Community Vision Planning

In 1992, Boyle County took initiative and tried to understand how the county could better equip the needs of its community members. After holding one community meeting, the concerns and ideas of community members were documented, and a list of community goals were presented, and soon implemented. Since the completion of the 1992 goals occurred in 2010 three years ahead of schedule, Boyle County has not formally met to set new goals for Boyle County. Therefore, Paula Fowler, Executive Director of the Danville-Boyle County Chamber of Commerce, took the lead and decided that it was time for Boyle County to once again meet and make a list of achievable and necessary goals. Thus began a new "Community Visioning" process to assess what community members believed to be the most demanding improvements Boyle County needed to meet.

Administration and Organization of Community Visioning Process

In order to determine the direction of Boyle County for the future, community meetings needed to be held to understand what community members expected of Boyle County in upcoming years. Previously, in 1992, only one community meeting was administrated. The meeting took place in Danville, and was open to any and all members living in Boyle County. For the 2013/14 Community Visioning process, however, instead of having the community all meet in one area, there were four meetings which took place from one side of the county to another, allowing easier access for all community members. The four meetings took place in: Forkland, Junction City, Perryville, and Danville.

In order to strive for great public participation at each of these events, the Chamber of Commerce produced a press release indicating where each of the four meetings would be held, as well as what time the meeting would commence. In deciding the dates and times of these meetings, the Chamber of Commerce had previously coordinated with city officials so that they would be able to attend each of these meetings.

Lastly, the Chamber of Commerce asked Dr. Clarence Wyatt of Centre College, who previously facilitated the community visioning meetings in 1992, to do so again for these four meetings.

Contents of Community Visioning Meetings

Once the meeting dates were in place, and the organization of the meetings determined, the Chamber of Commerce hosted the four Community Visioning meetings. At each of these meetings, the general schedule of events was relatively similar. Dr. Wyatt would announce the purpose behind the meetings, and then ask the members present to separate themselves into groups based on their interest in the following subjects: Health, Education, Safety, Economic Development, Arts and Culture, and Agriculture. Once self-separated, each grouping of people would sit at a table and write on a large piece of paper what they believed to be the largest concerns of that particular subject. The subjects listed were to be used as starting points, and those working within that subject had to freedom to change/ add-on to the subject (an example of this would be that many groups changed Health to also include Environmental issues). These subjects were not restrictive, but rather they were points of interest to be used as a starting point, and allow community members to take initiative to direct the subject in whatever areas deemed necessary.

After around 20-25 minutes, Dr. Wyatt called the community members back together and collected the six large pieces of paper that contained the concerns of the community members. Dr. Wyatt would display one subject at a time, and allow any of the community members who wrote the concerns on that piece of paper to tell the rest of the community members present why they chose to write the concerns they did. This allowed for open discussion to hear input, not only from those who had originally worked on that subject, but also from other community members who had worked on other subjects. Everyone could comment and add to the list of concerns, in this way. This was done for all six subjects.

Once all six subjects had been presented and the community members had all had a chance to say what they believed to be vital to each subject, the six pieces of paper were laid across tables and the community members were asked to vote for their top two or three (depending on the number of concerns written for each subject) concerns under each subject. Once all had voted, Dr. Wyatt announced which concerns received the most votes, hence indicating what each community found to be most important under the six subject headings.

After the voting results were announced, the meeting officially ended, and the results of each meeting were documented. This was the schedule for all four community meetings.

Results from Community Visioning Meetings

After the four meetings were conducted, the top 2-3 voted topics within each subject from each meeting were grouped together to search for commonalities. Following are the results for each subject. It is important to note that at each of these meetings the two largest topics discussed were for better cell phone reception and better Wi-Fi/internet availability. Therefore, due to these

topics being discussed in such detail at each of the meetings, they were not considered in the top 2-3 votes for each topic; it was stated that those two topics would undoubtedly be included in the top needs for Boyle County, and therefore to community members had a chance to address other concerns in addition to cell phone reception and Wi-Fi___33/internet availability.

Health: One of the largest commonalities under the subject of Health was the idea of updating/utilizing parks within each community, with all four communities commenting on the subject.[1] At the Junction City meeting, a community member said that "we have done away with our small parks," and a member attending the Danville meeting spoke fervently of the Henry Jackson Park, stating that "it is dead right now…it has been neglected for years."[2] The idea of parks being neglected was a theme which permeated through every meeting. In three of the four meetings, park developments were voted in the top two topics within the Health subject.[3]

