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Community Development as a Public Sector Agenda

Felice D. Perlmutter
University of Pennsylvania

Ram A. Cnaan
University of Pennsylvania, cnaan@sp2.upenn.edu

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Abstract
This paper documents how one Department of Recreation in a large city underwent a planned change effort which transformed some 200 site managers into active community organizers. Based on the philosophy of a very dynamic new commissioner (a former community organizer), city employees enhanced local civic participation and forged a partnership between the public and private sectors as well as with local residents. The paper presents the guiding philosophy, implementation steps, an assessment of the impact of the change, and a discussion of the potential of such a process which can be adopted nationwide.

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Comments
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Felice Davidson Perlmutter, PhD
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ABSTRACT. This paper documents how one Department of Recreation in a large city underwent a planned change effort which transformed some 200 site managers into active community organizers. Based on the philosophy of a very dynamic new commissioner (a former community organizer), city employees enhanced local civic participation and forged a partnership between the public and private sectors as well as with local residents. The paper presents the guiding philosophy, implementation steps, an assessment of the impact of the change, and a discussion of the potential of such a process which can be adopted nationwide. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com <Website: http://www.haworthpressinc.com>]*

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The resurgence of community action and community development in the 1990s has been welcomed by many who are committed to an empowerment, activist agenda (MacNair, 1994; Spergel, 1987). This is especially true for those who were involved in the earlier outburst of activity in community work in the 1960s and 1970s. The emergence of ACOSA (Association of Community Organizations and Social Administration)

Felice Davidson Perlmutter is Professor, School of Social Administration, Temple University, 19 Hansen Court, Narberth, PA 19072.

Ram A. Cnaan is Professor, School of Social Work, University of Pennsylvania, 3701 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

Journal of Community Practice, Vol. 6(4) 1999
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and the *Journal of Community Practice* attests to this new reality and calls attention to a variety of issues ranging from theory building to leadership development in the community context. It also reflects the fact that not only is community work evolving on the domestic scene, but development work continues to be a strong interest in both developing and developed nations (Perlmutter & Yanay, 1990; Lauffer, 1994).

The fact that community organizers are employees of the local municipality and are part of the bureaucracy is unusual in the American context, but this situation is quite common in other countries. For example, in Israel (Cnaan & Rothman, 1986), Sweden (Mattsson, 1992), and England (Henderson & Thomas, 1980), most community organizers are employees of local governments.

There is a dichotomy in the emergence of development work in our society: it usually focuses on economic development in the public sector but on community empowerment in the private sector. What is missing is a coupling of social and economic issues and a coupling of the private and the public sectors (Cnaan & Rothman, 1995). Weil (1994) further suggested that there is a need ". . . for public/private partnerships in community development that serve those most disadvantaged" (p. xxiv) with particular emphasis on the local level.

This paper presents a case study of leadership in the public sector that answers Weil's call and demonstrates the effective coupling not only of the public sector with the private sector but also of empowerment with economics at the local neighborhood level. The paper describes the philosophical underpinnings that made possible a strategy to develop and involve an array of volunteers in a public program. This program also reinvigorated community life at the neighborhood level in a city that had experienced neighborhood decay, blight, and flight while at the same time including business interests in its implementation. Further, the case meets the necessary assumptions of Daley and Wong (1994): first, the case acknowledged the culture of the local community; second, it supported existing networks; third, the case recognized empowerment was a major goal, and last but not least, self-determination at the neighborhood level.

RECREATION SERVICES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

It is important to note that community development and recreation are not strangers. In fact, group work in social work partly originates

in the recreation movement. Coyle (1947) noted: "One of the principles upon which group work as a method rests is its conviction that one of the chief sources of positive fulfillment for individuals lies in the deep delight available in the mutual interactions of democratic and creative groups" (p. 73). Breton (1990) further emphasized a focus on the individual as a whole and not as a victim or a center of pathology. Two approaches exist when forming groups, either "so that the whole person in each member is invited to participate, or it can be structured so that only the troubled, or broken, or hurt part of the person is invited to participate" (p. 27). Unfortunately, Breton concluded that too rarely the former approach is used in practice. Some examples include recreational departments and their attempts to include people with mental health disabilities (West, 1984), physical disabilities (Price, 1994), deafness (Munsch & Mulligan, 1991), unemployed (Pasavento, 1989), and ethnic minorities (Reid, 1993). Thus, many recreation departments sacrificed the whole individual for the broken individual.

