two managers decide to host the first of what they hope to be a series of stakeholder meetings that will guide the project.

This simulation provides students with the experience of designing and facilitating a citizen/stakeholder meeting that occurs in the early stages of a long-term collaborative project process in which economic, environmental, and social interests converge.

The activity is set up so that each student learns elements of stakeholder meeting design and implementation through readings, lecture, practice, and reflection. Part A presents the stakeholder situation and instructs students to plan their own process for facilitating the first stakeholder meeting. Part B contains role sheets to be used when pairs of students implement the process design they developed. Part C includes the second half of the case study, telling how the collaborative network in the real life case evolved and produced a successful outcome. Part D contains materials to be used in a pre-exercise lecture including the general instructions for the instructor as well as content and resources about stakeholder processes, meeting design, facilitation, and brainstorming.

This case was the winner in our 2009-10 “Collaborative Public Management, Collaborative Governance, and Collaborative Problem Solving” teaching case and simulation competition. It was double-blind peer reviewed by a committee of academics and practitioners. It was written by Rob Alexander of the Rochester Institute of Technology and edited by Martha Haddad Ketcham. This case is intended for classroom discussion and is not intended to suggest either effective or ineffective handling of the situation depicted. It is brought to you by E-PARCC, part of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University’s Collaborative Governance Initiative, a subset of the Program on the Analysis and Resolution of Conflicts. This material may be copied as many times as needed as long as the authors are given full credit for their work.

to handle the meeting? How could he ensure that all voices would be heard in such a way that they would be willing and interested in working together in the long-run, assuming that the financial resources came through? How would he balance the broader city and state level political interests with the narrow neighborhood interests? In less than two days, he would know the answers to these questions.

Your task is to design and facilitate an initial stakeholders meeting regarding the question “what should be done the ELCA property after it has been remediated?” The purposes of this meeting are threefold:

- To allow stakeholders to meet each other;
- To generate a list of ideas for property use and their subsequent pros and cons from the perspective of each stakeholder; and
- To earn their commitment to attend a follow-up meeting.

Using what you know about facilitation and incorporating what you understand about this case, design a meeting process that a facilitator may implement with stakeholders in order to arrive at the other end with the desired deliverables listed above. This meeting process must include the following components:

- a) An ice breaker
- b) The establishment of ground rules
- c) A structured process wherein participants have the opportunity to generate ideas for uses of the ELCA property while being consistent with the ground rules.
- d) A structured process wherein participants have the opportunity to list the pros and cons of each idea while being consistent with the ground rules.
- e) *For advanced groups: A structured process wherein participants have the opportunity to brainstorm, evaluate, and decide the next steps in the collaborative process.*

Remember that this is the first meeting of potentially many for this group of stakeholders, so starting out on the right foot with minimal conflict will be very desirable. Write out this process design in a scripted manner that a professional facilitator could pick up and use with minimal coaching.

Upon completing your process design, write up a rationale for the components you include and the order in which you include them. Show how your process design meets both the short-term goals of the meeting and the longer-term goals of building trust and strengthening stakeholder relationships.

Part B: Roles and Role Play Instructions

Notes to Instructor: The following thirteen characters represent the array of stakeholders most relevant to our case of remediating and redeveloping brownfields for residential end use. While every role may be used, the intent of providing thirteen is to allow flexibility to meet your course needs. If the primary focus of your course is on citizen engagement, then most role-play participants should assume one of the citizen roles. If your primary focus is on interorganizational power dynamics or the complexities of political conflict, then more of the public agency, elected official, and private firm stakeholders should be incorporated. Table A suggests two combinations of roles and possible processing questions that may accompany them.

Caution: Role sheets are written to include interpersonal relationship histories. It is important to address inconsistencies that will occur when certain roles are removed or added to the role-play exercise.

Table A: Two possible role combinations

Roles Characters	Affiliations	Citizen-focused	IOR-focused
Dmitri Brown	City Department of Environmental Quality	X	X
Dawn Suffolk	City Council	X	X
Candace Jones	Oceanic Neighborhood Association	X	X
Chen Kim	City Department of Housing	X	X
Paula Rodriguez	City Office of Real Estate	X	X
Maria Echevarria	Mayor's Office	X	X
Roy Lagin	Oceanic neighborhood	X	
Troy Shultz	Oceanic neighborhood	X	
Michelle Huggins	Oceanic neighborhood	X	
Harry Frederickson	Southwest Lansdale Neighborhood Association	X	X
Dan Simmons	State Environmental Management Department		X
Ted Pomeroy	Private Consulting Firm		X
Jeremy Baffin	Homebuilders Association		X

Role-play activity: The purpose of having students take on the roles as described in this section is to create a case-context in which two of your students can implement their meeting process design. Since the focus of the activity is on the act of facilitating, it is important that students taking on stakeholder roles do not hijack the activity. Depending upon the maturity level of the students, it is possible for charismatic students to overwhelm quieter students, for students to not “let go” of their role when it is time to end the activity and begin processing, for role stereotyping to occur, and for students to be distracted by character conflicts and forget to respond to the facilitator's actions². To avoid these events, **it is important to instruct students**

² <http://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/roleplaying/challeng.html> (accessed 2/24/10)

to not only incorporate their character's positions and interests³ in their actions but to also respond to the actions of the facilitators. As help towards this goal, none of the character descriptions include information about direct conflict with the facilitators.

Role-play alternate activity: In the primary version of this activity, two of the project stakeholders, Dmitri Brown and Paula Rodriguez, serve as the meeting facilitators. If you have the time and interest in rotating facilitation duties among multiple pairs of students, you may assign students to act as facilitators without having an additional role to play. In this instance, inform the students that, instead of assuming facilitation responsibilities themselves, Brown and Rodriguez obtained permission and funding from City Council to hire outside facilitators. In this situation, multiple iterations of the meeting may occur by having students rotate characters.

Non-role-play alternate activity: The roles may also be used as a case study without actually playing out the meeting. Instead, you may have students read through a subset of roles and identify potential conflicts and issues that may exist between stakeholder positions and interests. Then, tell students to review their meeting process design and analyze how their design may or may not minimize, address, or ignore these conflicts.

Role descriptions: Role descriptions are organized in alphabetical order. Each role sheet contains:

- A description of the personal positions and interests for each character;
- The organizational positions and interests influencing them (if relevant);
- Information about the project that that character may only know themselves; and,
- Any relevant interpersonal relationship information.

³ “Positions” refer to *what* a stakeholder wants in a given situation or regarding a certain issue while “interests” refer to the values-informed reasons *why* a stakeholder wants that particular position. See <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/intpos-p.htm> for an illustrative example.

Role-Play Instructions for All Participants

Your role-play character sheets are confidential and should only be viewed by yourself. Please take your time in reading through it and pay attention to your personal positions and interests, your organizational positions and interests, any project information you bring to the table, and the history of relationships you share with other stakeholders who will be attending.

It is extremely important that, in performing your role, you enact these characteristics while you simultaneously respond to those around you, *especially the facilitators*. The more realistically you respond to their efforts, the deeper and richer the post-activity conversation will be.

