VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE  
Human Services Commission  
Minutes  
October 4, 2006

Commission Members Present: Chairperson, Trisha Svehla, Members: Geoff Neustadt, Joyce Tumea and Leksa Pravdic  
Members Absent: Theresa Carlquist, Princess Dempsey and Sharon Dunn (1 vacant seat)  
Staff Liaison: Andrew J. Matejcak  
Director, Counseling and Social Services

I. Roll Call  
The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm. A quorum was obtained.

II. Approval of Minutes  
September Meeting Minutes were approved as presented. Corrections for the October Agenda were noted.

III. Discussion:

The Commission welcomed new youth member Leksa Pravdic. Ms. Pravdic was one of the first two youth candidates appointed by Mayor Krajewski with Council approval on October 3, 2006. She shared her academic interests and pursuits with the other commission members during introductions.

Andrew Matejcak shared with the Commission members the Council Adopted Strategic Plan 2006, 2011, 2021. Downers Grove’s Mission Statement, Vision 2021, and the Five-Year Plan Goals 2006 – 2011 were also highlighted as the framework that gives the Village Council and Staff direction to allocate the budgetary and personnel resources.

The commission members reviewed the documents and discussed various components frequently included in other strategic plans that were not prominent within the document. Chairperson Svehla noted some of these items included a detailed analysis of expected demographic and diversity trends for the Village and the impacts of demographic influences coming from the surrounding communities and expanding out to the national level.

The diversity discussion also included economic diversity as Ms. Tumea noted the average housing costs exceed the affordability of most family (median, average) incomes. Additionally, members noted a lack of adequate explanation of anticipated impacts of an aging baby-boomer citizenship, particularly with health care availability and affordability was noted as a key demographic trend affecting the strategic plan. Additionally, the question of the impact of a possible exodus from retirees in the next 10 years was raised.
Staff Liaison Matejcak noted the document was to serve as a tool for the Council and Staff in planning for the budgets and give direction for the use of personnel towards the vision and goals. It was noted that the Human Services Commission may address these items and bring them to the attention of the Council for inclusion in the strategic plan and goals and the Council could then decide to make amendments. Also, the broad definition of “…a great place for families to live…” was highlighted and Mr. Neustadt added that the mission was vague and indicated that it would allow for the consideration of these various human services issues to be included in the strategic plan.

Commission members also noted the document focused on the mechanics of the Village operations and not on the human side including: age, generational tendencies, race, socioeconomic levels, individual consumer debt, and religious differences. Some suggestions were raised for a plan that includes what the Village will do if certain human services factors change versus the focus of the strategic plan primarily being an operational plan as it is now.

Adjournment The meeting closed at 8:10pm

Submitted by: Andrew J. Matejcak, Staff Liaison
VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE  
Human Services Commission  
Minutes  
September 6, 2006

Commission Members Present: Chairperson, Trisha Svehla, Members: Geoff Neustadt, Theresa Carlquist and Joyce Tumea  
Members Absent: Princess Dempsey and Sharon Dunn (1 vacant seat)  
Staff Liaison: Andrew J. Matejcak  
Director, Counseling and Social Services

I. Roll Call  
The meeting was called to order at 7:35pm. A quorum was obtained.

II. Approval of Minutes  
June Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.

III. Discussion:

Theresa Carlquist discussed the upcoming events by the organization, Helping Girls Navigate Adolescence, Inc. including participation at the District 58 Parent Night and their “Chit Chat” event scheduled for February 10th at Herrick Middle School. Joyce Tumea noted the event was very well attended last year and will bring more information about the organizations events.

Geoff Neustadt inquired about the Village’s website listing of youth services. Andy Matejcak noted the Village is in the process of updating its website with formatting changes to be organized by Village services versus departmentally organized. New information on social services referrals and donation locations will also be added to the new site as it becomes implemented. Mr. Neustadt suggested using the site for publicity for some of the Commissions initiatives including the Youth in Government program. Trisha Svehla inquired about the status of the 40 assets survey. Mr. Neustadt reported he had forwarded the information to representatives of District 58. The District had expressed concerns over the cost of the survey to be run again. With respect to the advertisement of the youth initiatives including the youth in government program, Mr. Neustadt had discussed the hopes of covering the Village’s Website during classroom curriculum on web pages. This would afford students the opportunity to learn about websites in general while also education them about local government and services. Ms. Tumea noted the benefit of showing the Village website for even a portion of the class time.

