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FEB 22 2008

February 21, 2008

First Selectman Mary A. Glassman  
Town of Simsbury  
933 Hopmeadow Street  
PO Box 495  
Simsbury, CT 06070

RE: Proposed Charrette

Dear Ms. Glassman:

Representatives of the Simsbury Chamber of Commerce attended the combined meeting of boards and commissions last night at Eno Memorial Hall as they discussed the pros and cons of a town wide charrette to address development in the north, south and center of Simsbury.

This morning those representatives and members of our Government Affairs Committee met to discuss our position on the proposed charrette and we offer the following comments:

- 1) The Simsbury Chamber of Commerce does not feel that the discussion of a charrette has identified the properties to be included or included sufficient input from landowners, a critical component to any discussion of the future development of their properties. Without a commitment from these landowners to the charrette process, we are asking our elected officials and commissioners to support a process that may be open to dispute from the start.
- 2) With a newly adopted Plan of Conservation and Development (that included many opportunities for input from all stakeholders), a revised and notable set of Design Review Guidelines as well as the recent submission of a mixed use zoning regulation by town staff, Simsbury already has the town's "blueprint" and vision for development and redevelopment. Can the implementation of the Plan of Conservation and Development go forward without a mixed use regulation?
- 3) Without the RFP process already started, the projection of 6 months for completing a charrette is questionable.
- 4) The unpredictable marketability and demand for the end product of a charrette is neither cost effective nor a wise investment of town government's limited resources, time and staffing. The cost of \$500,000 is excessive, especially when the charrette results may or may not be in the best interest of the property owners, reasonable for market demands or subject to legal challenges by owners and special interest groups.

The Simsbury Chamber of Commerce feels that it is time for the Town of Simsbury to adopt a mixed use regulation and accept a mixed use development proposal for systematic and careful review by our land use commissions. We need to act with a sense of urgency to begin to eliminate the perception of Simsbury as a poor place to do business. An application review should be welcomed and its review process should exemplify the Town of Simsbury's commitment for openness and fairness to all applicants.

We urge the Board of Selectmen and other town boards and commissions to vote against a charrette and instead encourage the Zoning Commission and town staff to develop and adopt a meaningful mixed use regulation in a timely manner. As stated last night, the Town of Simsbury is in desperate need of balanced growth to increase our tax base.

As always, the Simsbury Chamber of Commerce appreciates your proactive approach in initiating last night's discussion to break an "impasse" in Simsbury and looks forward to further dialog and interaction with town government in planning for the future of Simsbury.

Sincerely,



Peter C. Pabich  
Chairman  
Government Affairs Committee

cc:

Board of Selectmen  
Board of Finance  
Planning Commission  
Zoning Commission

Conservation/Inland Wetlands Agency  
Zoning Board of Appeals  
Design Review Board  
Economic Development Commission



University of Connecticut  
*Department of Public Policy*

February 25, 2008

The Honorable Mary Glassman  
Members of the Board of Selectmen  
Town of Simsbury  
933 Hopmeadow Street  
Simsbury, CT 06070

*Re: Proposed Charrette (please read into the record at the BOS meeting this evening)*

Dear Mary and members of the Board,

I am sorry that I am not able to be present at the meeting this evening due to a prior commitment. Nonetheless I wanted to submit a few of my thoughts on the charrette process proposal for your consideration.

As you may be aware I have served as a Simsbury Selectman and am in my eleventh year of service on the Board of Finance. In addition, I have my Masters of Public Administration degree and work at the University of Connecticut Department of Public Policy managing public policy research projects. Management of these projects includes creating the project methodology and data collection instruments, data collection, data analysis and reporting. Project methodologies range from random national telephone surveys, conducting focus groups, meta-analysis (review and discussion of existing academic research on a given subject), cost-benefit analysis and other means to answer public policy questions. Much of the work I have done centers on eliciting citizen input regarding budget preferences. While I have *many* thoughts around the proposed charette process, my comments tonight are based on my professional training and experience.

I agree that sound and balanced economic development is necessary for the few remaining developable parcels in our town in order to increase our commercial tax base. I also applaud the effort to include our citizens in the effort to better understand what those who live and pay taxes in our community envision for the last stages of development of our town.

However, after attending the charrette informational meeting last Wednesday, I have three specific public policy research concerns regarding the charrette process as proposed:

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1. This process would invite interested citizens and stakeholders to participate. Without a random sample of citizens invited to participate in the charette process, there can be no generalizability of the results—in effect the “citizen input,” by design, has inherent bias. Said more plainly, invited stakeholders and interested citizens do not necessarily represent the broader population. Randomly inviting participants does increase cost and project planning time. (Please see attached discussion from the Town of West Hartford “Citizen Determined Performance Measures...” pages 3 & 4).
2. Small groups, despite scientific sampling, are weakly representative of a larger population. A town-wide random sample survey to affirm or refute the small group process would ensure that the exercise was representative. (Please see attached discussion from the Town of West Hartford “Citizen Determined Performance Measures...” pages 6 & 7).
3. The other public policy concern is the expense. I would be interested to know whether a cost-benefit analysis has been done by other communities who have undergone this process. Meaning, after the charrette has been produced:
  - Have new zoning regulations been written and adopted based on the charrette?
  - Was there an improvement on the percentage of approved zoning applications?
  - Was there a decrease in lawsuits by developers?And most importantly,
  - Was there a measurable increase in the commercial tax base for those communities above what had been typically seen?
  - Was there a resultant residential tax decrease?