YOU ARE INVITED!
ELCA PROPERTY COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER MEETING
7PM – OCEANIC COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Dear Stakeholder:

We are enthusiastic for you to participate in our upcoming stakeholder meeting addressing the future use of the property formerly occupied by the ELCA Corporation. As you well know, this property has been acquired by the City of Lansdale for the purpose of environmental cleanup and redevelopment. While action has already taken place regarding assessment of environmental contamination, no decisions have been made regarding how this property will be used.

With your input and assistance, we hope to generate some concrete ideas that meet all of our interests. To achieve this, have asked two facilitators to assist and have provided additional information that may help you think through the best use of this property embedded in the Oceanic Neighborhood.

We look forward to seeing you at the Community Library.

Sincerely,

Dawn Suffolk
President, City Council

**APPENDIX: ELCA PROPERTY COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER MEETING
SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

City of Lansdale Standard Brownfield Project Processes

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Stage</i>	<i>Description</i>
Cleanup	Site Identification	Potential developers (public and private) identify contaminated sites of interest with assistance from public brownfield directories or through marketing by current property owners.
	Initial Site Assessment – Phase I Investigation	Assessing whether contamination is present through historical records and examination of neighboring sites.
	Detailed Site Assessment – Phase II Investigation Remedial Assessment	Environmental engineers sample and analyze chemical parameters of site if Phase I Investigation suggests potential for contamination.
	Economic Assessment and Planning	Assessing for potential economic return vs. cost of restoring site to productive use. Sites categorized into viable, threshold, and nonviable groups according to this potential/cost ratio. End use plans generated.
Redevelopment (Overlap)	Project Development and Financing	Assuming financial feasibility studies are complete, developers arrange financing for clean up and redevelopment. This is a likely stage for meetings between multiple stakeholders.
Cleanup	Cleanup Planning and Execution	Selecting and implementing a cleanup plan in compliance with regulations.
Redevelopment	Redevelopment of Site	Altering the site for suitability to its new use.

State Contamination Limits for Residential Use of Property

Total Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons	5 ppm in soil
Mercury	1 ppm in soil
Benzene	60 ppb in soil
Benzene	1 ppb in groundwater
Toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene	5 ppb in groundwater

LANSDALE HOUSING MARKET INFORMATION

The following table summarizes the market potential for housing development within the City of Lansdale. The capture rate is an estimate of the percentage of new units the market is likely to support each year. The number of new units is the raw number based on this percentage.

Annual Capture of Market Potential

Housing Type	Income Target	Number of Households	Capture Rate	Number of New Units
Rental Multi-Family (lofts/apartments, leaseholder)	Below Market	3,670	5-10%	184-367
Rental Multi-Family (lofts/apartments, leaseholder)	Market Rate	4,620	5-10%	231-462
For Sale Multi-Family (lofts/apartments, condo/co-op ownership)	All Ranges	2,380	5-10%	119-238
For Sale Single-Family Attached (townhouses/rowhouses, fee-simple/condominium ownership)	All Ranges	1,650	5-10%	83-165
For Sale Single-Family Detached (urban houses, fee-simple ownership)	Below Market	1,410	5-10%	71-141
For Sale Single-Family Detached (urban houses, fee-simple ownership)	Market Rate	3,520	5-10%	176-352
Total		17,250		863-1,725 units

Source: Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc., 2007.

The following table describes the strategies utilized by the City of Lansdale Division of Community Development in assisting its neighborhoods. The Oceanic Neighborhood is considered to be on the boundary of Transitional Low and Transitional High. The Southwest Lansdale Neighborhood is considered to be on the boundary of Stable and Exceptional.

Type of Activity	Neighborhood Type					
	Exceptional	Stable	Transitional High	Transitional Low	Depreciated	Distressed
Community Organizing	X	X	X	X	X	X
Public Improvements	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vacant Land Management				X	X	X
Open Space Planning				X	X	X
Expanded Housing Services			X	X	X	X
Focused Rehabilitation		X	X	X	X	
Land Banking					X	X
Mixed-Income Development			X	X		
Economic Development			X	X	X	X
Mixed-Use Development		X	X	X		

Source: Interface Studio

THE ELCA PROPERTY IN THE CITY OF LANSDALE



Exhibit A: The Neighborhood Brownfield

Dmitri Brown (City Environmental Manager)

Male, Age 45

How did you get so involved in this project so quickly? Part of the reason is that you always saw your position at the city as more than the environmental “cog” in the wheel that addresses past and present environmental problems. Instead, you have always felt that your department should be more proactive in seeing the larger picture of environmental projects, extending services to the social and economic aspects of property remediation. Therefore, you are happy to have the opportunity to engage with this stakeholder group so that you can use your interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to communicate across interests.

Personal Background: You have spent your entire career working for the City of Lansdale in its Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) as both a budget analyst and an environmental project manager. Your commitment to quality of service has grown over time and you have developed a reputation for fairness and thoroughness in your work. While you are not specifically trained in negotiation or facilitation, you enjoy working with citizens and representatives of business and social interests and have many strong relationships built up over time, particularly with state EMD officials involved with funding contaminated property remediation.

Organizational Background: The DEQ has positioned itself over the years as central in economic and community development efforts but would like to showcase their ability to play on a bigger stage. The size of the ELCA property provides a great opportunity to do so, particularly with the introduction of the new EMD brownfield program. Knowing that many eyes at the state level would be on them as the first project in this program, the DEQ would like to maximize cleanup efforts depending upon the selected end use. Residential cleanup would require the greatest extent of cleanup with recreational a close second. Commercial or industrial uses would require less extensive cleanup.

Project Information: At this point in time, most of the environmental information you have about the property comes from the private consultant, Ted Pomeroy, who the DEQ contracted to conduct the Phase I and Phase II Assessments.

Interpersonal Relationship Information: Through extensive project work within the City of Lansdale, you have developed strong relationships with Paula Rodriguez in the Office of Real Estate, Dan Simmons of the State EMD, and Ted Pomeroy with the private consulting firm you have retained.

Dawn Suffolk (City Council President)

Female, Age 58

Personal Background: With the ELCA property sitting smack in the middle of your district, you are very interested in seeing what is currently an eyesore and a popular joke in the media turn into a very successful project pleasing to all involved. After twenty years serving on City Council, you plan to step down at the end of your current term (unknown to all but family). Therefore, you are more willing than usual to take political risks in moving this project forward. This means that you are more willing to back the citizen neighbors in this process as much as possible, even if it will rule out ideas that may be more lucrative for the city. These individuals had suffered long enough next to this property under your watch so you are more than willing to go to bat for them. If it turns out that the Oceanic Neighborhood Association has no clear ideas, you would like to see housing for seniors in this neighborhood.

You welcome the fact that the meeting will be facilitated and look forward to seeing how the facilitator has planned his or her meeting process. If asked, you are interested in seeing strict ground rules set down that creates formal guidelines for who speaks when and how. When you run your City Council meetings, you require all members to first ask you for permission to speak. To you, this maintains order and respect.