Jane Addams was an early proponent of the significance of organized municipal recreational services in the life of the neighborhood and its positive role. Addams (1907) described a transformed city in which publicly supported recreational and leisure activities would become the social cement of a cohesive urban community. "We are only beginning to understand," she wrote, "what might be done through the festival, the street procession, the band of marching musicians, orchestral music in public squares or parks" (p. 492). In the urban future she envisioned, the stroller in the city would encounter not the jangling distraction of raucous commercialized entertainment, but "spontaneous laughter, snatches of lyric song, the recovered forms of old dances, and the traditional rondels of merry games." The "delicious sensation to be found in swimming pools" would surely outweigh the temptation "to play craps in a foul and stuffy alley, even with the unnatural excitement which gambling offers" (p. 494).

While some can acknowledge the historic ties between social work and recreation it is still doubtful if the two can be actively linked. Andrew, Harvey, and Dawson (1994) reported that social workers in Toronto detached themselves from the recreation services in the mid-1940s as they claimed that the recreation services, by not addressing social problems, were not part of the social work domain. Ward (1986) tried to assess the link between municipal recreation and community development and questioned whether effective community

development could be initiated by a municipal recreation department. Ward concluded that municipal recreation seemed to be somewhat antithetical to the essence of community development. Valerius and MacKay (1993) studied a decade of dissertations in the field of recreation, but found no reference to community development in municipal recreation services. Andrew, Harvey, and Dawson (1994) noted that in the past two decades recreation departments moved from a citizen participation-orientation to a consumer choice orientation; thus recreation departments did not include residents in decision making but asked only their preferences for services. Furthermore, Larsen, Montelpare, and Donovan-Neale (1992) noted that volunteers in recreation departments do not participate in decision-making processes.

Some researchers noted promising opportunities for community development through recreational programs. Kaplan (1980) found that the more positive residents felt towards these services the more involved they are with their communities. Levy (1989) found that even in highly alienated areas significant communities formed around recreational services when people shared common recreational interests.

More specifically, some researchers found that recreation services can increase citizen participation and involvement when the attitudes of senior management encourage inclusion of residents and when the departments are large in size (Crompton, Lamb, & Schul, 1981). Involving residents in design and delivery of services can enable the municipal agency to make better, more sensitive decisions by increasing the range of alternatives available for planners and by allowing regional variability.

ISSUES UNDER ANALYSIS

Community planning for local services is the watchword of today's political process as each political party seeks to devalue planning at state and federal levels. But attention to community development in public recreation is limited (Valerius & MacKay, 1993). As noted above, Ward (1986) questioned whether a municipal recreation department can pass effective community development.

In this case study of community development in a public recreation program, we identify several issues that merit special attention. First, *decision making and authority* is of utmost importance to the community development and empowerment process. All too often, confusion

about appropriate issues for, and roles of, the local sub-units in relation to the broader parent body has led to power struggles and conflicts. Especially related to our study, Crompton, Lamb, and Schul (1981) found that when senior management encourages the inclusion of residents in planning, recreation services can stimulate citizen participation especially when it is a large department. However, Checkoway and Van Til (1978) noted that participation can be costly, time consuming, cause for long delays in implementation, and may increase and intensify the frequency of conflicts.

Second, the utilization of *human resources* provides an opportunity to tailor the staff to the local community's interests and needs. What is the role of the professional? Who has the responsibility for the recruitment, hiring, and training of volunteers in the various programs? And, to what extent can local organizers get involved in shaping local activities? As the literature above indicates, municipal recreation departments often discourage residents and volunteers. It is also of interest to examine the role of the social work profession in this case study since the literature suggests that very few social workers engage in community organization (Gibelman & Schervish, 1993).