In conclusion, there has been much emphasis on the value of the proposed charrette because it will incorporate citizen input. As a researcher, I am certain that there are a variety of less expensive ways to scientifically answer (to allow generalizability of the results) the question of what our citizens’ “vision” for our town is. I also believe that the cost-benefit questions regarding the charrette process need to be answered before we commit to this kind of public expenditure. It would be a shame to pursue an expensive research project that in the end does not properly answer the question it sought to, and also in the end does not ‘pay for itself.’ I value public policy research done well; however in the interests of pursuing that end, I would encourage the Board to defer its decision to pursue an RFP until the questions posed above are answered.

Sincerely,

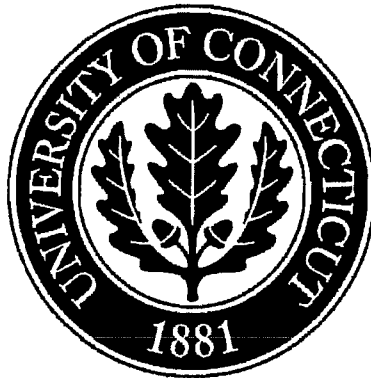


Candace V. Fitzpatrick

cc: Board of Finance  
Attachments

# Citizen Determined Performance Measures:

Designing and Testing a System for Developing Citizen Identified Performance Indicators for  
use in Local Governments



**Final Report to the Town of West Hartford  
July 1, 2005**

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## **Citizen Determined Performance Measures:**

Designing and Testing a System for Developing Citizen Identified Performance Indicators for use in Local Governments

### **INTRODUCTION**

Performance measurement and citizen participation have long histories in government and in the public policy and administration literature. Performance measures of many different types are used by governments to help managers to focus on their progress towards organizational goals, and to report this progress to internal and external audiences. In some instances, governments use performance measures as a part of their budget process. Governments use a host of different citizen participation mechanisms in a variety of ways when seeking input from their citizenry. The techniques vary in the amount and quality of information that citizens provide and the degree to which participants are selected to represent the community at large. This project applied citizen participation mechanisms to help develop performance measures.

The process described in this report was designed based on the lessons from previous research. We designed and demonstrated a process to produce measures developed by an informed group of citizens. These citizens had the opportunity to 1) consider the outcomes that they care about and 2) develop the measures capable of reporting to them the effect of government programs on these outcomes. In essence, the Town wished to improve communication with citizens about evaluating Town performance by providing measures that citizens understand of outcomes that they feel are important. This project was developed collaboratively with the Town of West Hartford, Connecticut. The design team consisted of the authors and the administrative services manager and budget director of the Town. The result is the ongoing West Hartford Citizen Determined Performance Measures (WHCDPM) project.

This report proceeds with a review of the relevant literature(s), a look at the process design, a description of how the process was implemented and a discussion of our findings from the project. The report concludes with the key lessons we have taken from the project.

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Citizen Participation**

The goods and services provided by governments to citizens are different than those they buy as general consumers. The nature of these public goods is such that too little (or none at all) of the service would be provided if private markets were left on their own to supply them. The consequence is that market signals of how much to produce are weak and government decision-makers are left to select the service levels that they believe satisfy their citizenry. Public administration thus has a knowledge gap in understanding citizens' desires and the public has a reciprocal lack of understanding about what government does. Governments listen to their

citizens in various ways but most the common approaches do little to fill this knowledge gap. It is also common for such efforts to have poor claims on their ability to represent broadly the views of the public.

Hearings, testimony, forums, constituent (e)mail, phone calls and lobbying efforts are in heavy use but do not produce representative opinions and views of all citizens. Such events draw those with the most at stake in economic and advocacy terms, or the most free time. Over the past 25 years a family of techniques have been developed that allow a representative group of citizens to render judgments about complex and difficult public problems. These techniques have two characteristics in common. First, participants are chosen using probability sampling so they represent the views of the larger population. Second, such techniques have an information (and sometimes a deliberative) component so that citizens have the chance to learn (sometimes from each other) about the public problem and their judgments are informed ones. A comprehensive review of these techniques appears in Simonsen and Robbins (2000).

## **Performance Measurement**

As described by Theodore Poister “performance measures are objective, qualitative indicators of various aspects of performance of public programs or agencies” (2003, p.3). The dimensions of performance include effectiveness, service quality, recipient satisfaction, and efficiency (Poister, 2003). One of the important purposes of performance measures for government is to objectively assess these different aspects of performance and use the results to inform management and improve their decisions.