Organizational Background: City Council, as the budget watchdogs for the city, would like to see potential end uses include options that are low-cost to the city. City Council trusts the abilities of city staff members to apply for and receive state and federal grants but would like to see more investment from the private sector in redevelopment projects. At the same time, City Council would like to see some sort of end use that would benefit the city in the long run, preferably by generating new tax revenue.

Project Information: City Council relies upon Dmitri Brown and Paula Rodriguez for project-level information.

Interpersonal Relationship Information: You are aware that members of the Oceanic Neighborhood Association do not have favorable views of you. While politically this is not as relevant to you, you have a personal desire to leave your office on a positive note. In the past, you have butted heads with Candace Jones but are interested in making amends.

Jeremy Baffin (Home Builders Association Executive Vice-President)

Male, Age 42

Personal Background: Having caught wind of the ELCA property and the opportunities it presents from your friend the Deputy Mayor, you are attending this meeting to see if there is any hope that the city would be willing to figure out some way to turn it into market-rate housing. Personally, you think that there might be interesting ways to put suburban-style housing in the middle of a traditional, single family home city neighborhood.

You hear that the meeting will be facilitated and are unsure as to what that means. In your office, meetings seem to work best when the conversation guides itself without much formality or rules, but you are open to new experiences.

Organizational Background: The Association has been exasperated in the past by Mayor Jordan making several off-hand public comments that the environmental problems of urban sprawl around his city are largely due to home builders building too much new housing stock on cheap land further and further from city limits. No matter how many times it has been explained, the Association couldn't seem to get through to the Mayor that homebuilder members largely do not work on projects within the city because every single home building opportunity in the past fifteen years has been for single "in-fill" homes located in already existing neighborhoods – projects that do not attract most mid- to large-sized building firms. The ELCA property may be an opportunity to prove the Mayor wrong.

Project Information: Association members who have built infill housing in this neighborhood are familiar with the property values in the area of the ELCA property. As a result, they would only get involved if it seemed like there was to be a return-on-investment for houses sold. Based upon what you know about the neighborhood it is unlikely that if homes were constructed on the ELCA property, they would fetch the prices necessary to turn a profit for Association members, especially if they were also responsible for street and sidewalk construction, as is the case in suburban developments.

Interpersonal Relationship Information: As inferred above, you have a good relationship with the Deputy Mayor but not so much with the Mayor and his assistant, Maria Echevarria. Echevarria has been known to lead the criticism of homebuilding as the cause of sprawl and the two of you have sparred in the editorial section of the Lansdale Times. While you have never met her, you are interested in introducing yourself and seeing if you can push a few of her buttons, just for fun. In the big picture, you want to be on the Mayor's good side in case the ELCA property provides profit opportunities for your members.

Candace Jones (Oceanic Neighborhood Association Leader)

Female, Age 48

You are looking forward to the upcoming meeting because you see the project as an opportunity to finally have the city put its money where its mouth is and do something significant with this property. Having gotten to know neighbors who have fought with the city about this property for over fifteen years, you look forward to seeing some pay out.

Personal Background: You are vaguely aware of the situation at the state level where potential funding for property remediation may come down the line to help move this project forward. Your job as a management consultant has shown you that state grant programs across the board like to see active citizen engagement in the applications that come to them. When wearing your “neighbor” hat, you have a strong interest in seeing something quiet like a park or a senior living facility built on the property.

In your profession as a project manager, you are familiar with facilitation practice and don’t like to experience what you consider to be “bad facilitation.” If you feel that a facilitator is losing control of the group, you have no qualms about stepping in and taking over the process.

Organizational Background: Your new position as the de facto leader of the Oceanic Neighborhood Association puts you in the position of representing overall neighborhood interests. When wearing the “ONA” hat, you are compelled to put aside your personal interests.

ONA’s interests are 1) to remove all contamination and potential health risks, 2) compensate any neighbors whose property has been compromised by the ELCA property, 3) find a non-nuisance use for the property once it is cleaned up, 4) find a use for the property that will stabilize property values, decrease crime, and enhance neighborhood aesthetics and, 5) obtain an apology from the City of Lansdale regarding the years of inaction prior to the meeting.

Project Information: You have no project information beyond a laundry list of past grievances of the ELCA owners compiled by neighbors that include:

- Backhoe digging at 3a.m.
- Mailbox sabotage of five neighbors who had called the police regarding disturbances
- Yard damage from illegal dynamite blasting
- Guard dogs barking all night, escaping and terrorizing neighborhood pets
- Loud parties on the property
- Foul smelling run off killing flowerbeds

Interpersonal Relationship Information: Needless to say, based on past performance, you do not fully trust City Councilwoman Suffolk or any city employee to do the right thing for the neighborhood. However, you are open to seeing what happens at this meeting. Your instinct is to resist participation so that you can observe until you are certain that the city is, indeed, serious about its intent to make a difference.

Ted Pomeroy (Consulting Engineer)

Male, Age 52

Personal Background: Having worked on a few projects before with Dmitri Brown and the City of Lansdale, you are familiar with the type of environmental assessment and remediation processes associated with city-owned properties and the technical nature of the data that ends up being generated and disseminated. However, you are unsure as to the extent to which you think non-experts should be involved in project implementation. While you have presented data at public meetings before, it seems to you that anything beyond that setting would require a great deal of time and effort to keep citizens up to speed, especially in your area of expertise. If at all possible, you would like to advocate for limited neighbor involvement, especially during environmental assessment and remediation processes.

You are very familiar with what a facilitated meeting looks like and are appreciative that a facilitator will arrive with a meeting agenda.

Organizational Background: Your consulting firm has worked with the city on a number of environmental remediation projects and has built good rapport by doing so. It is firm policy that field consultants show a good faith effort in working with citizens, but only as far as giving them information appeases them and quiets their complaints.

Being a large firm whose expertise extends to construction project management, there is a broader interest in seeing an expensive project selected for the ELCA property. The firm partners are certain that, if the field consultants do a good job on the environmentals, the firm would be in strong contention to pick up the lucrative construction sub-contract as well.

Project Information: Being the consultant for the Phase I and Phase II Assessments, you have all of the environmental information about the property. Based upon your work, you estimate that cleanup costs will approach \$4 million based upon the findings in the table below:

Environmental Problem	Amount
Impacted Soils	18,200 tons
Construction and Demolition Debris	4,500 tons
Asphalt	375 tons
Asbestos Wastes	220 tons
Scrap Metal	70 tons
Municipal Solid Waste	27 tons
Tires	230 cu. yds.
Impacted Water	280,000 gallons

Assuming that this project will be accepted into the State MBC program, the state would reimburse 75%, or \$3million of these costs, requiring the City of Lansdale to locate \$1 million in cleanup funding.

Interpersonal Relationship Information: You like working with Dmitri Brown and, as he is your client, you are prepared to do anything to support his efforts at the meeting.

Chen Kim (City Housing Manager)

Female, Age 33

Personal Background: You are pleased to have been invited to this meeting, knowing that the probability a property this large would open up in a residential area only occurs once in so many years. However, you are unsure how it might look to the public to be putting housing on top of what sounds like quite the environmental nightmare. Yet you trust the skills of Dmitri Brown in handling environmental situations and envision a good space for filling crucial city housing needs once he and his consultant complete their work. Your personal interest is in filling what you see as a great need for livable senior housing in the city. This neighborhood is perfect for this housing type based upon its walking distance to a range of services including a drug store, a diner, two churches, and a social services office.