Mr. Neustadt discussed his conversations with Rotary members who approved $5,000 in July for 2 clubs each at Herrick and O’Neil schools. One club would be a service club the other would be an open club such as chess, dance, football, etc. He added it appears to be a regular budget item for the Rotary to cover the cost of teacher staffing the four clubs in total.

Andy Matejcak updated the commission on the Village’s response to various nuisance behaviors in the downtown area on behalf of some of the adult population. With respect to the youth issues that the Commission worked on with downtown management, the Village’s staff and Police over the past few years, the Downtown Management Corp. had expressed much improvement with those issues in a recent meeting to address the current issues.

Members discussed the initiative to address Youth Awards. Ms. Tumea asked who would oversee it, noting that perhaps a larger organization or one that was very active may be able to assist. Ms Svehla and Ms. Carlquist also identified other service organizations. Ms. Carlquist asked about the response to the scholarship offered by
the Character Counts program to which Ms. Tumea shared aspects about the judging process of the essay submissions. The topic of Youth Awards was tabled for discussion for October’s meeting.

**Adjournment** The meeting closed at 7:35pm

Submitted by: Andrew J. Matejcak, Staff Liaison
VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
Human Services Commission
Meeting
June 6, 2006

Commission Members Present: Chairperson, Trisha Svehla, Members: Geoff Neustadt, Princess Dempsey, Joyce Tumea, Sharon Dunn and Theresa Carlquist
Members Absent: None (1 vacant seat)
Staff Liaison: Andrew J. Matejcak
    Director, Counseling and Social Services

I. Roll Call
The meeting was called to order at 7:39pm. A quorum was obtained.

II. Approval of Minutes
May Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.

III. Discussion:
Andrew Matejcak updated the commission members on the conversations he had with representatives from District #99 on the recruitment of eligible youth candidates for the participation in selected committees. Mr. Matejcak also noted that he had discussed the goals of the program, and it’s implementation this year and in the future. Among the items discussed were providing youth an orientation to the Village’s local government and assisting them through the processes of the program. Future recruitment ideas and other follow up with youth members were also discussed. Sharon Dunn suggested that the youth participants could be presented with an award or proclamation at the end of their tenure.

Meetings for the summer were discussed by all the members. Chairperson, Trisha Svehla suggested noting on the August Agenda the cancellation of the meeting if the commission was not going to meet that month.

Geoff Neustadt reported that the Rotarians have various service projects and one of the initiatives may be for after school events for 7th and 8th graders. The possibilities of athletic academies, game nights and dances were among the ideas generated. Additionally, there was a request from some teachers for Chess clubs and Civics projects. Joyce Tumea noted that “Friends of the Gifted” was an organization offering such activities as science classes, chess playing and other clubs and activities. Mr. Neustadt added initiative may also involve Kiwanis and Lyon’s Clubs from the community to partner with the schools and the Rotary Club to fill the need for the after school options for students in that age group. Mr. Neustadt reported the next meeting for the Rotary Club will be in July and he would report with more findings following that meeting. Ms. Dunn suggested inquired as to whether the Rotarian’s might consider high school students to assist with the service project in addition to the teachers. Chairperson Svehla suggested they may also refer to the Engage Citizen’s project to tie in the civics projects with the current initiative from the Downers Grove South students’ project.

The Commission voted for a change of the the regular meeting times from 7:30pm to 6:30pm on the first Wednesday of every month. Princess Dempsey made the motion, seconded by Ms. Dunn and approved by all members.

Adjournment The meeting closed at 8:35pm

Submitted by: Andrew J. Matejcak, Staff Liaison
VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
Human Services Commission
Meeting
May 3, 2006

Commission Members Present: Members Geoff Neustadt, Theresa Carlquist and Joyce Tumeta
Members Absent: Trisha Svehla, Sharon Dunn and Princess Dempsey
Staff Liaison: Andrew J. Matejcak
Director, Counseling and Social Services

I. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 7:42pm. A quorum was not obtained.

