HOW EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CAN HELP YOU MANAGE RISK

SUSAN HOPKINS, AICP
HIGHLAND PLANNING
SPRING PLANNERS DAY: APRIL 5, 2019
http://www.highland-planning.com/
HIGHLAND PLANNING

✔ Authentic and impactful engagement
✔ Involving people in high-stakes decisions
✔ Great results

Honor people. Make it sparkle. Go to them. Listen.
HIGHLAND PLANNING IS 12 YEARS OLD!
GAME PLAN

Explore overlooked risks that planners face

Learn how to recognize and mitigate those risks

Learn strategies to handle high-stakes situations
RISK.
Sewer project to take out some heritage trees, Scott Huddleston

Aug. 22, 2018 Updated: Aug. 23, 2018 6:29 a.m.

A stump is all that is le of a large tree that was cut down at the San Antonio Water System sewer construction project along Holbrook Road near Rittiman Road on Aug. 22, 2018. Some area residents are upset that heritage pecan trees have been removed from the site.

The city’s Planning Commission gave the San Antonio Water System the go-ahead Wednesday to cut down more trees in the path of a major East Side sewer expansion.

SAWS already destroyed at least three heritage pecan trees along Salado Creek, drawing re from neighbors near Holbrook and Rittiman roads. The utility removed the trees without obtaining the required variance from the city tree preservation rules, a step that “fell through the cracks,” a SAWS vice president told commission members.
TYPES OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT RISK

- Scope
- Schedule
- Cost
- Quality
THE ONE RISK THAT IMPACTS EVERYTHING...
Nobody ever asked me!

They held meetings when I wasn’t available!

I just found out about it.

They didn’t go through the right process!

It was a done deal!

They didn’t listen to us, anyway!
OUTRAGE

• Intense displeasure, anger, indignation caused by a sense of insult, offence or grievous wrong, often accompanied by the desire to get even
“CAUSES” OF OUTRAGE

• Fear
• Disagreement over values or priorities
• Anger about an approach
• Actual impacts
• Feeling like your values are being threatened
REAL CAUSES OF OUTRAGE

• Secrecy
• Stonewalling
• Unfairness
• Disrespect
• Coercion
• Lack of accountability
CONSEQUENCES OF OUTRAGE

Apathy
Project delays
Higher costs
Damage trust
Political fallout
INSPIRATION

- Responding to Community Outrage
  by Peter Sandman
PILLARS OF OUTRAGE MANAGEMENT

RECOGNITION

TRANSPARENCY

ACCOUNTABILITY
RECOGNITION
RECOGNITION

ACKNOWLEDGE PEOPLE’S PERSPECTIVES

APOLOGIZE FOR PRIOR BEHAVIOR

OWN UP TO CHANGE / BAD NEWS

DON’T ASSUME YOU DESERVE THE PUBLIC’S TRUST

DON’T TRY TO CONVINCE PEOPLE WITH EVIDENCE AND DATA
Evidence almost never persuades people who are outraged.
TWO CONDITIONS NEEDED FOR ENGAGEMENT:

1. When there is a decision to be made
2. When there is opportunity for influence

Source: IAP2
ENGAGE EARLY. PREPARE. PLAN.

It is very difficult to manage outrage in the moment.
EACH DECISION POINT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE THE PUBLIC

1. Define the decision
2. Gather info
3. Establish decision criteria
4. Develop Alternatives
5. Evaluate Alternatives
6. Make Decision
DEFINE THE SCOPE OF THE DECISION

Decision

Portion of the decision that can be influenced by the public

Source: IAP2
ACCOUNTABILITY
ACCOUNTABILITY

- Reporting back
- Advisory Committees
- Watch dog groups
OBJECTIONS

- **It’s expensive**
- **No one really cares**
- **If we engage people, we might make things worse**
- **We can’t let an ignorant public make decisions**
OBJECTIONS

- It’s too late, people are already angry
- These are activists, not real stakeholders
- The public is irrational
- The public is biased
ACTIVITY

1. Gather in groups of three/four
2. Get a pen/paper
3. Answer the following questions
1. What was most memorable about this presentation? What stands out?

2. How did you feel during this session? (were there low and high points?)

3. What is a key insight from this?

4. How has this changed your thinking/what would you do differently as a result?
ORID FOCUSED CONVERSATION METHOD

HELPs PARTICIPANTS ANALYZE FACTS AND FEELINGS, ASK ABOUT IMPLICATIONS AND TO MAKE DECISIONS INTELLIGENTLY.

USEFUL IN HIGH-HEAT SITUATIONS

**Objective:** Facts, Data, Senses. What images do you recall?

**Reflective:** Reactions, Heart, Feelings. What was the low point?

**Interpretive:** So what? What was your key insight?

**Decision:** Now what? How has this changed your thinking? What will you do differently now?
IN CLOSING...

The key to managing outrage
• Engage early and often
• Remember the fundamentals:
  • Recognition
  • Transparency
  • Accountability
RESOURCES:

- Responding to Community Outrage
  - Peter Sandman
THANK YOU!

SUSAN HOPKINS, AICP
HIGHLAND PLANNING
HTTP://WWW.HIGHLAND-PLANNING.COM/
SPRING PLANNERS DAY: APRIL 5, 2019