You have attended several facilitated citizen engagement meetings before and have not been impressed with the ability of facilitators to contain rowdy attendees. You hope this meeting will be different.

Organizational Background: For several months now, the Lansdale Housing Department has been trying to keep up with the demands of a recent U.S. Housing and Urban Development grant requiring that a certain number of affordable housing units be constructed within the city by the end of the year. This property sounds like an ideal place to put up some of the newer condominium-style subsidized housing units preferred by HUD. With the increasing role HUD has been playing in the shrinking economy, pleasing HUD would be in your department's best interest. You are aware that this would likely mean that the City would remain owner and your office would help manage these properties, but the pressure of maintaining good graces with HUD is quite strong.

Project Information: You do not have any addition information about the property or project to bring to the meeting.

Interpersonal Relationship Information: While you are aware that your office has been in conflict with the city Real Estate Office over the proper allocation of resources for housing or for economic development, you hold no ill will towards Paula Rodriguez, the representative from Real Estate you know will attend the upcoming ELCA property meeting. However, you are not against arguing in opposition to her ideas of what you see as the proper use of the property.

Dan Simmons (State Environmental Management Department)

Male, Age 38

Personal Background: With 15 years of experience working at the EMD, you have become quite competent at working with local partners interested in remediating their contaminated properties. However, you have never been in charge of piloting a new program and want to make your mark with the opportunity to find the first project for the new Municipal Brownfield Cleanup (MBC). For the upcoming meeting, you are very interested in listening and learning to see if this project might qualify.

In your mind, a high quality project is one where the municipality has the resources and capacity for environmental remediation project management, a positive relationship with the private development community in its jurisdiction, and skills to reach out to affected citizens. You have worked with the City of Lansdale before and have had positive experiences so are curious to see how they handle this brainstorming meeting. If asked for input during the meeting, your interest is to see this property cleaned up in a manner appropriate to the designated end use. If the end use is to be residential, the cleanup must be extensive and expensive. If the end use is to be light industrial, the cleanup will be less extensive and will require less up front money from the city.

Your only stipulation regarding end use is that it be agreeable to as many stakeholders as possible.

You take it as a good sign that a facilitator will be running this meeting and look forward to the information you anticipate will become revealed in the facilitated process.

Organizational Background: The EMD is traditionally neutral regarding local projects once projects have been accepted into an EMD policy program. Due to relations with the state Assembly and the Governor, the EMD feels pressure to accept projects likely to succeed and to provide maximum benefits to the community.

Project Information: The EMD relies upon local applicants for project information so you do not bring anything new to the meeting.

Interpersonal Relationship Information: You have a strong working relationship with Dmitri Brown but have not met any of the other stakeholders invited to the meeting. While you will be friendly, your primary goal is to observe the group in action.

Paula Rodriguez (City Real Estate Manager)

Female, Age 28

Your work with the city of Lansdale over the past four years has been interesting at best, as your office has struggled to keep pace with increasing foreclosures and pressure for the city to acquire and maintain a range of newly vacant properties. Each day brings a new challenge that makes you feel like you are still learning your job as if starting anew.

Personal Background: The ELCA property presents a different challenge that you welcome. Given the size of the property and what you perceive to be high political stakes, you know that the city will take a team approach, not leaving you in the lurch for handling the property yourself. When you have the opportunity to work on a team for this kind of project, you feel good about providing a service to neighbors who might be otherwise put upon by criminal, environmental, or other undesirable behaviors that seem to congregate around such derelict properties.

However, from this point forward, you are skeptical about the ability to do anything with this property other than keeping it light industrial. It is an odd shape, is still zoned industrial, and would require extensive street infrastructure if it were to be designated residential or retail-commercial. It is important to you that people who might promote those kinds of projects understand that road construction is no laughing matter and often comprises upwards of 40% of site preparation costs.

You have had some exposure to facilitation and facilitation practice and feel confident that the meeting will go well.

Organizational Background: In recent years, the Lansdale Real Estate department has been at odds with their counterparts in Housing in terms of best use for vacant properties. Members of the Real Estate department feel that the challenges facing downtown Lansdale result from a loss of jobs, so emphasis on newly vacant properties should be on small to medium sized businesses. The Housing office, on the other hand, seems to think that the primary challenge is loss of workers living downtown and therefore key properties should be used for housing.

Project Information: City real estate statistics indicate that the ELCA property lies in a transition zone between small single family homes in the Oceanic neighborhood assessed on an average of \$40,000 and large single family homes in the Southwest Lansdale neighborhood that average \$260,000 in assessed values.

Interpersonal Relationship Information: You have enjoyed working with your colleague, Dmitri Brown, on smaller properties in the past, where you handle acquisition processes and he tackles the environmental impact requirements. While this is new territory, you will rely upon this past goodwill to feel comfortable that your needs will be met.

Maria Echevarria (Aide to Mayor Jordan)

Female, Age 30

Personal Background: You have been working for Mayor Jordan for seven years as his primary aide on urban development issues, an issue that strikes you close to home. Growing up in center city Lansdale, you see much potential in revitalizing cities from the urban core out. As a citizen and urban development expert, you think the ELCA property is a great opportunity to do something special like a commercial/cultural marketplace. However, your role as representative of the Mayor is a bit more complicated (see below).

You understand that the meeting will be facilitated. While you are fine with facilitated processes, you are wary of how power dynamics happen within them, particularly the tendency for men to dominate the process and marginalize women. If you feel this begins to happen, you will assert yourself and reveal what you think is a power imbalance.

Organizational Background: Your presence at this meeting is to represent Mayor Jordan's interest in establishing better relationships with area homebuilders whom the Mayor had been arguing for several years regarding urban sprawl. In the Mayor's mind, the use of this property would coincide with the interests of Jeremy Baffin. However, the project must also generate increased property taxes, so while the Mayor does not want to be seen as visibly opposed to what the neighbors might want, if there is an opening to steer the conversation away from turning the property into a park, you should take it.

Project Information: Like City Council, the Mayor's office relies upon the work of city employees in the housing, real estate, and environmental divisions in understanding the characteristics of the property. However, sources close to the Mayor in the state capital indicate that the state EDM is *very* interested in funding a cleanup for this property.

Interpersonal Relationship Information: In the past, you have experienced conflict with Jeremy Baffin of the Homebuilders Association in the pages of the local newspaper over the causes of urban sprawl in the region. You believe it is the result of shortsighted developers while he pins the reason on decaying inner city cores that causes residents to flee. While you have never met him in person, you know it will be tough for you to find common ground and shared interests as directed by the Mayor. Your strategy is to cautiously observe him before making attempts to work with him.

Roy Lagin (Neighbor)

Male, Age 62

Personal Background: You are sick and tired of complaining to the city about the smells and peculiar run-off from the ELCA property entering your own. In fact, you were almost dumbstruck when you got the Oceanic Neighborhood Association email stating that the city had acquired the property and now wanted to obtain neighborhood input on the next use of the property. As an owner of property immediately adjacent to ELCA, you would love to see the land divided such that existing neighbors have the opportunity to extend their current lots further back. You think this would be a great way to enhance your property and ensure that you maintain privacy, peace, and maybe even see a little bit of wildlife. The remaining property should then be turned into a park.