An informal discussion was held recapping the staff presentation of the Creation of Process to Appoint Youth to selected Commissions at the Council Workshop on April 25, 2006. The discussion also focused on the current status of coordinating with the schools to recruit interested candidates. Member Joyce Tumeta inquired if it was possible to select an earlier time for the commission meeting. Staff Liaison, Andy Matejcak will check into the process of changing commission meeting times and report back to the commission.

II. Adjournment

The meeting closed at 8:42pm

Submitted by: Andrew J. Matejcak, Staff Liaison
Commission Members Present: Chairperson Trisha Svehla, Members Geoff Neustadt, Sharon Dunn, Joyce Tumea, Theresa Carlquist, and Princess Dempsey

Members Absent: John Page

Staff Liaison: Andrew J. Matejcak, Director Dept. of Social and Health Services

Guests: Commissioner William Waldack, John Bruesch, Gina Ziccardi, Jason Garstka, Edward Kim, James Markham and Melissa Miller.

I. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 7:37pm. A quorum was obtained.

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the meeting of March 1, 2006 were approved as presented.

III. Visitor Welcome

Commissioner William Waldack and representatives from Downers Grove South High School’s Engaged Citizen’s Project were welcomed to the meeting.

IV. DG South HS Engaged Citizen Project Presentation to the Commission

John Bruesch, Social Studies educator from Downers Grove South High School introduced the Engaged Citizen’s Project (ECP) highlighting its development as a student driven initiative to address the involvement of youth in the democratic process. In mock elections at the school, participation decreases as students reach their junior and senior years. This trend is reflected in real elections where young adults are underrepresented in voting turnout until about age thirty, when they begin to become more engaged in the democratic process. The ECP seeks to address this issue through rigorous research and use the data to affect curriculum development in the schools so that it may enhance the citizenship engagement of future young adults.

James Markham defined what an engaged citizen is in terms of their participation in the democratic process, knowledge of local, national and world issues, and involvement in the community. Their research hopes to follow graduates of Downers Grove South High School for 10 years to study their level of citizenship participation. Other research indicates only about 11% of voters in the 18-21 year old range actually vote. Melissa Miller added that if teenagers are to become more engaged as citizens, they often need the assistance of their parents and the larger community. She noted the need to support lifelong learners that are contributing, responsible members of a changing world.

Ed Kim spoke next about the extent to which the ECP has involved other academic departments in the schools. These include assistance by the Math department for survey design and data analysis, Pupil Personnel Services for assistance with student/parental consent forms and survey assistance with current and graduating participants, and Applied Arts and Sciences to help design materials. Mr. Kim added the research will hopefully allow them to compare the local level of youth participation with national averages as well as identify what factors led to the differences. Ms. Miller noted the initiative also hopes to build a connection between young adults and their community.
Mr. Bruesch stated there is much support from School Administration, other academic departments and from within the Social Studies department to identify curriculum impacts that will positively impact young adults to become more engaged citizens.

Jason Garstka stated the Village’s Human Services Commission could assist with a letter of support for the Engaged Citizen’s Project. Additional requests of Staff assistance, where available, to assist with available public information regarding voting trends would also be welcomed. The ECP would also like to present to Council their survey findings, hopefully in May of 2007, should they have data results at that time. Jason also discussed the need for the financial support to conduct the survey and interpret results. He shared the financial estimates of an on-line survey, printed materials, professional data consultation and other costs would be between $3,000 and $6,000. Funding assistance or recommendations for sources of funding were also appreciated. Finally, Mr. Garstka requested referrals to other organizations that might support their initiative and be in a position to offer financial, technical or other support.

Chairperson Svehla thanked the presenters for their presentation and shared the Commission is currently working with Council on an initiative to involve youth in local government. Commissioner Waldack and Human Services Commission members engaged the presenters with a dialogue of opportunities for partnerships between their Engaged Citizen’s Project and various entities that may be able to provide a wide range of support and resources. The presenters were also invited to attend, not only the Council workshop meeting on April 25th, but all workshop and Council meetings for opportunities of involvement in the democratic process.

V. Old Business

The commission decided to table the discussion of Youth awards in favor of addressing the initiative at the next meeting to allow more time for discussion.