Third, fiscal responsibility and accountability for the local programs has raised many questions. Who is responsible for raising funds? How much should be raised outside the publicly allocated resources? Who can provide final approvals, at what level, and for what purpose? Where is the tax-exempt status lodged?

These issues are particularly important in public sector programs where political pressures and interests are highest. This case study of the Philadelphia Department of Recreation highlights how leadership, with vision and values, fostered community development and empowered the local communities to effectively meet local needs.

THE CONTEXT

In late 1991, Philadelphia elected a new Democratic mayor, Ed Rendell. Mayor Rendell brought with him many new ideas for reviving the city and improving services. However, he first faced the task of salvaging the city from bankruptcy. Due to the increased cost of services, the demand for additional services, reduced state and federal aid, a declining tax base, and the corresponding decline in property values due to suburban flight of the middle and upper classes, the city

found itself unable to pay salaries on time and faced a decreased bond rating. Mayor Rendell accepted the challenge to restore Philadelphia's fiscal solvency as well as to improve the quality of life in the city.

As part of his administration, Mayor Rendell appointed Michael DiBerardinis as the new Commissioner for the Department of Recreation. Commissioner DiBerardinis had worked for many years as a neighborhood-based community organizer and, later, as a congressional aid. In both positions he was known to be energetic, innovative, and a person with vision.

The Mayor and the new Commissioner shared many values and visions concerning the rejuvenation of the city of Philadelphia: the Mayor focused on restoring the financial solvency of a city in bankruptcy; the Commissioner focused on restoring community health to neighborhoods served by the Department of Recreation. The Commissioner managed the process in a manner that combined both fiscal and empowerment strategies, thus satisfying the Mayor's concerns while effecting his own community development agenda.

From the outset of the new administration, it was clear that not only was there no additional money allocated to the Department of Recreation but most of the department's dwindling budget was ear-marked for maintenance of the many physical plants (e.g., recreational centers, swimming pools, ice-skating rinks, and tennis courts) rather than for new programs. Whereas the department employed 568 people in 1992, by 1994 the number of employees decreased to 521. Furthermore, budget allocations were well below the cost of living for the next two-year period. These cuts not only eliminated many programs completely, but drastically shortened the length of the season of the retained programs (e.g., pools, ice-skating rinks).

Until 1992, when the new commissioner took office, the Department had been a traditional bureaucratic unit. Headquarters made the decisions and front-line workers carried them out under supervisory control. Services were routine and identical across the city. Local service providers (recreation site managers/leaders) were not expected to engage with residents or to be proactive. Success was viewed as working within the budget and providing services to as many customers/residents as possible. Front-line workers were discouraged from suggesting changes or initiating new ideas as the budget was tight and there was no room for creativity.

The Department under Mr. DiBerardinis' leadership successfully

managed to raise funds from the private sector and to salvage most of the city-wide programs (see Perlmutter & Cnaan, 1995, and Cnaan & Perlmutter, 1995). What is most interesting is the Department's transformation into a community development-oriented agency. The new mission of the Department of Recreation stressed strengthening communities by linking the public and the private sectors; local residents and local private businesses worked together with the employees of the Department of Recreation.

METHODS

This study combines qualitative and quantitative data in its analysis. The Commissioner of Recreation met with us and shared his philosophy and strategies for organizational change. We explored the community empowerment dimension through interviews with Ms. Carol B. Rice, Deputy Commissioner for Planning and Development. In addition, we observed staff meetings in which the issues were addressed.

A series of interviews with the top management of the Department and some professional staff served as the basis for a two-page questionnaire. We developed the questionnaire to address the three central issues of decision making, human resources, and fiscal concerns. The questionnaire focused on: (1) a list of members of Advisory Council members, their gender and a few other basic, demographic variables; (2) a set of open-ended questions regarding the functioning of the Advisory Council members; (3) a section that asked about the volunteers and what activities they are engaged in; (4) open-ended questions regarding the work of volunteers, recruitment, and supervision; and (5) questions regarding sources of income and budget use.

