

WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
SISTERS CITY COUNCIL
520 E. CASCADE AVENUE
OCTOBER 08, 2015

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chris Frye Mayor
Nancy Connolly Council President Pro-Tem
David Asson Councilor
Amy Burgstahler Councilor

STAFF PRESENT:

Andrew Gorayeb City Manager
Patrick Davenport CD Director
Lynne Fujita-Conrads Finance Officer
Paul Bertagna PW Director
Julie Pieper Finance Assistant

GUESTS:

Lisa Dobey Speak Your Peace Advocate
Robyn Holdman Speak Your Peace Advocate
Rob Karwath Speak Your Peace Advocate (Via Phone)

ABSENT:
Kathy Nelson City Recorder

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Frye at 6:00 p.m.

1. Speak Your Peace

Councilor Burgstahler introduced Sister's citizen Robyn Holdman who has championed bringing Speak Your Peace to Sisters. She also introduced Lisa Dobey with the St. Charles Foundation who had hands on experience of implementing the program in Truckee, California and communications expert Bob Karwath, (via conference call) from Duluth Minnesota. She noted Mr. Karwath was an official spokesperson for Speak You Peace and had helped customize the initiative to meet the needs of small and large communities throughout the nation.

Sisters community member **Robyn Holdman** spoke about the possibility of bringing the Speak Your Peace program to Sisters and how it would benefit the community. She read excerpts of letters to the editor from the Nugget newspaper where community members communicated their disappointment in the tone of other community members when addressing issues and concerns. The common thread in the letters was the concern over a lack of civility and the wish that people could be kinder and more respectful to one another. She described how the Speak Your Peace initiative was launched in 2009 using nine guiding principles and had grown to be used internationally and translated into many languages. She stated the goal of the program was to bring awareness to core values.

Ms. Dobey began by stating Speak your Peace was not about *politically correct* speech but rather a means of having civil discourse using the nine tools of civil conversation which included:

1. Pay Attention
2. Listen
3. Be Inclusive
4. Not Gossip
5. Show Respect
6. Be Agreeable
7. Apologize
8. Give Constructive Criticism

9. Take Responsibility

Ms. Dobey explained she had participated in the program in the Tahoe region which covered a portion of two states, four counties, one incorporated town and included approximately 40,000 people. She stated many different types of districts were included in the process. She stated many people lived in the region because they chose to be living in the area, much like the Sisters community. She stated the investment of the people in the community was apparent and a necessary component. She explained the program was started due to issues within the school board where people had stopped attending because of personal attacks on individuals and overwhelmingly uncomfortable atmosphere. She stated the issue began creeping out into other agencies within the district and it became a real concern for the community.

Ms. Dobey provided an overview of the steps the Tahoe region had taken to launch the program which included two kick off parties where a wide range of community members were invited to attend. She reported at the meetings sign-up sheets were available for people to sign up indicating they would support the nine tools of conduct when speaking in a public forum. She stated those who signed up had their names published in the newspaper in order to show others there was wide buy-in by the community. She reported there was a lot of publicity through articles and editorials in the paper to create a sense of energy. She stated in meeting with officials from the various agencies/districts in the district, some were quick to embrace the concept while others were not. She reported outreach to the community continued at public events and eventually the elected bodies of the each agency/district were asked to adopt the program. She stated there was negative community feedback when the school district refused to adopt the program. She stated even though the school district was against adoption of the program, in actuality, they were using the principles of the program during their protest by incorporating civil disagreement. She stated the concept of *"it's not what you say, it's how you say it"*, was evident. She stated many teachers and students were incorporating the principles into their classrooms, even without district support. She reported the turning point for the school board was when one community member asked, "What are we teaching our students when our school board refuses to adopt tools of civility?" Shortly thereafter the school district board acquiesced and adopted the program. She stated the program was formally adopted by some agencies/districts, some had signage posted in their buildings and some even opened their meetings by reading the nine principles at the beginning of meetings.

Ms. Dobey reported the program ran for nine months and the week of Martin Luther King Day was used as a program reminder for all. She stated it became the norm in the community and clearly helped with civil discourse and a means for people to talk with one another.

Rob Karwath, a Speak your Peace spokesperson, calling from Duluth, Minnesota stated the Truckee experience was a good example of how the program can work. He stated there was a big demand for the program regardless of the size of a community as it was about treating people well even if you didn't agree and the final outcome was not what you hoped for.

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Ms. Holdman noted it was helpful to have some type of community foundation to spearhead the effort and asked who **Mr. Karwath** felt could lead the charge since Sisters did not have such an organization. **Mr. Karwath** replied he felt it was important that the organization chosen not be affiliated with any particular agenda other than to promote civility; therefore having the City Council as that organization would likely not be the best choice for the community.

Community member **Chuck Humphreys** stated he did not feel that organizations were dysfunctional in Sisters as much as there were some community bullies who made personal attacks on anyone having a different view than they did. He stated it didn't take many attacks of that nature to make people not want to be involved. He asked if Ms. Dobey or Mr. Karwath had encountered this issue and if so, how did they isolate or moderate the behavior of the bullies. **Ms. Dobey** stated she felt that once a community adopted a program like Speak Your Peace it made people less tolerant of that type of behavior and freed people up to let the bullies know their behavior was unwarranted and needed to change. She stated it certainly didn't solve the issue completely but it could help. **Mayor Frye** suggested the newspaper be asked to abide by the same principles and not print inflammatory letters or statements.

Community member **Karen Kassey** noted there were some individuals in the community who had threatened lawsuits against community leaders and asked for suggestions on how to address that type of behavior. **Mr. Karwath** stated trying to get the message across about using civil discourse was worth a try as the type of behavior Ms. Kassey was describing could cause instability in the community. He agreed that getting local media to partner with others was a good start.

Community member **Kent Neff** stated he felt the purpose of program was to make the community better and should not be to silence the naysayer; the program needed to rise above that mentality. **Mr. Karwath** agreed and stated sometimes naysayers acted out of fear that they were not being heard. He added it was important to know how to lose gracefully.

Community member **Sharlene Weed** asked if there were training modules for the program and **Ms. Dobey** replied there were some but a lot of the program was just community discussion.

Councilor Burgstahler asked what the next logical step would be if it was decided the program would be a good fit for the community. **Ms. Doby** replied the Tahoe region had not employed any type of consultant as it already had a neutral body in its community foundation that could facilitate. She suggested holding a community meeting as a start and see if a core group of interested people came forth as an outcome of the meeting.

Ms. Holdman reported she had previously asked Mr. Karwath how order was maintained at meetings and he had informed her that just saying "No" to those not acting in a civil manner and following the principles had worked effectively. **Ms. Karwath** added it was important to keep working at civil discourse as well as believing in it and making a commitment to the community.

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Mayor Frye thanked Ms. Holdman, Ms. Dobe, Mr. Karwath and community members for taking part in the conversation.

2. Transient Vendor News Release and Outreach Plan

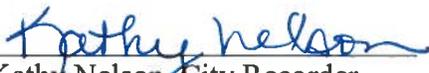
Due to lack of time this was not discussed.

3. Other Business

Due to lack of time there was no Other Business.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Kathy Nelson, City Recorder


Chris Frye, Mayor