Local Next Steps in the Context of the National Election (in District 13)

TO: Sara Eskrich, District 13 Alder and Other Interested Parties  
FROM: Professor Denis Collins, dcollins@edgewood.edu  
RE: Local Next Steps in the Context of the National Election (in District 13)  
DATE: November 13, 2016

Below is a summary of the “Local Next Steps in the Context of the National Election (in District 13)” meeting held on Sunday, November 13, 4:00-5:00 p.m., at the Neighborhood House Community Center, 29 South Mills Street. The purpose of the meeting was to develop short and long-term action items and priorities for the city, and share with the wider community by Monday afternoon (November 14) on your website. This summary has parts:


Part B – Replicating the Event: (1) A one-hour meeting agenda, (2) Detailed meeting process that generated the recommendations contained in this report, (3) Civil discussion ground rules, (4) Your individual feelings and recommendations, and (5) Your group/table’s recommendations.

The 14 participants, within one hour, developed and prioritized a list of 60 local action recommendations. Many arrived feeling somewhat hopeless, and left feeling hopeful. Their list of local action recommendations, and the steps suggested in the “Concluding Comments” section of this report, should be shared widely, develop roots quickly, and blossom throughout Madison and other locations.

Part A – Event and Results

(1) Event Summary

The District 13 group session was held on Sunday, November 13, 2016, 4:00-5:00 p.m., at the Neighborhood House Community Center titled “Local Next Steps in the Context of the National Election (in District 13).” The results contained in this report are based on the input of 14 participants who attended the session, which does not include the views of the facilitator. To foster an open and safe sharing of ideas, the participants generating and prioritizing recommendations were informed that their names would not appear in this report.

The 14 participants chose to sit in two groups of seven people. They wrote one word descriptors of their reactions to the election results, individually generated local action recommendations and prioritized them, shared their recommendations with others at their table, and then each table reached consensus on prioritizing local action recommendations.

(2) Participant Reactions to the Election Results

Participants provided written responses to the prompt: “One word that describes how you felt when you heard the election results.”
The descriptors included: worried and unsurprised, devastated, sick to my stomach, shocked, nauseated, dread, numb, unbelieving, terrified, tired, despair, hollowed out.

Participants also provided written responses to the prompt: “One word that describes how you feel now (4 days after the 2016 presidential election).”

The descriptors included: feeling worried, incredulous, sick to my stomach, depressed, angry, discouraged, dread, concerned, gob smacked, lost, and sad. A few people reported feeling determined, resolute, and guardedly hopeful.

(3) **Group Consensus on “Top 3 High Impact Recommendations”**

These recommendations are numbered to provide easy reader reference. The numbers do not represent a prioritization ranking.

1) Create a map-based and citizen-driven harassment reporting database for Madison.
2) Resources for creating active and informed allies: Ally trainings at community centers and libraries, “ally app” for smart phones.
3) Alders check city records policies to understand when sensitive/private information is stored and not well protected.
4) Promote tolerance in educational system to minimize harassment.
5) Encourage cross discipline talk among scientists to deal with CO2 reduction as done with Manhattan Project.
6) Develop a broadly advertised list of volunteer opportunities at area non-profits and groups needing support.
7) Match constituents needing help with constituents possessing those skill sets.
8) Constituents share their expertise, both formally and informally.
9) City-to-City (Madison to Waukesha) sharing conversations.

(4) **Group Consensus on “Top 3 Easy to Do Recommendations”**

1) PDF of “safety” sign to indicate that your yard or house is safe for people of color, LGBTQ, etc.
2) #SafeWithMe anti-bigotry messages
3) Study groups to explore election impacts locally

(5) **An Individual Chose Recommendation as “Top 3 High Impact Recommendations”**

This and following lists consists of recommendations individuals generated but did not make it into the group’s consensus prioritization. The recommendations are listed in random order, but numbered for easy reader reference.
1) Because Madison is insulated:
   a. Study election results to see why people voted the way they did
   b. Try to understand why others believe differently
   c. Develop a better understanding of “self-interest”
2) Determine if local police will allow harassment or how they will respond to it
3) Find out what authority new president, house, and senate can have on our judicial branch
4) Explore adding compost system similar to Twin Cities
5) Invest in community-developed priorities, particularly those identified by communities of color
6) Invest in sustainability initiatives – green city, coal-free city
7) Prioritize public dollars for projects that can’t leverage other funding
8) Stand up against bigotry and bullying in schools, workplaces and other locations
9) Adopt campaign zero guidelines for our local police department
10) City ordinance tying building permits to affordable housing development
11) South and North Madison infrastructure enhancements, such as bus routes
12) Financial support for community centers
13) Support civic spaces: parks, libraries, community centers, and community events
14) Extend UW-Madison Safewalk for people feeling unsafe and recruit volunteers
15) Prevent any change in policing standards that could put community members in danger
16) Protect city’s information infrastructure from hacking or misuse of data
17) Ally training on how we can support each other and protect targeted groups from hate speech and violence
18) Reach out to groups supporting people and issues under threat, including environmental groups, and find out how we can help and distribute information to the community
19) Develop a strong voice of our own