Our contact people advised us not to use any identifier for the leaders (and/or the sites). The rationale was that identifying the respondents distorts responses because the leaders might answer as they assume their supervisors will want them to do. Thus, to minimize bias we did not collect information about the respondents.

We sent questionnaires to the leaders of all the neighborhood centers (N = 196). We received responses from 60 neighborhoods with a response rate of 30.6%. Since this is a case study of one locale only, our findings are not to be generalized to other settings, but are intended to stimulate further debate and action.

VISION AND VALUES

Appointing a Commissioner of Recreation with a clear philosophy regarding local neighborhood development was an unusual and important political decision. As stated earlier, DiBerardinis worked for many years as a community organizer in working class neighborhoods in Philadelphia and, therefore, had a deep understanding of the needs of these communities. He clearly articulated his philosophy of community development as he discussed ingredients for success in community development. By viewing the local citizenry as equal partners in the planning and implementation processes, he facilitated the development of shared goals and objectives in a climate of trust. The stake in success was not lodged at the bureaucratic level in city hall; it became a shared commitment among the stakeholders. The bottom line for community development, even when ultimate responsibility was lodged with the Department, was to engage the community as a stake-holder with authority!

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing a policy is always complex (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973); in this paper, we describe a process that used the Commissioner's vision. The discussion centers around the three critical issues that were identified earlier: (1) decision-making and authority, (2) using human resources, and (3) fiscal responsibility and accountability. While they are all interrelated, they will be discussed individually to highlight the important elements of each.

Decision-Making and Authority

The first and most important aspect in the discussion of decision-making and authority was to understand the role of the organization's key actor, in this case the Commissioner of Recreation. The ultimate accountability and authority for the organization was clearly lodged at the top, but there were many degrees of freedom in the implementation which reflected the unique leadership attributes in the organization.

As DiBerardinis took office, he began a process of strategic plan-

ning that included developing a mission statement for the Department. The unique aspect of this process was the involvement of many employees, at all levels in the Department, in its formulation. The mission statement is an important affirmation of the new directions being taken which captured the values and vision of the Commissioner.

The mission statement was primarily concerned with pressing social issues, especially race relations and drugs. The Commissioner highlighted the primacy of community development through "building local leadership, building youth, building neighborhoods," and the importance of Advisory Councils and neighborhood empowerment:

> The Department will train and support staff in the building of Advisory Councils, and in cooperation with these Councils, will work to improve the quality and level of programming . . . In addition, the Recreation Department will act as a resource to train community leadership. . . . (The Philadelphia Department of Recreation, Mission Statement, 1994)

The implication line was that an infrastructure had to be built and that all activity, be it corporate money or program related, would be linked to the neighborhood volunteer structure.

Thus, the vision for the Department of Recreation combined the basic program intent of providing recreation with a community development and a community participation approach. Accordingly, the goals of reopening all swimming pools for the full duration of the summer and activating summer and winter sport programs for children and young adults simultaneously included two new strategies: first, developing a cadre of volunteers in the administrative operation of the centers; second, expanding the responsibility of the recreation programs to a broader group of stakeholders including neighborhood volunteers as well as local businesses as sponsors.

DiBerardinis acknowledged that change and revitalization required the involvement and investment of those in the local community in their facilities. DiBerardinis articulated his views: it is essential for government and communities to engage with each other in a meaningful way to make things happen. Communities cannot wait to receive services; there must be an interaction around the delivery of services–a partnership concept.

The Commissioner issued a challenge at the neighborhood level through local newspapers, local organizational networks, and by word of mouth. For example, the Department would preserve a center build-

ing and swimming pool that had been closed for seven years provided that people in the community participated in the physical restoration and planning. The community responded and the Department met its commitment initially by hiring temporary staff; there is now a year-round program with a paid, permanent leader to complement the local volunteer structure. The term ''leader'' implies that the role was more than the mere managing of a local site; it included skill in empowering local residents to take charge of the services in their centers. This was accomplished by forming local Advisory Councils.