VI. New Business

Staff liaison Andy Matejcak shared with the commission that Village Staff is in the process of developing a uniform protocol for Village council workshops and meetings. These new protocols include presentations such as the Youth on Commissions scheduled for the 25th, with having the directors present on behalf of the boards and commissions for which they serve as staff liaison. He apologized for any confusion and delays in presenting that may have been caused a couple meetings ago when he had initially suggested that commission members would conduct the presentation for Council as they had in the past.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting closed at 8:58pm

Submitted by: Andrew J. Matejcak, Staff Liaison
Commission Members Present: Chairperson Trisha Svehla, Members Joyce Tumea, Geoff Neustadt, Theresa Carlquist and Sharon Dunn
Members Absent: John Page and Princess C. Dempsey
Staff Liaison: Andrew J. Matejcak, Director Dept. of Social and Health Services

The meeting was called to order at 7:40pm. A quorum was obtained. The minutes for February’s meeting were approved with noted corrections to change “it’s” to “its” in the first paragraph and the last sentence in the fourth paragraph to read, “...It will have to be determined by the legal department if a member of a board and commission has to be of legal voting age or if there will have to be an ordinance change approved to assist with the initiative.”

Commission members Svehla, Dunn and Neustadt provided a verbal report of their participation in a forum to address issues related to disenfranchised youth congregating outside some local businesses. The forum included members of the Downtown Management Corp., Character Counts!, business management, the D.G. Police Department, members of the D.G. Human Services Commission and sought to include youth representatives as well. While the involvement of the disenfranchised youth was actively encouraged, their reluctance to participate was demonstrated by not attending the dialogue meeting set up to solicit their input. It was further noted that the team had identified several of the youth as non-residents of Downers Grove who happen to have chosen this location to meet others and congregate. Commission members discussed the many and varied activities for youth sponsored by numerous entities in the community. It was highlighted that there may always be a segment of youth simply not interested in either organized or adult supervised activities. The development of the forum was constructive for the stakeholders to meet and creatively address the issues. Members noted a similar initiative that met with great success a few years ago and that served as a model to address these issues in the future.

Ms. Carlquist presented the commission with a draft application for youth interested in applying to sit on the selected commissions. The draft application, designed to assist staff in the development of the program, gathers information from prospective candidates as well as clarifies the length of term and expected time commitments. Mr. Matejcak noted that will submit the draft to the legal department for review as they will be making the ordinance changes associated with the initiative.

Chairperson Svehla identified the most important outcome of the presentation is to come away with the Council’s direction to implement the program. Mr. Matejcak discussed the process by which the Council will hear the presentation and provide input and direction but the actual authorization for the program will likely occur as a vote at a subsequent Council meeting. Commission members discussed the various items the Council will need to address such as voting rights, length of terms, etc. Ms. Tumea asked if, in the event of no other applicants, youth members could renew their term for a second year. Ms. Carlquist added that there was nothing in the current application process that she saw that would not allow a youth from applying as a regular member.

The commission members discussed the presentation at the Council workshop on April 11th. Ms. Svehla and Mr. Neustadt will provide a brief history of the initiative as an outcome of the 40 Assets Community work. They will also share the Human Service’s Commission’s specific recommendations for voting rights, 1year appointments, preference for youth in their junior year (or age equivalent) of school, and the addition of the 8th member seat to accommodate the membership.
In other matters, Ms. Dunn raised the point of the 40 Assets Community surveys needing to be re-administered. Mr. Neustadt offered to check with District 58, one of the sponsors of the initial survey, to see if their education foundation will be able to provide some of the funding. Ms. Tumea offered to speak with District 99 representatives as well. Commission members discussed the value in seeing the progress made by the Village as well as identifying areas of improvement. As importantly, the information obtained is of value to the school districts in the development of their curriculum and supportive services to the students.

Ms. Tumea addressed the issues of the developing Youth Merit Award Program by providing a list of considerations for the need for such a program that she prepared between meetings. She highlighted most current awards are for school-based activities with some exceptions such as Scouts. Additionally, there are many recognized awards for academic achievements and competitive accomplishments such as, sports, musical and other team/club related activities. The need to highlight and encourage the many other unrecognized contributions and achievements of youth is still there.

The meeting closed at 8:49pm

Submitted by: Andrew Matejcak, Staff Liaison.
The meeting was called to order at 7:34pm. A quorum was obtained. The minutes for January’s meeting were approved.

Chairperson Trisha Svehla spoke to the importance of utilizing the 40 assets survey work as the tool by which the Commission identifies the strengths of the community, its challenge areas for youth and the measure by which we gauge the impacts of initiatives designed to improve the health and well being of our youth.

