

Advancing Our Community – Steering Committee
2 March 2006 – 12:30 pm
Sitka Fire Hall

In attendance: Hedy Peterson, Alison Ramp, Michael Lande – SCPS, Tom Clarke – DJJ, David Voluck – YAS, Rachel Johnson (proxy from SAFV), Ariyeh Levinson – SEARHC

Hedy introduced Allison Ramp, who will be a new youth rep. to AOC. She is a sophomore. Matthew tells Allison that part of what we do as a Steering Committee is to keep our eyes and ears open for issues that emerge in the community that can be brought to AOC.

Handbook revisions:

At the last steering committee meeting there was some discussion about the membership of the Steering Committee. Some others have been asking about being a member of the SC. We're still operating under the old rules for AOY, where the SC was originally comprised of reps from agencies that put money into the Flex fund. It's been a long time since anyone has paid into the account, so there's been some discussion about how to better reflect the coalition and how to do the Flex fund group.

Matthew emailed the following revised/streamlined AOY policies as proposals for updating the policies:

General

Membership is open to anyone desiring to become a part of a community-wide coalition that focuses on the global issues affecting the community of Sitka's wellbeing.

This includes public agencies; organizations providing services for youth, individuals, and families; businesses; and individual community representatives.

AOC Facilitator

The primary function of this position is to work with the multiple agencies that form the core of AOC, assuring the coordination of meetings, notification of members to current AOC issues, and providing information about AOC activities to the public. The Facilitator reports to the Steering Committee.

Committees

In addition to the regular general membership meetings, AOC shall maintain standing and ad-hoc subcommittees to allow greater focus on issues and actions as necessary. With the exception of the Steering and Flexible Fund committee, membership to committees shall be comprised of any interested member.

Steering Committee

This group guides the overall activity of AOC and is the decision-making body for the Coalition, taking into consideration the recommendations of the general membership. Resolutions, letters of support, and other matters where the Coalition is taking action as a body must be approved through the Steering Committee.

It is expected that Steering Committee members will make every effort to attend both Steering and AOC meetings, keep abreast of the issues and actions undertaken by AOC, and serve as a liaison to other agencies and the community in AOC matters.

Steering Committee members shall be elected at an annual meeting of the members, and shall serve a term of at least one year.

Flexible Fund Committee

This Committee manages and authorizes the use of special funds for high- and at-risk youth and their families when immediate funding is needed for treatment and intervention services and is not otherwise available through regular channels. The purpose of these funds is to assist children or youth (and their families) who have identified mental, emotional, or significant behavioral issues or are at-risk of having them.

The funds are made possible by the contributions of agency members. Only those representatives from agencies that contribute to the Flexible Fund shall serve on the Flexible Fund Committee.

Committee members comment that the Flexible Fund committee makes sense and that modifying the SC is a good idea to include others. There are some questions about how many seats will be on the SC, how to do the voting (i.e. most popular, how many votes, etc.), and who are the voting AOC members? There is lots of waxing and waning on who attends AOC meetings. There is lots of informality in the current AOC structure, which is good sometimes, but does make it difficult to tell who is actually a member – there are different levels of involvement.

Tom mentions that over the years (since 99) AOY/AOC membership has been up and down – the dark times have been when we’ve gotten caught up in bureaucracy (i.e. making policies, attempting to become non-profit, etc.). Perhaps we should try to have a certain number of agencies represented; probably some SC members would be willing to change out; if someone wants to be involved, by all means they should be.

Other committee members express the need to establish a set number of seats, pointing out that it would be difficult to manage if 20 people come forward. There is some discussion about a “natural selection” process – people come forward and express their interest to be involved, but there is a limit on unexcused absences...one way of identifying who should make the decisions.

Another suggestion is that each seat could represent a segment of the community, i.e. youth, JJ, domestic violence, etc. This could help avoid getting to a place where several SC members serve the same population.

One SC member asks if we need to have a SC after the Flexible Fund aspect of it has been taken out. Matthew responds that it is important, especially when AOC is being represented as a body – there needs to be a smaller group who give guidance on how to do that. Plus it’s valuable to the facilitators to have some constancy, as well as a mix of historical perspective and new blood to shake things up.

The idea of having 8-10 seats representing different segments of the community seems to rise out of the discussion. These seats would be filled by people that are interested to do the extra work; if there are more than 10 interested, then that group sits down to decide how to settle it. Matthew raises the notion of establishing guiding principals instead of rules, such as “in general, we believe the SC should be represented by these broad sectors of the community, and each SC member commits for at least one year,” etc. We can use those principals guide a process of self-selection that make the most sense.

Someone mentions that if we establish a list of community segments to be represented on the SC, it would be hard to have just one seat for mental health/substance abuse – can’t imagine the committee advancing without all a rep from SCPS, YAS, and SEARHC all there.

Matthew agrees to try to revise the policies to include elements of this discussion, as well as some expectations about attendance, etc. If a SC member stops coming, the facilitators will be responsible for checking in with them, and seeking a replacement if need be.

Ariyeh advises from a historical perspective – there needs to be consistency in order to avoid different things being decided at different meeting; also need some insurance against someone coming in with a personal/agency agenda and trying to drive the coalition accordingly.

Ariyeh also mentions that originally AOY started as coalition to help resolve the family/child gaps in the community – more recently, the focus has become more diffused for other competing needs. He believes we need to make some decision about the overall umbrella goals of the coalition – without those, it may hinder progress on anything. Tom responds by saying that there were larger gaps in the community when AOY first formed, but the coalition has helped to bridge some of those gaps by building relationships between agencies. It's easier to work together now.

Resolution

AOC, in coordination with the City Commission on Health Needs and Community Services, has passed a resolution regarding the city's process (or lack thereof) for granting funds to local agencies. This action has been in process for a couple of months – the resolution was passed by the AOC Steering Committee last month. The Health Commission has scheduled a work session with the Assembly for March 15th at 6:30 pm, prior to an assembly meeting. AOC and the Commission will present the resolution and a proposal for establishing some criteria and priorities during this 1/2 hour session. There should be a planning meeting prior to the 15th to plan the best way to use this work session time – Kayla will circulate an email to set up this planning meeting.

Sitka Police Department

Police Chief Sheldon Schmitt is in attendance – he acknowledges that the SPD has not been very involved with AOC lately, but he would like to return to their seat on the Steering Committee.

The meeting ends around 1:30, as people arrive for the general AOC meeting that follows. The next Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for April 6.