The Advisory Councils assured a uniform approach across all recreation centers in Philadelphia. Until this time, the relationship with the Department had been loose, with little central leadership articulated vis-à-vis departmental goals and philosophy. A departmental manual now formalized the approach. The manual sought ''to formally recognize and promote community involvement and participation in the operation of the facilities of the Department of Recreation . . . , to incorporate the principles of openness, democracy, inclusion and cooperation in a uniform manner across the city of Philadelphia'' (City of Philadelphia, 1993, p. ii).

The first step in the community development process was to articulate the roles and functions of Advisory Councils at the neighborhood center level, a critical step in implementing and institutionalizing the community empowerment intent. Advisory Councils were given both the authority to plan and implement local programs as well as the responsibility for the local center budget.

Empowerment was evident at the outset as a task force developed a Department manual. The task force included representatives from the various recreation centers and central administration. Furthermore, the Advisory Councils were to be composed of members elected from the residents of the communities and to reflect the views of the residents. ''It is a vehicle for citizen involvement and it is the essential means of making certain that the recreation services are geared to the needs of the community'' (City of Philadelphia, 1993, p. 16).

The manual clearly presented the duties and functions of Advisory Councils which include identifying recreational needs and resources; acting as a liaison among staff, community, and other agencies; serving as a source of volunteer leadership; recruiting volunteers; working with staff to evaluate programs; conducting fund-raising activities; and coordinating activities with other recreational programs in the

area. This supports Absher's (1986) view that local leaders best represent the taste and interests of local residents in the field of recreation.

What is of particular interest is the manual's clarification of the extent of the Advisory Council's authority: the manual clearly specifies that ultimate authority rests with the Department:

> While it is recognized that an Advisory Council has an important and vital function in the successful operation of a recreation facility, it must be clearly understood by all parties that all Department of Recreation facilities are ultimately under the full and complete control of the Department of Recreation and its staff member or appointed designee. The facility supervisor (and district manager), therefore bear the burden and responsibility for the proper operation of that facility. To accomplish this, the facility supervisor and district manager (while actively seeking, encouraging and consulting the Advisory Council) have the singular duty and responsibility for all operational decisions at the facility. . . . (Recreation Department, 1993, p. 4)

From the Commissioner's point of view, the goal was a good working relationship and consensus between the leader and the Advisory Council. In those cases where there was disagreement, the issue was resolved at the departmental level. If the conflict went against departmental policy (this was rare), the Advisory Council could be disenfranchised.

The following two examples demonstrate the important role of the Advisory Council. A murder in neighborhood "A" brought the residents to the Department asking that the local Center be open more hours at night, especially until midnight on weekends. They wanted a safe place with adult supervision. The Commissioner was ready to hire an additional staff person for 15 hours a week provided that the community came up with three adult volunteers. This made it possible to meet the community needs in a realistic situation and it brought both parties together.

In neighborhood "B," there were many changes as middle class residents moved out; the neighborhood was on an economic downturn. The Advisory Council, with other local groups, created a "peace and safety network" and worked intensively with young people and their parents. The model developed in this community was based on a

$60,000 grant which allowed the department to replicate the "peace and safety network" in other local districts throughout the city.

The major challenge, as articulated by the Commissioner, was facilitating the formation of effective Advisory Councils in neighborhoods where there was little leadership capacity. The need for more intensive supports from the Department directly reflected the economic condition of the community where, regardless of the ethnic composition, poverty was extensive and there were no community structures. In these situations, the Department built the structure as it assigned paid staff to seven centers. The staff's primary role was to identify leadership and to develop relationships with businesses in the neighborhood. In the process of becoming more empowered, the most disenfranchised communities received further assistance in the process of community development, while the stronger communities were only guided towards the same end.