One of your primary concerns, and one that you are certain is shared by a number of your neighbors, is that the ELCA property may be turned into an expensive redevelopment that will rapidly increase your property value to a level you cannot afford. As a retired plumber, you receive a pension, but not one significant enough to pay a significant increase in property taxes. You have no interest in leaving the neighborhood as your house was the one in which you and your wife raised your family.

Someone told you that a “facilitator” will be running the meeting. You are not sure what that means but hope that they won’t make you talk about “what you feel” and stuff like that. If they do, your strategy is to sit back and pass on the activity.

Organizational Background: While a member of the ONA, you have not been particularly active except when you see an upcoming event that directly pertains to you and your own property. However, if push comes to shove, you will defend ONA interests against all others.

Project Information: You really don’t have any additional information about the property, but plenty of opinions.

Interpersonal Relationship Information: While you grudgingly respect the work that ONA de facto president Candace Jones has been doing as a liaison to the city, you are uncomfortable being represented by a woman. That is part of the reason that you do not attend ONA meetings regularly. You are wary of Jones and need to test the waters to see if you trust that she is open to your interests and ideas.

Troy Schultz (Neighbor)

Male, Age 28

Personal Background: Having been active in Oceanic Neighborhood Association meetings since they really became active in the past few months, you are very enthusiastic not so much about what the ELCA property *should* become, but what it *shouldn't*. Based on conversations you have had with friends after Association meetings at the local dive bar, you are confident that most neighbors do not want to see anything that would attract loud kids or provide space for teenagers to congregate and get into trouble. In addition, you are against anything that would increase traffic and parking problems on already congested streets. This includes high-rise apartment and condominium buildings regardless of who would live there. You are especially against subsidized housing because your experience growing up near the north side of Chicago had led you to believe that public housing only generates crime and litter, especially when government is the landlord.

To be honest, you really don't care what goes on the ELCA property *as long as it is not anything previously mentioned*.

You know what facilitation is due to team meetings you sit through at work and, in general, are OK with it. However, if you feel there is a lull in the conversation, you fill the gaps with your own ideas and opinions.

Organizational Background: As an avid supporter of ONA, you stand by the interests the group developed at your last meeting in preparation for this upcoming stakeholder meeting. ONA's interests are 1) to remove all contamination and potential health risks, 2) compensate any neighbors whose property has been compromised by the ELCA property, 3) find a non-nuisance use for the property once it is cleaned up, 4) find a use for the property that will stabilize property values, decrease crime, and enhance neighborhood aesthetics and, 5) obtain an apology from the City of Lansdale regarding the years of inaction prior to the meeting.

Project Information: You do not possess any information regarding the property that others do not know.

Interpersonal Relationship Information: You generally like the neighbors whom you know will be attending the meeting but you are not too happy that Harry Frederickson from the Southwest Lansdale Neighborhood Association has been invited. You have met Harry at other city events and think he is an elitist know-it-all who likes to hear the sound of his own voice. You don't trust that he has the best interests of the Oceanic Neighborhood in mind and intend to challenge his ideas for use of the ELCA property.

Michelle Huggins (Neighbor)

Female, Age 55

Personal Background: Having grown up in this neighborhood and living in the house once occupied by your parents, you have great pride and connection to the Oceanic area. In addition, your work volunteering at your son's school has gotten you involved with various environmental and beautification projects in and around the neighborhood. As a result, you are very upset that the city has allowed such a significant property as the ELCA property become so polluted, or so you are led to think.

It is extremely important to you that, regardless of what happens to the ELCA property, the city remains as transparent as possible with its environmental assessment data and redevelopment data. At the same time, you want the future of the ELCA property to somehow acknowledge its dirty environmental past. If the use is to be industrial, it should be for a company involved with alternative energy. If the use is to be a public park, then it should include a public educational display about brownfields. If the use is to be residential, then the houses should be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified for green building standards.

Organizational Background: You belong to numerous environmental and community development groups around the city, but find ONA to be the most useful regarding this property. At the last meeting, you learn that the group has prioritized a list of interests of which you care about only two: 1) to remove all contamination and potential health risks, and, 2) obtain an apology from the City of Lansdale regarding the years of inaction prior to the meeting.

Project Information: You do not possess any additional information about the property.

Interpersonal Relationship Information: While you have no strong opinion about anyone who will be present at this meeting, you are generally suspicious of city employees, especially elected officials like City Councilwoman Dawn Suffolk.

Harry Frederickson (Southwest Lansdale Neighborhood Association - SLNA)

Male, Age 60

Personal Background: Being a city resident whose house straddles two neighborhoods, you have been very interested in tracking the ongoing saga of the ELCA property. A high-investment development project would likely increase and stabilize the weakest side of the Southwest Lansdale (SL) neighborhood – the one closest to the Oceanic neighborhood in which your house sits. Therefore, you think that the Oceanic neighborhood should conform to the street design plans of the more affluent Southwest Lansdale neighborhood. In addition, you know that the best use of the property is for an upscale grocery store, something you feel the SL neighborhood needs to make it the best neighborhood in the region.

In addition, as a longtime board member of SLNA, you feel that you have a lot to offer the “newbies” when it comes to organizing and working with the city and would love to give lots of unsolicited advice.

Organizational Background: SLNA has a long tradition of pushing the city to provide added value projects in their neighborhood, which is considered the wealthiest of all the city neighborhoods and the area with the best schools. While the area has never had to deal with environmental contamination on the scale of what the ELCA property presents, SLNA has a strong record of advocating for better recycling services and more efficient storm water systems. Proud of its status as a city neighborhood, SLNA has often been quite vocal about its disdain for the more suburban-style housing pressing up against the western edge of the neighborhood.

Project Information: While direct information regarding the ELCA property is not something you have had access to, you are able to testify to the increasing property values of the strip bordering the Southwest Lansdale Neighborhood and the Oceanic Neighborhood. Based on estimates put together by a member of the SLNA board who works in the real estate industry, you are convinced that property values in ONA will double with the introduction of the grocery store.

Interpersonal Relationship Information: You are aware that there might be individuals present who might not be as passionate about the SL neighborhood as you, but you are confident that everyone will welcome your advice.

Part C: Case Outcomes: From ELCA to Ontario Oaks

In the real-life case upon which this exercise was based, the initial meetings between city managers, citizen stakeholders, and private homebuilders proved to be crucial in building positive relationships that contributed to an award-winning “new urbanism” market-rate housing development. Key to this success was the role played by the environmental manager and the president of city council. The president in particular took the time on multiple occasions to meet with and listen to neighborhood residents in the early stages prior to property acquisition.

