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Steering Committee, MVEST

RE: Summary Report of MVEST Workshop, June 27, 2022

Submitted 6-28-2022, Meg Jordan

Dear Steering Committee Members,

Our community is a close-knit ecosystem, and the work you've done to keep it flourishing requires leadership and dedication. I really acknowledge and appreciate that! Thanks so much for hanging in there during this work together.

Each of you spoke from your authentic voice, offering opinions, ideas, critiques and feedback that did come together and gel into some actionable items and a shared idea of mission and purpose. For that reason, I'm satisfied with the outcome, and I hope you found it useful, too.

Here are my summaries: (open to corrections, edits)

- Opened with ground agreements consent and inquired about topics for discussion.
- Discussed intent of session, Re-Imaging MVEST, which was interpreted by 3 members in the following ways:
 - 1) We deconstruct what's so, including what's presently missing and how we either live up to or need to redraft the manual;
 - 2) We (re)define current roles, responsibilities and tasks; and
 - 3) We retain the status quo of original mission but give generous time and energy to organizing the significant workload that needs to be accomplished.

Summary: There was not full consensus on the intent.

- Discussed what activities of MVEST were considered important, and then prioritized which of those tasks/activities were urgent (top 2-3 priorities):
 - Earthquake and power outages, according to one survey
 - Wildfire response and power outages, according to another survey
 - Led to **Contested discussion**: short-term action goals vs comprehensive linear-stepped education roll-out. In other words, some see the need for addressing one issue (i.e., fires/evac/safety) with renewed post-pandemic vigor – vs -- a proposal that MVEST “needs to get organized” at the committee/subcommittee levels first to determine a plan that is cohesive with larger, comprehensive disaster design for Prevention, Preparation, Mitigation, Adaptation, based on coordination with external agencies and multiple other factors.

*Summary: This discussion led to concerns about **block captains** (recruitment, retention, engagement of more volunteers, and general non-participation among most residents. This contested point described above remains firmly in place, as articulated by one dominant leader, supported by a couple more “worker bee” members, and opposed by four other members who voiced requests for simplified agendas, fewer meetings, less wasted time. This repeated theme stands as most significant barrier to forward momentum.*

- Discussed MISSION.
 - “Help residents stay safe.” (more of a vision statement)
 - “Educate resident to prepare for and cope with emergency situations in absence of other emergency or official first responder personnel.”

Summary: Good resolution here that MVEST is primarily an educational organization.

- Discussed next action of the Steering Committee.
 - JH suggested the Steering Committee organizes future meetings centered on the 10 points outlined in his Ppt slide deck. General agreement that this was a product of true expertise, experience and comprehensive, while at least four others responded that it was overwhelming, that there weren’t enough “worker bees” to accomplish everything entailed, and that it required an unrealistic time commitment for volunteers.

Summary: Unresolved and problematic for future meeting efficiency. An actionable item here would have been helpful, including a SMART goal (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-oriented).

- Discussion moved toward brainstorming topics: how to educate the residents, and how to organize educational objectives among the Steering committee.
 - While several ideas were generated, this was mostly a listing of past activities that MVEST members were proud of: information shared in meetings and ECHO about defensible space, juniper removal, fire alarm checks, goats, guest speakers on safety issues, drought resistant planting.

Summary: Future brainstorming sessions should be designated as such with ground agreements about not judging ideas as they emerge, free-flowing exchange, appreciative inquiry process, put suggestions into positive framing language.

- Areas of Agreement at conclusion:
 - Review current and create new points of contact for residents (welcome committee).
 - Review and update block captain roles; evaluate necessity for zone chiefs
 - Consider Needs & Interest Survey among residents
 - Shift weekly meeting to monthly meeting, 1-1.5 hrs
 - Create ad hoc task force (temporary “subcommittees”) to take responsibility for and spearhead design and implementation of special events or projects; comprised of a few steering committee members and externals as needed. Should report to Steering Committee for approval of plan (this final point was debated, not resolved.)
 - First Ad hoc committee BBQ/Educational event in July

- Next Ad hoc committee: FADR/CERT in fall, should be open to all residents with guaranteed spot for block captain participation.
- Final Affirmations
 - Ongoing inequitable distribution of power, decision-making and workload among current Steering committee members, with JH maintaining chief responsibility (and Chair position) for external contacts, PAC appointment, reports to public agencies, agenda setting and facilitating meetings.
Summary: Appears to be acceptance/resignation that no other Steering Committee members are willing or able to take on this collection of responsibilities at present time. Affirmed and acknowledged ongoing JH's leadership.

Suggestion #1: A modification of this imbalance be seriously undertaken within the next year in order to preserve some longstanding (and newer) members' involvement. There are many styles of leadership, and a rotation of various duties could be assigned to widen perspectives, add diverse thinking, alleviate tension and open to more creativity and engagement.

Suggestion #2: Consider individual analysis of a recognized method for advancing group effectiveness and harmonious management, based on FIRO-B tool, which measures the following questions among team members:

On a 1 – 10 scale, 1 being very low, 10 being highest:

INCLUSION:

I include you (and others) in my thinking and decision-making at a level __/

You include me at a level __in your process.

CONTROL:

I control others at a __ with in my working on this committee.

I am controlled by others at a level __ in this team.

OPENESS (Affection)

I make efforts to be close to others on this team at a level __.

I feel others on this team make efforts to be close to me at a level __.

This would provide an assessment of this working team (committee) that can predict and direct where improvements need to be made in order to overcome stagnation or obstacles.

Again, thanks for the opportunity!

Forge ahead. SO much good has already been accomplished. You're all awesome!

Meg