The primary issues which involve all Advisory Council members relate to administration (such as managing the facility, supervising, and recruiting and working with program volunteers). The two other most frequently mentioned issues were planning and organizing programs (N = 48) and financial issues (N = 46). In addition, half of the leaders reported that the Advisory Council was also involved in a variety of issues such as safety, social problems, and publicity. It is evident from the findings that the local residents who were recruited to serve on the Advisory Councils did not see themselves as executives, but as assistants to the leaders and shared with them the responsibility of managing the facility and assuring that programs would be provided by competent staff and volunteers, compatible with the department's mission.

Demographics of Advisory Councils

The information received from the leaders of 60 recreation centers indicated that 59 centers had established an Advisory Council in the year before the study. These Advisory Councils had a mean of 6.37 members with a range of between one and 11 members. In all cases, the Advisory Council members either resided in the immediate neighborhood of the city's facility or worked in that area as managers or owners of offices and businesses. Thus, they were all, in one way or another, invested in, and concerned with the neighborhood.

In examining the demographic characteristics of the 363 members

participating in Councils across the city, 57 percent were women. Regarding ethnic origin, Caucasians comprised 58%, African Americans 39%, Hispanics 2% and Asian Americans 1%. In regard to occupational background, the Advisory Councils are a very heterogenous group, ranging from retirees to full-time, self-employed people. As the percentage of upper class or professional members is quite low, the findings indicate that the individuals who serve on the Advisory Councils are residents who represent their neighbors.

A common problem in such an Advisory Council is the extent to which members actively participate and come to meetings. Almost half (49.3%) were rated as active by their center leaders. It is interesting to note that women were significantly more active than men ($X^2 = 6.89$, D.F. = 1, $p < .01$).

Recruitment Approaches

Leaders used five key methods to recruit members for the Centers' Advisory Councils: (1) word of mouth, that is, talking with various people and persuading them (N = 18 sites); (2) recruiting program participants or parents of participating children (N = 7); (3) advertising in local newspapers and fliers (N = 15); (4) approaching people who have special expertise or control over resources (N = 12); and (5) recommendations by current members of the advisory council (N = 3). Only 15 leaders used a formal mode of recruitment (advertising in newspapers and fliers), while 50 reported using a variety of informal methods. This clearly indicates grassroots-level work in which organizers (facility leaders) work with local, self-selected leaders and volunteers who are visible and willing to shoulder responsibility (Cnaan, 1991).

Using Human Resources

There are two important roles in the discussion of human resources. The first is the paid Recreation Department leader; the second is the role of the volunteer.

The Paid Recreation Department Leader

The role of the paid Recreation Department leader was central to this change process. The leaders had been with the organization in

previous administrations when their roles were very traditional, providing recreational services and managing the center. Now that the culture of the organization was changing, they felt the impact most directly: not only were they now expected to function as community organizers but they would share control of the center with the newly formed Advisory Council. This constituted a major change in the culture of the organization. The new climate encouraged the leaders to become proactive and managerially inclusive, whereas before, their roles were to follow orders and provide recreational services as prescribed by the management.

There was much to be learned concerning how this shift was to occur. Initially the Commissioner focused on the creation and empowerment of the Advisory Councils and the leaders began to feel dis-empowered and alienated. DiBerardinis recognized that the leaders also needed help in this transition. The challenge was to help the leaders to also become stakeholders in the new system.

Two changes were responsive to this need. In 1994, the Department developed a new mission statement which specifically addressed this problem and reflected the change in the leader's role:

> The Department recognizes the primary role of its employees in the delivery of recreational services throughout the city. It also seeks to provide training opportunities to all staff that will lead to the development of new skills, assist in career advancement and meet the changing needs of the communities we serve. (City of Philadelphia, 1994, p. 1)

The second change was that the Department paid increasing attention to staff development and training for the leaders in (a) understanding the dynamics of community development, (b) skill development (i.e., how to listen, how to interact, how to manage conflict), and (c) skill in identifying leadership in the local community and in maintaining grassroots organizations.

