

CCR

citizens for civic renewal



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empowering citizens and serving as a catalyst for civic cooperation in greater cincinnati

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Management Partners to Study Shared Services

Cincinnati's own Management Partners Inc. was selected to complete a Shared Services Study to kick-start the work of the Government Cooperation and Efficiency Project (the Project). The Project is the brainchild of Hamilton County Commissioner Pat DeWine and City of Cincinnati Councilperson Chris Bortz. The two moved forward with the Project in part as a result of CCR's 2006 Annual Meeting where the two were featured on a panel about local government cooperation.

CCR now has a seat at the table as a member of the steering committee for the Project. The goal of the Project is to assist local jurisdictions examine ways to improve service delivery and control costs through cross-jurisdictional cooperation and possible service consolidations. In layman's terms the Project is focused on promoting "shared services" between the 49 jurisdictions in Hamilton County.

That is where Management Partners, former Cincinnati City Manager Jerry Newfarmer's firm, comes in. Their expertise in local government service delivery will be used to identify pilot pro-

jects where shared service arrangements are most likely to take place. Management Partners has a wealth of experience in identifying and implementing shared services—including work on the Metro Louisville merger of city and county governments.

The initial work items of the study are underway. After collecting input from the stakeholder groups through interviews and focus groups, Management Partners will analyze the opportunities for shared services and present their findings to the Project's Steering Team. This aspect of the Shared Services Study should be completed by the beginning of Fall.

The Steering Committee will then select pilot projects that will be advanced for implementation. Management Partners will use working groups to shepherd the implementation of these selected pilot projects. CCR is positioning itself to help bring citizen voice to this implementation process. By being a conduit of information to and from the steering committee, CCR will help keep the public involved.

Convening Conversations

CCR has much in common with other civic organizations in our area—the League of Women Voters of Greater Cincinnati, Cincinnati Association and Woman's City Club. Besides sharing members and volunteers, the four organizations have similar missions of public policy education and civic engagement:

Cincinnati Association: to initiate, recognize, participate in and promote projects that improve the quality of life for all citizens in this region through the study of critical issues confronting the region, by engaging community leaders and by shaping public policy.

Woman's City Club: to secure a more just and livable community for all. The WCC pursues this

mission through programs that educate, encourage and equip citizens to play an active role in civic affairs.



League of Women Voters: a nonpartisan, political organization, encourages the informed

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Convening Conversations

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and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Each of the four organizations has issue committees or panels working on similar issues-- education, government, transportation, natural resources, diversity, etc. Each also has areas of specialty that do not overlap- Cincinnati in Arts and Culture, Woman's City Club in Economic Justice, the League on Housing, etc. Each organization has unique traits, based on history, structure and funding—for example, the League is the only one of the four to be attached to state and national organizations; Cincinnati membership is by invitation only, CCR has paid policy staff, etc. We share challenges in impact and ability to engage the public; sometimes we feel we need more clout and

public attention, as well as more willing hands to do the work.

Convened by CCR member Ruth Cronenberg, these four groups have recently begun meeting regularly in conversations to discuss collaboration for more effective community service. Together, we can be more proactive and more influential in shaping public policy. The first projects that the four groups have undertaken together include: 1) encouraging Cincinnati to develop a better civic engagement process in the City budget, using models of empowered citizen participation from other communities; 2) planning public education for Hamilton County residents regarding the jail 3) encouraging communication and cooperation between issue committees of the four organizations; and 4) investigating the strong potential for sharing some resources and administrative items in the future.

There is strength in the diversity of our approaches, but there is also strength in collective action. Working together, the four organizations can grow stronger.

Thanks to CCR member Rina Saperstein who wrote this article.

Numbers don't lie – fewer local governments equal lower costs.

Long Island is struggling with a proliferation of local governments and special districts. So noted a recent article in the *New York Times* (March 22, 2007). The article discussed how a recently released study from the Long Island Index called *A Tale of Two Suburbs* highlights the lower cost that can come from fewer local governments. The study also found that concerns about loss of service quality with consolidation may be unfounded.

A Tale of Two Suburbs studies how two suburban regions provide local government services. The publication looked at the costs of local government services from Long Island and Northern Virginia. While the regions have similar demographics, housing prices and population densities, Long Island has a total of 239 counties, cities, towns, villages and school districts (439 when special districts are included) compared with the two Northern Virginia counties which have 17.

This proliferation of local governments costs Long Island Residents 45% more than in Northern Virginia even though residents of Northern Virginia reported higher satisfaction with local government services. Much of the cost difference is attributable to differences in school spending and police. And although Long Island local governments employ 13% more employees than Northern Virginia governments, they spend 83% more on salaries. Much of this can be attributed to the different labor climate in the two states— Virginia is a “right to work” state while New York is strongly union. The difference has resulted in much higher property taxes for Long Islanders.

Hamilton County Competition and Efficiency Committee

The Hamilton County Competition and Efficiency Committee (HCCEC) continues to look at ways economies of scale or “privatization” can save Hamilton County taxpayer dollars. As reported in the previous newsletter, one of the areas examined was fleet maintenance. Both the Sheriff and the Engineer have been reluctant to hand over maintenance responsibilities of their vehicles to another party.

This is where the marriage of the HCCEC and the Government Cooperation and Efficiency Project (GCEP) comes in. Instead of just stopping at the internal efficiencies because of the political nature of these individually elected officials, why not market the sheriff's motor pool to the other 48 jurisdictions in Hamilton County? Many of the other public safety vehicles make their way downtown for court and jail activities – why not have your police cruiser serviced while you are testifying in court? – it just makes sense.