Involvement by the citizens of the neighborhood, however, was not an automatic occurrence. As one leader of “ONA” revealed, once the city acquired the properties and began looking at possible uses, much chaos ensued. Because of where the neighborhood was located, factions of two adjacent neighborhood associations, who felt they had a stake in the property development, attended initial meetings and asserted their opinions. What “ONA” leaders quickly realized was that these factions only clouded the conversation and neighborhood meetings took on a combative tone. During these meetings, no one really listened to each other and city officials were unable to fully understand neighborhood needs. So, the de facto “ONA” leaders took stock of the situation and made the decision to exclude outside groups and rebuild their own capacity for engagement from within. This entailed a formalization of the group and a lot of door-to-door visits by group leadership to build internal trust and commitment. As a result, a core group of members began attending meetings regularly, committing to participate until the development was complete. When that happened, the group decided that they would disband, enabling them to focus on a single purpose.

The first meeting between the city environmental manager and “ONA” representatives revealed a cultural divide. On one hand, there was a city manager dressed in a coat and tie and on the other were blue-collar homeowners upset over city inaction to their complaints. Told to “loosen your tie and take off the jacket”, the environmental manager quickly adapted and recognized that his early role was to provide complete transparency regarding any and all environmental information about the property. With help from the environmental consultant retained by the city, this proved easy to do.

What was more difficult was discerning the best use for the property once it was revealed that it would be cleaned up as the first municipally led brownfield funded under the state “MBC”. The first neighborhood meeting on this topic revealed that there were many ideas on what could be done with the contaminated property. These included cleaning up the site and turning it into a public park, but city council members were not interested in spending a large amount of money for something that they already had challenges maintaining. So, the ideas quickly transformed into ones that would generate funding either from state and federal grants or from private investment. Although market-rate housing was far from the norm for city-owned properties, several city government stakeholders saw the opportunity to pursue it and, given the probable addition to city tax rolls, the idea took off. This was especially of interest to certain more affluent neighbors of the property who were not keen on having subsidized, low income housing so close by. “ONA” neighbors themselves were slower to jump on this idea mainly because they were concerned about increased traffic, the construction process itself, potential impact on property values, and the style of homes that were to be built. Again, the city environmental manager, this time with the city housing manager, assuaged their concerns by including “ONA” leadership in all internal communications and decision-making regarding development design.

During this phase of the project, “ONA” leaders served as proxies for the city, educating other neighbors about the unfolding of events, disseminating any new data that appeared, and helping convince neighbors to allow city employees to inspect their properties for ongoing concerns. Proof of this role was found in the basement of one “ONA” leader who revealed that she had a more complete set of files about the project than what was subsequently made available to the general public. To help integrate neighborhood leadership into the role of information disseminator, the city, in turn, invested in their capacities, sending one leader to a brownfield-related conference in Colorado to talk about what became known as the Ontario Oaks development.

While these meetings ensued, members of the city housing department began conversations with the regional homebuilders association about the possibility of building market-rate suburban-style homes on the properties assembled. Because of the previous involvement of the association and its interest with new housing in the city, the groups soon generated a vision that brought several homebuilders on board. This vision involved the city cleaning up the properties, obtaining liability releases, producing design standards and building up the surrounding infrastructure. The homebuilders, in turn, committed to building demo homes, sponsoring a home show, and building houses for each buyer. Homes were to be financed through individual mortgages acquired by the homebuyers and homebuilders were fronting the construction costs.

In retrospect, each stakeholder interviewed in this study felt that the Ontario Oaks project was very successful and that part of the success was due to the amount of time spent talking to each other, working through conflicts, asserting interests, and engaging in collaborative decision-making. Today, an innovative single family home subdivision exists in the center of the Oceanic Neighborhood that has added property taxes for the city, addressed environmental threats to neighbors, and provided a small profit to developers. An additional legacy is the set of lessons learned by all involved:

- *Capacities and management cultures matter.* The first neighborhood meeting sponsored by the city was patterned after the typical “citizen engagement” meeting city managers were used to sponsoring. This meeting had a typical agenda that was heavy on information provision and time for citizens to volunteer comments, but light on structured process. While fulfilling state MBC requirements, these meetings did not produce much forward progress until the ONA leadership became organized. At this point, one of these leaders stepped forward as an individual familiar with facilitated process design. She, in conjunction with the environmental manager, proceeded to transform these meetings into more productive and efficient affairs and the collaboration took off.
- *Framing of initial problem matters.* The first meetings where neighborhood activists and homebuilders were present together were successful due to the a common framing of the problem at hand – what designs best blend the suburban expertise with the neighborhood style and interest in moderate property value increases. Framing the problem in this manner enabled citizens and homebuilders to quickly get to the idea generation stage.
- *TIME is needed.* The city environmental manager spent a disproportionately large amount of time with neighborhood leaders compared to other projects of similar size and scope – a factor that contributed heavily to the amount of trust the neighborhood had in the city at the end of the project. It is important to note that this investment in citizen relationships would not have occurred without support from the environmental manager’s boss, the Environmental Commissioner.

- *Stability of collaboration membership matters.* Another key attribute mentioned by several project participants was the consistency of representation across city, homebuilder, and citizen actors. By not having to restart relationships with a new set of city officials or new neighborhood leadership, the bonds between actors deepened to a point where, after meetings at the neighborhood library, the group would go across the street for a beer and socializing.
- *Collaborations exist in broader social contexts.* It is important to note that stakeholder collaborations are embedded within broader social, legal, market, and environmental contexts. In this case, the project would not have happened if it were not for a strong market environment supporting the profit needs of both the homebuilders and the city. This condition was necessary for project success. Without it, the strongest collaborative team possible likely would not have reached the same levels of success.

Part D: Teaching Note – Process Design, Collaboration, and Facilitation

Introduction

Much attention is placed upon collaborative processes as they pertain to citizen and stakeholder engagement but most experiential activities focus on conflict management *during* the process. This exercise encourages students to consider how process design can make an impact *before* the process begins by requiring students to design an initial meeting with stakeholders of what could be a high-conflict brownfield cleanup and remediation project. In addition, the exercise provides facilitation practice for two students at a time to implement and facilitate their meeting design while other students take on the stakeholder roles, enacting behaviors that may challenge, or enhance, the designed process.

Intended Use

This activity is intended for use with both undergraduate and graduate level public management and policy analysis courses, particularly as they pertain to stakeholder meeting design and process. It complements coursework on neighborhood politics, economic development, and environmental issues and can easily be plugged into existing activities teaching conflict management and negotiation practice. There are multiple ways in which to present this activity, depending upon the goals and time availability of the course. Table B below compares the options:

Time Frame	Activity Components	Take Home Assignments
1 class session (1 hour)	Lecture – Process Design and Facilitation	Process Design
2 class sessions (1 hour each)	Lecture – Process Design and Facilitation Role Play and Role Play Discussion	Process Design Role Play Reflection Paper
3 class sessions (1 hour each)	Lecture – Process Design and Facilitation Role Play and Role Play Discussion Case Discussion	Process Design Role Play Reflection Paper Case Analysis

Due to the situational nature of “effective facilitative practice”, instructors are encouraged to tap into resources on their campus and in their community to present the background content on process design and facilitation if their personal capacity to teach this topic is limited. For example, many communities have community mediation centers and private consulting groups that provide facilitation services and may provide educational outreach services. In addition, the human resource departments of many large organizations, church groups, and local governments may have professionals trained in facilitative practice.

