Presenter: Myrla Rivier, DRO Representative for BHUAC
Subject: Presentation for Building Public Trust between Police Departments and Community

My lived experience: I have a long history of creating and participating in community programs for marginalized communities, starting in the 90's. More recently I was a member of the tumultuous COAB until it was officially disbanded. I was also explicitly part of designing the newly established PCCEP both through the City Attorney's office and a public involvement specialist who also taught at. All of my work has been voluntary and without financial compensation. I do this work because I care about our collective community, I believe in democratic system which is based on law and order and I am concerned not only on the effectiveness of the PPB but as well, how the work of our police force impacts the lives of people with serious mental health issues. Through my work on boards and committees I have gained a deep appreciation for the degrees of commitment and sacrifice public employees make because they also care about the quality and health of our collective community life.

My expertise: I have also taken some unnumbered amount of community engagement graduate level classes here at PSU and at the International Institute of Restorative Practices with the aim of improving my own practice and learning about the theoretical frameworks and practical applications for a broad range of populations, whether that is organizational, youth involved in the prison system, underserved populations or the Disabled community. I have also taken graduate classes focusing on local government public administration and nonprofit management.

Benefits of Engaging with the Community from an Organizational Perspective

There is incredible wisdom and powerful data when civic engagement is done right. But when it's not, we get the unfortunately all-too-familiar sequence:
- A few squeaky wheels intimidate others at city council or community engagement meetings
- The silent majority remains silent
- Cities spend time and resources trying to re-engage the silent majority through various communication channels
- The fractured communication leaves citizens confused and not participating

- The lack of participation fails to deliver data

Definition

"Engagement" can mean many things but generally I mean it within the framework of working together as a stronger and more resilient community as we move forward to address community-identified issues.

Background Realities

Given the connection between local governments and their police forces, elected and appointed officials of local government are caught in the glare of the unfavorable spotlight caused by a lack of transparency and trust between the community and the police force as an organization. This drives home the fact that responsibility for improving trust isn't solely a police responsibility but that of an entire community.

Accountability and Building Public Trust:

Introduction: One important aspect of the accountability of a public service provider is that they should be aware of what matters to the recipients of their service.

In recent research studies I ran across outcomes of a strategy summit of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The ICMA is one of what is known as the Big Seven organizations (links available at end of this document).

Issue: What will it take to restore trust in public institutions--whether it's trust in the police force, the city or county council.

Findings: One of the outcomes identified was that the job of city managers and decision makers is to help police and policy makers convene community conversations. In the end, if people don't trust the police, they also don't trust local government or elected officials." meaning "we're in it together."

Frameworks and Elements of Trust building: Consistency, fairness, and procedural justice are all elements of building foundations of trust and legitimacy.

<u>Must have conditions for establishing trust between law enforcement and the community</u>

- Overtly acknowledging the community's trust and equity issues

- Authentic conversations with the right people invited to participate

- Engagement--giving a voice to all stakeholders

- Allowing stakeholders to vent

- Giving stakeholders opportunities to provide input

- Listening and being listened to

- Being part of the decision-making process: Consistency, fairness, and procedural justice

- Educating the police, elected officials, and the public about the community's issues

- Asking stakeholders what they want and how police policies impact them

- Transparency (e.g., beat cops, online data, listening tours)

- Asking citizens to be co-owners in finding solutions

Several underlying themes emerged throughout the Strategy Summit:
No single entity--be it law enforcement, local government, or community organizations--has all the answers, and none has sufficient resources to effect comprehensive change.
All of the community's available resources need to be brought to bear in a coordinated effort. Success starts with reaching out to all segments of the community, giving voice to the underserved, listening, and building and maintaining collaborative relationships among all organizations that can contribute to making a stronger community.

Mental health and homelessness are two important social conditions that need to be addressed by the entire community, not just by the police, whose expertise and resources are not designed to serve these groups or address these issues.

Assuming a strategic and genuine effort to improve police policies and practices and interactions with the public, an equally strong initiative (in part comprising communications and branding) needs to occur simultaneously to shift the public's negative perception of the police.

Reliable measures of community engagement (as one participant put it, "what you count, people will do") and other police-involved activities need to be agreed upon and accessible in an easy-to-use format.

Outcomes from National League of Cities

Why engage? When governments and citizens work well together, better and more sustainable decisions are developed. Many managers fear public engagement, being all too aware of the times that the gears do not mesh smoothly, conflict flares, and elected officials and citizens become frustrated or angry.

The fact is, successful public engagement doesn't "just happen." As with any process or project, preparation and planning make for a better result. And like other processes, effective public engagement requires a system—one that takes into account the people, values, information, and issues involved; careful choice of the structure for interaction; and planned maintenance or follow up. That system needs to be integrated in a coherent way with the other systems used for decisions within the community. It is critical to understand how "the engagement system" is intended to work.

The following ten preliminary are designed to help you use your existing planning and project management skills to more effectively plan and manage a public engagement process.

10 Guiding Questions

1. Why do we want to engage?
2. Where are we starting from?
3. How do we need to engage?
4. How at this point in time can we engage?
5. How can we keep the process moving?
6. What resources do we need?
7. What contingencies might arise?
8. How can we prepare to meet them?

9. How will we recognize progress?
10. What will we do when we're done?

The Big Seven

- Council of State Governments
- National Governors Association
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- National League of Cities
- United States Conference of Mayors
- National Association of Counties
- International City/County Management Association