(6) An Individual Chose Recommendation as “Top 3 Easy to Do Recommendations”

1) Start a Madison version of “Reach Out”
2) Find out which of the 99 open benches are in Madison or Wisconsin
3) Have means of knowing when and where marches are occurring
4) Advocate for constitutional rights and preservation of all liberties
5) Provide space for forward-thinking community vision creation
6) Make clear the Madison Police Department’s commitment to not share information regarding documentation status of Madisonians
7) Encourage people to wear safety pin symbol signifying support for diverse people
8) Display a safe home symbol for people who are harassed and need comforting
9) Support the popular vote for president
10) Create a local network for progressive actions, rallies, and block captains
11) A twitter feed for people to report harassment that hasn’t been reported to the police
12) Offer vulnerable people opportunity to ask the city for what they need and then follow-up
13) Facilitate letter campaigns to federal legislators
14) Defend freedom of speech and assembly
15) Educate in favor of tolerance
16) Be a model for civil discussion and promote a regard for truth
17) Council declaration

(7) An Individual Provided the Recommendation as “Something Interesting to Consider”

1) Organize group to go to Washington DC for inauguration protest
2) Can we harness technology in Madison to deal with the environment (e.g. Elan Musk systems)
3) Form groups within our neighborhoods where we can speak our feelings
4) Petitions to all elected officials
5) Demonstrations
6) Organize resources for people in our community who may lose benefits under the Republicans
7) Leverage federal and state dollars, and advocate for this funding
8) Financial support for public libraries
9) Planned Parenthood and Urban League funding
10) City resources for an agriculture extension fair
11) Build rural-urban connections
12) Educate citizens about cybersecurity

(8) Concluding Comments – A Call to Organize and Act

Within one hour, fourteen District 13 constituents gathered and developed a list of 60 local action recommendations and prioritized them, a rather remarkable accomplishment. Many of these constituents did not previously know one another; some did. They bonded quickly, and gained hope, by sitting at two tables brainstorming action recommendations. The fourteen participants:

- Reached group consensus on 9 “high impact” recommendations
- Individually prioritized 19 other “high impact” recommendations that should be pursued
- Reached group consensus on 3 “easy to do” recommendations
- Individually prioritized 17 other “easy to do” that should be pursued
- Individually proposed 12 other recommendations that should be pursued

What next? I suggest the following general organizing local action steps, a list which can easily be added to:

Local Organizing Action Step 1: Immediately distribute this list of 60 local action recommendations throughout Madison via multiple communication outlets, such as social media, emails, and your District 13 website.

Local Organizing Action Step 2: Individuals should widely distribute this list of 60 local action steps and target friends and like-minded interest group members to join their efforts.

Local Organizing Action Step 3: Individuals should voluntarily choose 1 action step and organize friends and like-minded people around the action step, beginning immediately. The more action groups the better, and different groups working on the same action step should communicate with each other to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency.

Local Organizing Action Step 4: Individuals should focus their energies on one or two action groups to enhance the likelihood of success, yet feel free to assist other action groups they find appealing.

Local Organizing Action Step 5: City Council should offer to support these efforts any way possible.

Local Organizing Action Step 6: Individuals and City Council members should adopt the one-hour meeting format summarized in Part B of this report and hold similar sessions throughout Madison to generate other local action recommendations and form hopeful bonds among their constituents.

Local Organizing Action Step 7: Most importantly, individuals should organize and join action groups right now, and act!
As noted earlier in this report, four days following the 2016 presidential election fourteen people arrived at our event and reported that they were feeling worried, incredulous, sick to my stomach, depressed, angry, discouraged, dread, concerned, gob smacked, lost, and sad. A few people reported feeling determined, resolute, and guardedly hopeful. It is my sense that many people left the event feeling more hopeful, and I hope they are already sharing these recommendations with others and taking constructive actions.

We need to spread this hope to others throughout Madison, Dane County, Wisconsin, and other communities across the United States.

A special thanks for those individuals who participated in the group session, and to you for organizing this event on such short notice.

**Part B – Replicating the Event**

Other districts and interested parties can replicate this process. This section provides: (1) A one-hour meeting agenda, (2) Detailed meeting process that generated the recommendations contained in this report, (3) Civil discussion ground rules, (4) Your individual feelings and recommendations, and (5) Your group/table’s recommendations.