The Department now also clearly defined the role of the paid recreation leader. This role focuses on the provision of recreational services in relation to the functions of the Advisory Council, thus, enhancing the principle of participation. This is in contrast to prior years when the centers were basically the fiefdoms of these leaders and programs were offered uniformly across the city.

Leaders themselves are empowered as they develop new job de-

scriptions for their positions. In addition, through a training program, the leaders are asked to embrace a broader concept of their role. For example, they are encouraged to initiate new programs to broaden their centers from simply sports to a community center agenda. The leaders are also expected to reach out to art schools for instructors as part of volunteer recruitment, and to art stores for donations of art supplies.

The training also discusses inter-group relations designed to make diverse ethnic groups comfortable in the centers. Other innovative efforts at improving inter-group relations are being attempted in a city with many ethnic communities. One project involves ten youngsters from five centers with diverse constituencies who develop youth leadership while performing light maintenance and beautification of their neighborhoods in an effort to increase neighborhood pride.

It must be noted that none of these leaders who function as community organizers are social workers. Most have undergraduate degrees in various fields, and the others have associate degrees or high school diplomas. This is consistent with the findings that many community organizers across the country are not social workers (O'Donnell, 1995), and that very few social workers are engaged in community organization (Gibelman & Schervish, 1993).

Program Volunteers

Program volunteers are the second major human resource group and the Department focused on their recruitment, training, and support. Fifty-four leaders (90%) reported using volunteers, with a mean number of 55.75 volunteers, and a range between one and 369 volunteers. Program volunteers were, by and large, restricted to coaching, teaching, assisting professionals, securing the facility while programs took place, and helping with cleaning and setting up. These program volunteers were not involved in decision-making as were Advisory Council members; rather, they contributed to the quality and continuity of the programs.

The methods of recruiting program volunteers were similar to that of recruiting Advisory Council members: (1) by word of mouth (N = 8); (2) recruiting program participants or parents of participating children (N = 12); (3) advertisement in local newspapers and fliers (N = 11); (4) approaching people who have special expertise or control over resources (N = 25); and (5) recommendation by members of the Advi-

sory Council (N = 6). Only 11 leaders used a formal mode of recruitment (advertisement in newspapers and fliers), while 51 reported using a variety of informal methods. It is interesting, but not surprising, to note that program volunteers were recruited especially for their expertise (usually as coaches or teachers).

Fiscal Resources and Accountability

Fiscal responsibility is directly related to decision-making and authority. While the basic budget of the Department was controlled and centralized, there was certainly some degree of decentralization at the local level. The financial responsibilities were clearly and extensively delineated in the Manual: ten of the 52 pages were devoted to financial affairs.

The Advisory Councils had authority for the center's budget with the proviso that the money could be used only for programs in the center. Each center had to secure its own tax exempt number and federally insured checking account. The Advisory Council could establish federally insured savings accounts or invest in federally insured Certificate of Deposits (CDS) with an investment term of no more than six months (City of Philadelphia, 1993, p. 43).

There were clear methods of accountability built into the system. A finance committee would function as an independent fiscal auditor for the community. The committee usually consisted of at least three volunteer members of the Council, one of whom was the President or Treasurer. The facility supervisor, who supervises the facility leader, was an ex-officio member of the finance committee but the paid leader had no contact or responsibility for the money. There were both monthly reporting of all fiscal matters and an annual reconciliation of the budget with the central budgeting office for the Department. Two signatories were the minimum required for the signing of checks, and any expense over $200.00 needed approval from the center's finance committee.

One of the goals of the Advisory Councils was to increase the pool of income available for programs. Advisory Councils were encouraged to use their initiative in fund-raising and resourcing. Seven methods were identified by the respondents for their centers: (1) sponsorship by local businesses (N = 24); (2) sponsorship by members of the Advisory Council (N = 21); (3) support from public sources other than the Department of Recreation (N = 16); (4) fees (N = 10); (5) individu-

al sponsorship (N = 4); (6) local fund-raising, such as door-to-door solicitation, and (7) special events such as a car wash.