GASB initiated a nine month study from November of 2000, in which they conducted nineteen citizen discussion groups with a total of 133 individuals (GASB, 2003). The purpose of this research was to gain insight into the best ways for local governments to develop and communicate performance measures. Through discussion with individuals, GASB suggest sixteen criteria for use in preparing a report on performance information. They state that “These criteria are designed to provide guidance to preparers who want to prepare SEA [or performance] reports that effectively communicate relevant and reliable information to elected officials, citizens, and other users about the results of government programs and services” (GASB, 2003, p. 35). These criterion however, do not explain how citizen should be involved in identifying performance measurement, rather it provides a framework for reporting.

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation has funded several studies that are dedicated to producing new and innovative research regarding citizen identified performance measures. The goals of its Performance Assessment of Municipal Government Program “are to encourage the creation and widespread adoption of measures of municipal government performance that objectively measure outcomes that matter to ordinary people (performance assessment) and to encourage use of the internet to enable citizens to make service requests of their local governments” (Sloan, 2005).

Of the Sloan funded initiatives, the closest in concept to the West Hartford study took place in the state of Iowa. The Iowa study differed from traditional performance measurement in several respects. “First, it emphasizes collaboration among citizens, elected officials and managers in

able to devote enough time to developing both outcomes and measures. The first focus group meeting was primarily devoted to developing outcomes and the second to deriving measures.

Focus group participants were not provided outcome information from the Town to assure that the outcomes generated were not contaminated by existing Town goals and expectations. Only the design team and the facilitators were present at the focus groups. The design team did not participate in the discussions, only observed (and in a few instances answered clarification questions). Line staff was not involved in the focus groups.

### ***Prioritization***

The design team recognized that the groups were likely to generate an extensive list of outcomes and measures with some more important than others. Therefore, the focus group process devoted substantial time prioritizing the outcomes and the measures.

### ***Flexibility***

The focus groups were managed by professional focus group facilitators from the University of Connecticut, Department of Public Policy's Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA). The facilitators were informed about the aims of the process and provided with broad outlines regarding how to proceed and manage the groups. Within these broad guidelines, the expert facilitators had wide latitude to gauge the group dynamics and make adjustments to make the process work better for each particular group. Focus group dynamics are often idiosyncratic and the public services that were examined were different enough that the design team felt that a flexible approach would be more likely to achieve positive results than would forcing rigid adherence to protocols. Indeed, in the end, the focus groups successfully generated outcomes and measures for each of the services examined.

### ***Representativeness***

The Town wanted to develop measures that would represent the thinking of the community as a whole—not simply the activists or others most motivated to attend meetings. A set of 'come one, come all' forums or other nonsystematic approaches would not have provided a representative view of the community as a whole. The only way to achieve a sample that represents the community is to use some form of random selection so that each person in the sample frame (in this case, Town residents) has an equal chance of being selected to participate. Therefore, the focus group participants were selected randomly using random digit dialing (RDD).

Random selection helps to ensure that focus groups are representative of the community as a whole. By extension, the measures that they develop ought to represent what the larger population would have done had they the opportunity to deliberate in a similar way. However, the group sample sizes were small—less than 20 participants.

A problem with small sample sizes is that it is comparatively more likely that the results from any particular group will not accurately resemble those that would be obtained from the whole population. Survey researchers use the concept of margin of error to measure this potential inaccuracy. For example, if a survey has a margin of error of  $\pm 5\%$  at the 95% confidence level it means that if the survey were implemented 100 times we would expect that 95 times the responses would fall within 5% above or below the reported response. Given a conservative set of assumptions, the margin of error for a sample size of 20 is  $\pm 22\%$  at the 95% confidence level.

The design team wanted greater comfort that the measures generated by the focus groups accurately represent the community as a whole. Therefore, the second part of the process included presenting the measures generated by the focus groups to a larger, random sample of the population. By way of comparison, this larger sample (800) generates a margin of error of  $\pm 3.4\%$  at the 95% confidence level, given conservative assumptions.

Respondents for the larger survey were selected randomly using random digit dialing. This group participated in a web (internet) survey or a paper survey, at their choice.

By combining methods in this way, the need to have adequate time to process and reflect upon service goals and measures was met through the focus groups while the need for a larger sample size to test the helpfulness of the measures to the larger Town population was accommodated in the surveys.

## **FOCUS GROUP PROCESS DESIGN**

### **Design Elements**

The purpose of using focus groups in this project was to 1) reveal the performance measure preferences of citizens based on their discussion of the key outcomes and 2) determine how such measures might communicate the degree to which outcomes have been accomplished. The focus group preparation process required the recruitment of citizen volunteers to participate in a two night discussion group, the design and test of the process and facilitator scripts, the training of facilitators to familiarize them with the process and with Town operations, and the design, test and production of materials for use during the group process.

### **Recruitment**

The recruitment of participants was performed by the Department of Public Policy's Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA). Staff from CSRA recruited focus group panel participants by telephone over a two week period. Adult subjects were identified by phone through the use of random digit dialing in order to give each adult Town resident an equal chance of being invited. Recruitment continued until enough residents had agreed to participate so that three groups could be formed. Each group contained at least 35 persons agreeing to attend two separate two-hour evening sessions on performance measures. Participants were not offered compensation. CSRA staff contacted about 1000 residents and were able to get commitments