Another area that may benefit from linking the HCCEC to the GCEP is on gas purchase. Hamilton County spent \$850,000 on gasoline in 2006. Buying this much gas gives the county some leverage on price. The county could share this beneficial pricing by allowing local jurisdictions to use the eight county gas stations.

Other areas include purchasing, facilities management and print services. The facilities management report identified possible savings related to economies of scale as the County Facilities Department takes over management for the Juvenile Court's Hillcrest School and Juvenile Detention Center along with MRDD's new offices. For more information on this effort go to www.hamiltoncountyohio.gov/hc/bocc_cec.asp.

Director's Corner

Me and Fred Orth

By Steve Johns, CCR Director



I got to meet Fred Orth the other day. Fred is a former City of Cincinnati employee who now serves on the Walnut Hills Area Council (WWAC). It seems the WWAC has a streetscape project on Gilbert Avenue that Fred is spearheading.

Where did we meet? At OKI's public hearing on its updates to Greater Cincinnati's Long Range Transportation Plan. I got to meet Fred because we were the only two citizens in attendance at the hearing. Fred deserves to be singled out because he was the only citizen who attended without getting paid!

Unfortunately, this OKI hearing is a pretty good example of the state of citizen engagement in Greater Cincinnati—a dreaded public hearing where more staff are present than citizens. Where spreading the word about the hearing means a post in the legal section of the *Enquirer* and a notice on the website. Where I never hear back if my comments changed a policy or were presented to decision-makers. Where the federally required public hearing box is checked on some bureaucratic checklist.

But it isn't just the government agencies that need to be held to a higher standard that makes citizens want to participate in government decision-making processes. The civic sector in

Greater Cincinnati must truly partner with these agencies so that we can bring interested citizens to the table. So that we can help design engagement processes that include real discussion and feedback.

Too often we are attempting to raise money and attract members offline from these processes. Next time we bring Myron Orfield or Diane Rehm or Andres Duany to town let's have them speak before or after a public hearing where real life decisions are going to be made. (In OKI's case the L RTP influences the annual expenditure of \$250 million of federal money on transportation infrastructure.)



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®



As reported in this newsletter, an embryonic effort called Convening Conversations is trying to bring the collective power of at least part of Greater Cincinnati's civic sector to bear on the City of Cincinnati budget process. CCR in partnership with the Cincinnati Association, League of Women Voters of Greater Cincinnati and the Woman's City Club are trying to work with the City of Cincinnati to include citizen input throughout the process not just at the end at a traditional public hearing where we get two minutes and a nod.

I am excited to work on this effort. No offense to Fred Orth but I want to meet a bunch more citizens at the next public involvement event I attend.

Meet Jeffrey Stec

Jeff Stec is a network professional. No, not the guy who tinkers with computer servers so your email gets to the right place. Jeff's passion is convening meetings. "So many people underestimate the power of human connections. Just getting people in the same room and talking face-to-face is often half the battle to implementing change," says Stec.



If meetings equal power, then Stec is a human powerplant. Stec is bringing people together on issues as varied as the future of the City of Covington to 3CDC's work in Over-the-Rhine to local government coordination on issues like transportation for seniors. "We know we live in a quickly changing world and it's natural to resist that change, but when we network we can overcome the anxiety associated with the change and see how change is really about opportunities to work together and shape a common vision," says Stec.

Jeff's enthusiasm and passion about networking can be contagious. Jeff became chair of Citizens for Civic Renewal in January. He is convinced that his convening model is a perfect fit for CCR's work on promoting local government cooperation. As part of CCR's effort to get local governments working together, Jeff has a vision of meeting on a variety of issues—health, parks, whatever—wherever there is opportunity for better collaboration between the City and the County. He is confident that convening for a reason could lead to a warming of relations between the two largest governments in the region.

When not busy trying to get a usually warring county and city together, you can find Jeff at his home in the Enright Eco-Village in Price Hill or at his office in Over-the-Rhine where he runs his consulting business, or on the road helping to facilitate strategic planning for communities and non-profit organizations. At all three locations, chances are you'll find him at a meeting. See www.jeffreystec.com for more about CCR's new chair.



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What do you think?

In February at the CCR Board Retreat the CCR Board suggested that a better name than Citizens for Civic Renewal may be out there? Is there? Can we use our same initials with different words? Do we need to start from scratch?

Let us know what you think by emailing us at ccrcinn@juno.com or calling 513-458-6736.

Want to help out?

Join a CCR Committee. We need your help on our basic committees—Program, Organizational, Membership and Nominating. Email us at ccrcinn@juno.com or call 513-458-6736 if you are interested.

CCR needs a new computer! Have a computer that you are replacing?—get the tax write off by donating it to CCR - specs we are looking for include 1GB RAM, 100GB+ hard drive and LCD monitor.

Citizens for Civic Renewal Membership Form

Join CCR Today! Your membership will: Keep you informed—CCR newsletters and forums featuring national experts are just two of the ways in which CCR members enhance their awareness of issues of regional importance. Aggregate your voice—As a member of CCR, you join hundreds of others so that when we get the ear of public officials, your voice is heard. Support our efforts—Your membership dues augment our work and match the support of local foundations and funders.

_____ Individual \$25 _____ Household \$50 _____ Student \$5
Please mail to Citizens for Civic Renewal 3805 Edwards Road #549, Cincinnati, OH 45209

Name _____
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Phone _____
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Interests (circle those that apply)

Education Social Justice
Transportation Economic Development