The amounts that were raised varied. Contributions from local businesses were generally under $1000; by contrast, grants from special city and state funds were much greater. The average city grant was $2500, while the state grant could be as high as $10,000.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As our society moves towards the minimizing, if not divestment, of public responsibility for providing services to the community, collaboration between public and private sectors becomes all the more urgent. Furthermore, we are repeatedly hearing calls for local initiatives and local sensitivity as to what is really needed and what can work locally. This case study provides an important model of the role of proactive leadership in the development of this collaboration in an era of dwindling public resources.

The case demonstrates the importance of a clear delineation of roles with top leadership clarifying the expectations for flexibility and creativity in the public bureaucracy. At the outset, the Department clarified the potential for responsible and accountable community involvement and civil servants were transformed into community activists. Community empowerment occurs as residents and local business owners participate in the development of the services being provided in their own community. In a society that stresses the importance of service planning and provision by those closest to the service recipient, a process known elsewhere as decentralization, the Philadelphia Department of Recreation successfully managed to plan and provide programs for local residents while making them active partners.

The local recreation centers, thus, became new, active players in the neighborhood. These sites along with schools, churches, civic organizations, crime watch groups, and block associations are the backbone of community development and representation in urban America (Cnaan & Rothman, 1995). How these new players, the recreation sites with their Advisory Councils are linking to and collaborating with the other more traditional organizations is yet to be seen and should be the focus of future studies. However, these new structures challenge community practitioners to seek their inclusion in local coalitions and to provide an opportunity to present additional local needs.

The potential for community development embedded in recreational services should induce community practitioners all over the country to replicate and link these organizations both to each other and to other community coalitions and collaborations. Residents who consume recreational services may not be active in local groups and thus may be a potential cadre of additional community activists. They are often parents of young children who are concerned about the quality of life in their neighborhoods. Encouraging recreational workers to enhance citizen participation is an old social work tradition that community practitioners may well be advised to apply some 50 years after this tradition ceased to exist. Including recreation sites in community development efforts is thus a renewed challenge for contemporary community practitioners.

This case study also demonstrates that community organization is not the sole domain of any discipline or profession. The people who carried out the new mission of community participation, local empowerment, and local control over service planning, budgeting, and implementation were the same people who previously treated the local centers as their fiefdoms and shielded themselves from community involvement. The same workers who for years were guided by a "business as usual," and a "sit and wait" mentality, are now the people who actively form local leadership and collaborate with many constituencies in the community. Thus, we can infer that similar change is possible elsewhere with people who are currently not community professionals.

However, there is a dilemma in using civil servants as community practitioners since they must, by definition and design, limit their activities to community planning and development, and must shy away from any social action or advocacy. Relying on the public sector to initiate citizen participation and leadership has its own limits. Some might view the Department's policy manual as an attempt to limit the role of the Advisory Councils to supporting the Department's policies since the Department not only retains the right to veto any program but also retains final control of all budgetary decisions. Thus, the Advisory Councils can plan the services collaboratively, but cannot become fully independent and critical of the Department. Longitudinal research will show whether some Advisory Councils will seek independence and will act in an adversarial manner as they become more experienced.

A second dilemma exists in relation to the institutionalization of change (Perlmutter & Gummer, 1995). How is permanency of change assured when there is a change in Department leadership? Will the Department of Recreation retreat to traditional recreational programs with little interest in community development and empowerment or has the change in fact been instilled throughout the system? While the respondents believed in its permanency, it will be of interest to follow the Department's activity after the current administration is gone to determine the extent to which the change has been institutionalized. As Checkoway and Van Til (1978) noted, involving citizens and municipal attempts for empowerment may exhaust the administration.

However, this case study demonstrates that organizational transformation is possible but it requires a clear vision, a strong and committed leadership, a clear statement of mission, clear operating procedures, a methodical training program, and ongoing supervision and monitoring. Communities can be re-energized with the involvement of neighborhood residents and businesses. Combined with proactive department leadership, these re-energized communities promise a brighter future for our neighborhoods and for civic society.

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