The following sections provide the minimal content and resources needed to present the three activity components listed in Table B.

Component #1: Lecture – Process Design and Facilitation

Background

As public sector leaders and managers increasingly turn to interorganizational collaborations to solve complex problems, more attention has been paid to the mechanisms through which these collaborations succeed. Management research has determined the importance of building the trust, interdependence, and network governance mechanisms needed for effective collaborative function (Lundin 2007; Edelenbos and Klijn 2007; McKnight, Cummings, and Chervany 1998; Jones and George 1998). However, establishing the social relations and structural ties necessary for successful collaboration does not happen automatically. Instead, collaborative leaders must strategically build relationships over time to build group cohesion and then develop group capacities to perform at the highest levels. One skill that is essential in building these relationships and capacities is group facilitation.

“Facilitation” is the application of experiential techniques to empower groups to move through problem solving processes (Heron 1999). A “facilitator” is therefore an individual trained to help move a group through a preset arrangement of experiential activities towards the group goals, ostensibly improving group decision-making effectiveness (Schwarz 2002). Facilitators exhibit skills that have been associated with positive interpersonal relationships such as conflict management, reflective listening, assertion, negotiation, and mediation (Elliott 1999).

An integral part of facilitation is “process design”, or the strategic planning of group meetings that work toward a concrete set of goals. In public sector stakeholder situations, process design often means laying out a sequence of activities that, when implemented, build social capital, gather data, elicit interests, and generate ideas. Recent studies of the impact of process planning on levels of stakeholder conflict and collaboration productivity indicate that effective process design and implementation directly relates to positive outcomes (Edelenbos and Klijn 2006; Thomas and Poister 2009). This brief review examines what is known about group effectiveness, the role group facilitators play in enhancing it, and specific process design strategies facilitators use when playing this role.

Basic Facilitation Theory

Understanding effective facilitation requires an understanding of effective groups and a brief tour through theories of group psychology and workgroup function. Integrating past research, Schwarz (2002) offers a comprehensive group effectiveness model that has, at its core, group structure and group process when a group functions in a stable context. Group structure is comprised of a clear group mission and shared vision, clear goals, a motivating task, clearly defined roles, and sufficient time. Group process pertains to problem solving, decision-making, conflict management, communication, and boundary management. Theory suggests that a proper balance between these components enhances group effectiveness (Elliott 1999). When individuals in a group represent different organizations, as in the case of public sector stakeholder groups, these core elements of group function apply but are made more complex by the influence of the group cultures of each home organization, changing the group context component of effectiveness (Schwarz 2002).

In order to empower groups within their own problem-solving processes, facilitators must understand how to mobilize without leading and how to control a process without controlling the outputs generated by process participants. While complete neutrality is difficult to achieve and verify, facilitators can maintain this value by designing a process that ensures representation and participation, clarifies how decisions will be made, and is accountable and fair (Elliott 1999).

Heron (1999) writes that facilitation occurs across six dimensions, summarized below in Table C. In each of these dimensions, the key questions may be dealt with in a *hierarchal mode* where the facilitator directs the group by exercising power and controlling the process, a *cooperative mode* where power over the process is shared with the group, and an *autonomous mode* where the facilitator allows the group to experience full self-determination. In any given facilitative process at any given stage for any given group, facilitators must find a balance between these three modes to maximize effectiveness. For newly formed groups, however, it is common that the early stages require that the facilitator operate in the hierarchal mode, the middle stages require a cooperative mode, and the latter stages the autonomous mode. The rate in which a group incurs these facilitative shifts varies widely (Heron 1999). Within group experiences, it is important to discern between *content* and *process*. The content refers to the stated task or activity confronting the group at the moment while the process is the social phenomena that occur during implementation of that task (Schwarz 2002).

Table C: Dimensions of Facilitation (Heron, 1999)

Dimension	Key Question
<i>The Planning Dimension</i>	<i>How will the group determine its objectives?</i>
The Meaning Dimension	How will meaning be found in group behaviors?
The Confronting Dimension	How will the group address barriers and difficult situations?
The Feeling Dimension	How will group emotions be handled?
<i>The Structuring Dimension</i>	<i>How will group learning be structured?</i>
The Valuing Dimension	How will a climate of respect be generated?

Topics relevant to this role-play italicized.

Facilitating a Problem-Solving Model

Many group processes center upon problem solving (Table D). Group problem solving processes follow a general model that starts with group members agreeing to work together and has the end goal of implementing agreed upon solutions. The first step is defining the problem they have agreed to address. Then, they develop the criteria for decision-making and the process by which decisions will be made. After that, group members share information about positions and interests so that they can begin brainstorming possible solutions to the problem. Next, the group applies decision criteria to the list of options to determine the course of action and seek agreement on a package of solutions. Upon reaching this agreement, the group then proceeds to the implementation phase (Carpenter 1999; Schwarz 2002). In reality, group problem solving processes are rarely as linear as this model makes them seem, with many instances of moving back and forth between phases as new information arises and interpersonal relationships evolve. Nevertheless, the use of a trained, skilled facilitator streamlines this process, particularly when defining the problem, establishing evaluation criteria, and brainstorming options.

Table D: A Problem Solving Model (Schwarz, 2002)

Problem Solving Steps	5. Evaluate alternative solutions
1. Define the problem	6. Select the best solutions
2. Establish evaluation criteria	7. Develop an action plan
3. Identify root causes	8. Implement the action plan
4. Generate alternative solutions (brainstorm)	9. Evaluate outcomes and the process

Developing Activities for a Facilitated Problem Solving Process

In Heron's (1999) framework, facilitators face two planning considerations. First, they must consider the *objectives* of the group. What will the group learn as a result of participating in the group process? Then, they must determine the *program* by which objectives are to be reached. Program elements include the activities planned, their time allowance, the teaching methods involved, resources needed, and how they will be assessed (Heron 1999).

The structural dimension encompasses activity creation. Heron (1999) suggests that activities developed for a process incorporate the experiential learning cycle. In this cycle, facilitators first model the desired behavior and while providing activity instructions. Then, participants practice the activity, obtain feedback, and engage in the activity again. Once the activity is complete, participants reflect individually and then review their reflections as a group (Kolb 1984). In designing a group activity, it is also important to pay attention to the space in which the activity is conducted and the composition of the group in terms of existing interpersonal dynamics or special needs. A group sitting in a circle of chairs responds and reacts differently than a mix of people sitting and standing in rows. Likewise, group attributes such as gender, age, race, and cultural background may all play a role in how a room is set up for a facilitated activity.

Similarly, an important piece of the structural dimension for facilitators is the establishment of *ground rules*. These rules should be reasonable, fair, and relevant to the purpose of the meeting. Common ground rules include paying attention to time, taking breaks by group agreement, paying full attention to others when they are speaking, eliminating distractions, respect for people and property, etc. (Heron 1999). Schwarz (2002) writes that ground rules must, at the minimum, address issues of attendance, how decisions will be made, and confidentiality. Ground rules may be determined ahead of the meeting and presented to the group or generated by the group itself as an activity, depending on the composition and purpose of the group. Regardless, buy-in for these ground rules is important.