**(1) Meeting Agenda**

- 4:00-4:10 p.m.: Welcome and Process Overview
- 4:10-4:15: Divide into interest group tables (depending on who attends), introduce yourself, and review rules and guidelines for civil discourse.
- 4:15-4:25: Individually generate and prioritize your own ideas and recommendations.
- 4:25-4:40: Interest group at table reach consensus on “Top 3 High Impact Recommendations” and “Top 3 Easy to Do Local Action Recommendations.”
- 4:40-4:45: Report out to other tables and interest groups and generate Room consensus among those in the same interest group.
- 4:45-4:55: Review the recommendations of other types of interest groups (such as those supporting a different political perspective) and civilly discuss their recommendations.
- 4:55-5:00: Debrief, meet with others, and develop next step actions. Facilitator collects recommendation sheets to include the information in a final report.
- After the Meeting: Participants can organize on their own based on the discussions. The facilitator synthesizes all the input and creates a report to be shared electronically with the public, and for City Council consideration.

**(2) Detailed Meeting Process**
Generate and Prioritize Your Own Ideas and Recommendations

- At each table, one person reads out loud one “Discussion Ground Rules” until all 9 are read
- By self, and with no interruptions, answer the following:
  - One word that describes how you felt when you heard election results
  - One word that describes how you feel now
  - Several local actions you think you, members of your neighborhood, interest group, and City Council, can do to address your concerns
  - Insert “***” (three stars) next to top 3 High Impact local action recommendations
  - Insert “*” (one star) next to top 3 easy to do local actions

Generate Table’s (1) Top 3 High Impact Recommendations and (2) Top 3 Easy to Do Local Actions

- Without interruption, each person reads top 3 high impact (***) and easy to do (*) local actions
- As a table, reach consensus and write top 3 high impact recommendations (*** on top of paper provided)
- As a table, reach consensus and write top 3 easy to do (*) local actions on bottom of paper provided
- Each Table Reports out (doing this activity depends on how many people participate)
- Tape Report to Appropriate “Interest Group” Wall

Generate Room’s (1) Top 3 High Impact Recommendations and (2) Top 3 Easy to Do Local Actions

- Walk around room, put 1 “sticky dot” on 3 different High Impact recommendations for your interest group
- Walk around room, put 1 “sticky dot” on 3 different easy to do local actions for your interest group
- Facilitator collects individual recommendations sheets from tables to include in final report

Other Interest Group’s (or Other Candidate’s) Recommendations and Actions

- Find sheet or wall with “other interest group” recommendations
- Civilly discuss them with someone supporting that interest group

Next Steps

- Debrief
- Meet with others and develop next step actions
- Facilitator collects Group recommendation sheets from walls to include in final report

After Meeting:

- Attendees can organize as so moved after the meeting based on what was said and felt
- Facilitator synthesizes input, creates report shared electronically with public site and for City Council by Monday afternoon meeting

(3) Civil Discussion Ground Rules

1. Treat every single person in the room with complete and unconditional respect.
2. Please relax and share your opinion when you wish. Your voice is important.
3. The moderator will call on every person that requests to speak. He/she will keep track of your turn. You will get to speak.
4. If you disagree, please speak out. If you remain quiet we will never know your objections.
5. We all agree to disagree and continue to respect each other unconditionally even after our engaging discussions.

6. You can change your mind. It is allowed.

7. No retributions. You can speak your mind and no one will deny your right to your opinion.

8. Please use your voice. The goal is that everyone will speak. It is not, however, required.

9. Read the first guideline again...

(4) Your Individual Feelings and Recommendations (This sheet will be collected by Facilitator)

1) One word that describes how you felt when you heard election results:

2) One word that describes how you feel now:

3) What are several local actions you think you, members of your neighborhood or interest group, and City Council, can do to address your concerns? Please list your recommendations below as you think of them. If more space is needed, please write on the back of this sheet of paper.

4) Now review your list of recommended actions above and insert “***” (three stars) next to YOUR top 3 High Impact local action recommendations, no matter how complex it may be.

5) Now review your list above and insert “*” (one star) next to YOUR top 3 Easy To Do local actions.

Please save this sheet for the Facilitator to collect.

(5) Your Group/Table’s Recommendations (This sheet will be shared with others and collected by Facilitator)

1) “TOP 3 HIGH IMPACT (***LOCAL ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS”**: After each person has read all of his/her individual “Top 3 High Impact” local action recommendations (*** to the table group, civilly discuss them, and reach consensus on YOUR GROUP’S Top 3 high impact recommendations. Write them clearly below.

2) “TOP 3 “EASY TO DO” (*)LOCAL ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS”**: After each person has read all of his/her individual “Top 3 Easy to Do” (*) local action recommendations (*) to the table group, civilly discuss them, and reach consensus on YOUR GROUP’S Top 3 easy to do recommendations. Write them clearly below.

Ideas on this sheet will be shared with others and collected by Facilitator.