The commission also made several recommendations:
Making the opportunity for youth membership on boards and commissions available to all Downers Grove youth entering their junior year (or age equivalence) of high school. The Commission also is in favor of having the proposed youth member being a voting member rather than a non-voting appointment. The proposal is consistent with the primary purpose of utilizing the contributions and dedication that youth can bring to local government. Mr. Neustadt highlighted that a voting youth member, like all commission members, would have within their powers to make recommendations to Council, who ultimately has the authority to make decisions on public policy.

Further recommendations included: each youth member could serve a maximum of 1 (12month) term to allow for more youth to get a chance to serve. This was suggested to reduce the likelihood of the seat being vacant for an extended period should a youth member seek a second term, graduate from high school and resign from serving.

The commission also recommends those selected boards and commissions with a youth member to have a total of 8 members. For ease of implementation, it would be less problematic to add a member than to wait for a seat to become vacant. Adding another member would also be easier if the vacancy did not coincide with youth being available the beginning of their junior year. It will have to be determined by the legal department if a member of a board and commission has to be of legal voting age or if there will have to be an ordinance change approved to assist with.

Ms. Dempsey suggested the Council liaison to each of the selected boards would make the recommendation of appointing the youth candidate, with Mayoral approval, in keeping with the current policy. Ms Dunn noted there may be a need for parental approval in the process as well.

The commission also discussed contacting the area schools and targeting a presentation to council to move the process along. Additionally, Character Counts! representatives may also to invite them to a Commission meeting to discuss ideas they may have for youth awards.

The meeting closed at 8:45pm

Submitted by: Andrew Matejcak, Staff Liaison.
VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
Human Services Commission
Meeting
January 4, 2006

Commission Members Present: Geoff Neustadt, John Page, Sharon Dunn, Joyce Tumea, and Theresa Carlquist
Members Absent: Trisha Svehla, and Cynthia Dempsey
Staff Liaison: Andrew J. Matejcak

The meeting was called to order at 7:33pm. A quorum was obtained. The minutes for October’s meeting were approved.

Geoff Neustadt updated the commission on his correspondence with Gary Mitchell from Downers Grove North High School. Mr. Mitchell had expressed an interest in helping identify students who may be interested in participating on the selected boards and commissions. Geoff and Sharon Dunn will help develop an application process for youth interested in serving that would include an essay in addition to other application materials.

The importance of having the Council formally approve the commission’s initiative was raised by John Page. The idea had been proposed in the past as part of the commission’s presentation to council with the 40 assets survey. While the initiative was warmly welcomed, at the time the Commission did not have the details in place to roll it out. Andy Matejcak will work with the Village Manager to place the presentation on a future agenda. He added in previous discussions with the staff, it was noted that the Legal department will have to have the ordinances brought before the Council for a vote to include youth on the designated boards and commissions. Theresa Carlquist also noted the importance of making sure that the interested Dist. 99 students are also Downers Grove residents. Theresa volunteered to assist in developing a draft application for the Dist. 99 staff and students.

Village recognition of youth achievement at council meetings was addressed by Joyce Tumea. The Commission brainstormed ideas such as what age youth would be eligible, how one could nominate a youth for the award, and what sort of accomplishments warranted an award. Additionally, the needs to develop a process for sorting through the applications and bringing it up to the Village Council/Mayor to read were identified. John added the goal of wanting to encourage positive behavior early noting the awards initiative should not just be geared to the older kids. The commission discussed the need to review the submittals and discussed the potential need for editorializing. Theresa, Geoff, and Sharon offered their support in assisting with that process. Furthermore, there was an identified need to tie the awards to some element of achievement or character, such as a pillar of character counts so that the awards. Commission members discussed coordinating with Character Counts! to see if this would be an initiative with which they would be able to assist. Joyce also highlighted there may be awards that are not tied into character such as artistic achievement awards, and other accomplishments that typically do not get noted in other venues. Joyce also volunteered to begin working on a form to be used to nominate youth.

Andy will contact Character Counts! representatives to invite them to a Commission meeting to discuss ideas they may have for youth awards.

The meeting closed at 8:39pm

Submitted by: Andrew Matejcak, Staff Liaison.