A common subset of activities includes *icebreakers*, which are activities serving to initiate relationship building by facilitating knowledge sharing. These activities are often implemented at the start of group processes and designed to segue into more substantial activities at the core of a meeting. For example, a facilitator may ask a group to introduce themselves by stating their name, their affiliated organization, and one goal they hope to accomplish by being at the meeting. This information can then be used in a follow-up activity asking participants to develop a group mission.

Due to the wide variety of exercises that could be incorporated into a facilitated stakeholder meeting, it is often easier to state what exercises should NOT be. Schwarz (2002) considers it

inappropriate to use an exercise that requires withholding information or relying on deception, has outcomes predetermined by the facilitator, demands a level of risk not agreed to by the group, requires more time for processing than is allowed, is inconsistent with group objectives, and the outcomes of which the facilitator is not confident he or she can handle (p. 374).

Brainstorming and Evaluation

Brainstorming is a creative process in which groups generate unedited ideas about an answer to a question, the definition to a problem, or possible solutions (Schwarz 2002). Schwarz (2002) lists four rules for conducting a brainstorm: do not evaluate ideas generated, include the wildest ideas possible, generate as many ideas as possible, and combine and build upon ideas already generated (p. 227). Brainstorming may be conducted numerous ways, including group members stating ideas as they think of them, giving each group member an equal turn until no more ideas come forth, and working in small groups to create lists of ideas that are then combined as a whole group. It is important that the ideas generated be presented visually to the entire group so that the next step, evaluation, may occur (see *visual facilitation* below). Many resources exist that provide specific ways in which brainstorming can occur⁴

Evaluating brainstormed ideas relies upon the prior generation of decision-making criteria. Common criteria include efficiency, effectiveness, feasibility, and cost, but can vary based upon the group objectives and goals. Once a list of options has been generated, the criteria may be applied to narrow down the list to a manageable number for decision-making. Similar to brainstorming, there are many ways in which to apply criteria for evaluating a list. One common way is to write the options in a single column, create subsequent columns with headings of the criteria to be used, and then to have each group member rate each option based on each criterion. Once this is complete, a visual list will remain that indicates which options are more popular than others. For more information and ideas, see the Consensus Building Institute (www.cbuilt.org), the International Association of Facilitators (www.iaf-world.org), and the Policy Consensus Initiative (www.policyconsensus.org) in addition to a range of private consulting firms found on the Internet.

Visual Facilitation

Often times, and in the instructions for the role play presented above, facilitators work in teams of two, enabling one facilitator to work directly with the group while the other “scribes” or keeps track of group progress on charts visible to all group members. Scribing, or visual facilitation, enables groups to see progress, obtain bearings on group process, and evaluate ideas. In specific activities, such as brainstorming, effective visual facilitation is essential for activity success. An effective visual facilitator is able to listen to and summarize ideas, ask clarifying questions when unsure about idea summaries, and write clearly and efficiently. Strong communication between the primary facilitator and the visual facilitator is also very important.

⁴ Many web and paper resources exist from commercial, academic, and non-profit resources. For example, <http://www.mycoted.com/Brainstorming> and www.tacoma.washington.edu/tlc/docs/Brainstorming%20Exercises.pdf (accessed 2/24/10)

Putting it All Together

For the purpose of this role-play simulation, it is important to make sure that students understand these basics of facilitation technique and the role facilitation can play in moving a stakeholder group towards positive collaboration. It is also important to provide students with concrete ideas about creating activities for their process design as instructed in Part A. If you are not comfortable with class comprehension of either of these components, consider the non-role-play alternative for utilizing this activity.

Component #2 – Possible Role Play Processing Questions

Questions for facilitators

- What happened? Describe the evolution of events.
- As a facilitator, what were your greatest challenges? How did you address them? What would you do differently next time?

Questions for stakeholders

- From your stakeholder perspective, what did you hope to gain from the meeting? Were your stakeholder goals met?
- From your stakeholder perspective, evaluate the meeting using the following criteria:
 - Fairness
 - Inclusiveness
 - Order
 - Productivity
 - Effectiveness at achieving intended goals

Questions for all about the activity

- In what ways did the following barriers to positive collaboration development manifest during the role-play?
 - Power imbalances
 - Conflicting positions and interests
 - Personal biases (gender, age, race)
 - Pre-existing relationship problems
- How did facilitator actions address/not address the following barriers to positive collaboration development? (*See The Consensus Building Handbook, 1999, for additional content on this topic*)
 - Power imbalances
 - Conflicting positions and interests
 - Personal biases (gender, age, race)
 - Pre-existing relationship problems
- How did components of the process design address/not address the following barriers to positive collaboration development?
 - Power imbalances
 - Conflicting positions and interests
 - Personal biases (gender, age, race)
 - Pre-existing relationship problems
- Based upon this meeting, do you think this collection of stakeholders could form a strong collaboration over time? Why or why not?

Questions for all about the use of facilitated processes in building collaborations

- In what ways did the process design meet/not meet the objectives of the meeting?
- Group development theory suggests that, early in a collaborative arrangement, facilitators need to take a more directive role and that, later in the collaboration, facilitators should step back and allow groups to guide themselves. Based on this meeting experience, do you agree or disagree with this proposition?

Component #3 – Possible Case Analysis Questions

These questions pertain to the use Parts A, B, and C as a case study rather than an experiential role-play.

Part A: Students generate a meeting process design as if they will be facilitating

- In what ways does your process design meet the following goals?
 - Stakeholder introductions
 - Generating a list of ideas for future property use
 - Generating commitment to meet again
- Why might ground rules be important at the start of a collaborative problem solving process? How do you propose establishing ground rules?
- Given the prospect that the stakeholders attending this meeting will need to work together for a period of years, what are ways in which this first meeting might impact future ones?
- What challenges do you think your process design might face if it were implemented?

Part B: Students read through the stakeholder role sheets

- What potential conflicts do you see between stakeholders? Are these conflicts due to pre-existing interpersonal relationships, individual personalities, or organizational missions?
- Based upon these role sheets, what dynamic might you anticipate between elected officials and citizens at this meeting? Elected officials and public managers? Public managers and citizens? Explain.
- Are there any power imbalances inherent to this group? What are they? How might they impact the meeting process and outcomes?
- Thinking about your process design and using the information in the role sheets, which activities do you think will work well? Which activities will possibly fail? Why?
- Thinking about how a first meeting of this group might unfold, what are some generalizations you might make regarding the initial steps of forming any problem solving collaboration?

Part C: Students read the “Case Outcomes: From ELCA to Ontario Oaks” follow-up

- What constraints might local government managers face when engaging with citizens for long-term collaborative projects?
- If you were the city environmental manager, how might you have approached initial meetings with citizen stakeholders differently?
- Do you think that the amount of time invested by city officials in this project was realistic? Why or why not? Why do you think city officials made the investment?
- Do you think strong collaborative relationships between the stakeholders in this case could overcome a downturn in the real estate market? Why or why not?
- What are management strategies that could be used in a collaboration to address turnover in collaboration membership?

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