

Establishment of Community Congress Rests with the City

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The process to establish a Community Congress for Winston-Salem's Enterprise Community has been planned and is ready to be implemented. However, how quickly the plans move along rest with city officials since Common Visions denied a request for funds to get things underway.

A grant request for about \$17,000 was made to the Common Vision Board of Directors for the preparation phase of the Congress. The money would pay for supplies and meeting spaces needed to get the most community involvement possible for one of the most integral parts of the Enterprise Community.

The Community Congress is the mechanism by which representatives will be selected to serve on the Enterprise Community's Board of Directors.

Assistant City Manager Allen Joines said Common Vision board members felt that since the city was the lead agency it should provide the funding.

Common Vision turned down the request from the group that has been working closely with Enterprise Community plans. Common Vision became a supporting agency of the concept after the idea was brought back from a meeting attended by Joines and Jame Grace, executive director of the East Winston Community Development Corporation, said Ellen Monahan.

Grace, who has been involved in promoting the project, said he recently received notice from Common Vision Chairman Richard Janeway that the Mayor and the city manager will be considering the request. It will ultimately be presented to the Board of Alderman.

Monahan, who works with Common Vision and helped write the Enterprise Community grant application, said there is a misconception about Common Vision. People think it is a grant-giving agency and it is not. However Common Vision has made exception for a few projects. Those projects were one time special projects or had no other avenue to receive funds. This did not apply to the Enterprise Community, in which the city is the lead agency.

Common Vision receives \$20,000 each from the city, Forsyth County, the Chamber of Commerce, the Winston-Salem Foundation and United Way. Most of the money is used for operating expenses for Common Vision.

Monahan said the board did discuss the request for the Community Congress but decided it was fairest, and Mayor Martha Wood agreed, to let the lead agency handle it because members did not want to establish a

precedent.

Grace said he felt good about the city taking up the responsibility to keep things moving.

When the city did not receive the \$3 million federal grant to implement the project, city officials said they would be committed to it anyway.

The Enterprise community represents an economically deprived area in Winston-Salem that includes more than 30 neighborhoods. The \$3 million would have gone to complete strategic plans that would economically revive the area and help alleviate poverty.

Grace said the \$17,000 is very important to begin working toward those strategic plans outlined in the proposal.

"It's very critical," he said. "Everyone needs to know what the Enterprise Community is all about."

Ten of the 19 voting members of the board of directors will be residents in the designated area.

The area has been divided into six districts, and the number of representatives from each district to serve on the board is based on the population. There will be one representative per every 4,000 people.

The other voting members will consist of elected officials, and representatives from the religious community, financial community and foundations.

Both Joines and Grace agree that the number is not too large.

"It has the number of officers needed to make this successful," Grace said. "And community people do not have enough input and oversight of leadership."

"It provides us with a good cross-section of representatives," Joines added.

The number of community representatives on the congress is not limited. However, each district must come to a consensus on how many it wants.

Once board members are selected, the city will provide leadership training for all of them. The training will be provided by Forrest Toms, CEO of Training Research and Development. The sessions will focus on commitment of board members to the project and accountability to the community.

The process calls for a community congress annually or bi-annually to provide an avenue to get information back to the community from board members.

Grace said he would like to start as early as this summer get-

ting out information to various community organizations about the Community congress. The effort will consist of five to six teams comprised of 8-12 members. They will conduct a door-to-door campaigns, meetings

with existing neighborhood associations, church groups and other organizations to get as much involvement as possible.


"We should be standing at every entrance of Happy Hill Gardens with those orange jack-

ets on passing out pamphlets and doing whatever else we can to get people involved," Grace said.


The work toward implementing strategies cannot begin until board members are selected.

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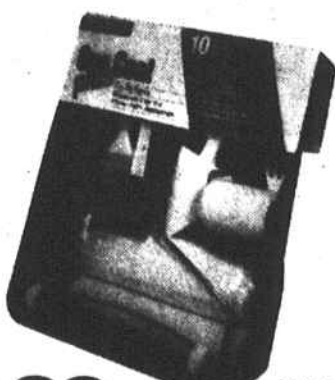
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