A second commonality which stemmed throughout each meeting was the idea of introducing/continuing walking and bike trails in Boyle County. At the Junction City meeting, a comment was made that more trails needed to be introduced, with the suggestion of having the trail be placed on the Rails which currently run through the community. This trail, as suggested, could be used for biking, hiking, horseback riding, running, etc. At the Danville meeting, walking paths were introduced as a way to have an interconnected trail system to not only run through Danville, but Boyle County, at large. During the Perryville meeting the trail system was echoed, with the idea that Boyle County could become a 'Trail Town', which would bring additional revenue to the county. It was stated that if a trail ran through the entire county, and

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[1] The subject "Health" also encompassed "Environmental Issues" for three of the four meetings.
[2] At the Danville meeting, when speaking of updating parks within the community, the Henry Jackson Park was the park which was most primarily discussed.
[33] Forkland did not vote for park developments in its top2-3 votes; however, park updates were discussed at the meeting.

places were built to camp/eat and stay, then this may have the ability to attract a type of people which Boyle County currently does not serve.

Education: The single largest commonality under the subject of Education was that community members wanted their children to be exposed to real-world/ hands-on learning through their public education.[4] At the Junction City meeting, the concept of having local companies come into the schools and present students with problems within their company and allow students to research and brainstorm different ways to solve the issue at hand was introduced. The same concept was presented at the Danville meeting, with the idea of project-based learning. It was stated that this would not only allow for real-world experience, but it would also allow for leadership opportunities, in addition to an increase in civic engagement within middle and high school students. In Perryville, members stated that businesses could have, as one member termed, 'open work days', which would ask business owners to open their business to students interested in that type of work to come in a shadow for a determined amount of days.

Safety: For the subject of Safety, there were no commonalities encompassing all four communities. At each of the meetings, the discussion for this subject was community-specific.

Economic Development: For most meetings, the discussion concerning economic development lingered the longest. The largest commonality was the concept of Agritourism. At the Forkland meeting, the community agreed there was a need for something new for economic development in their town, however, these projects which Boyle County brings in, as stated, "are things which must be able to sustain our community and certainly our environment…we need low impact projects." Suggestions for this 'low-impact project' included the idea of expanding the

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[4] Forkland did not vote for hands-on education experiences in its top 2-3 votes. Forkland focused greatly on having local histories taught in public education.

community's resources for more ag adventurism, including more attention to the Central Kentucky Wildlife Refuge, Bike/Horse Trails, and Farm stays. At the Perryville meeting, community members discussed having farm tours, orchard visits, corn mazes, making the concept of a "Trail town" by utilizing the already present 25 trails which come through Perryville.[5] Members attending the Junction City meeting suggested ideas of zip lines in Boyle County.

Arts and Culture: This subject had two main commonalities. The first was the concept of the preservation of local history.[6] At the Danville meeting, a community member stated that Boyle County needed to focus on "assessing, collecting, and digitizing photos/documents." It was stated that Boyle County is full of rich history, and that needs to be made available. There was a suggestion of a story-core program to be implemented. Perryville discussed the need for historical preservation because it was stated that as areas of Boyle County were starting to be renovated, the historic nature of the buildings was being lost. Thus, Perryville voted that a community goal needed to be established which would protect the historic essence of Boyle County. Community members of Forkland adamantly spoke of the need for historical preservation. The concept of an oral history collection was very popular, as well as having educational programs to teach children about local history, art, and culture. It was suggested that having storytelling events would benefit the community, as well as give children a grasp of Boyle County history.

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[5]Neither Danville nor Perryville voted Agritourism in its top 2-3 votes; however, Agritourism ideas were briefly discussed at each meeting.
[6] Junction City did not vote for historical preservation in its top 2-3 votes; however, the idea was discussed, including ideas for a history room and storytelling to be implemented in the city.

The second largest commonality under the subject of Arts and Crafts was to make Boyle County a more attractive town. Suggestions from Perryville included the idea of a 'streetscape program.' This program would include beautifying the town, with ideas such as having more trees downtown, and putting green space between the road and sidewalk to allow citizens and visitors to feel safer. At the Junction City meeting, community members spoke of the development of a Main Street program. Developments for Junction City's appeal, as suggested, would include updating street signs and welcome signs, and having underground utilities.[7]

Agriculture: One commonality established during the series of meetings includes the development of a community garden.[8] Those present at the Danville meeting encouraged the creation of a community garden so that it could be used as a tool for schools, community garden planters, and churches to all be in collaboration together. In the Perryville discussion, it was stated that they have tried previously to have a community garden, but were unsuccessful; however, the community believes that if they could sustain this project, it would be a wonderful asset to their town.

A second commonality discovered was the want for a Farmers Market.[9] The members of Junction City spoke of how they have recently started a farmers market in their community. They say that they could use help to improve their newly established market. An issue for Junction City, as well with Perryville and Forkland, is that most of the farmers in each of these communities have signed a contract with the Danville Farmers Market, previously, that does not

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[7] Neither Danville nor Forkland voted Streetscape/Main Street Program in its top 2-3 votes; however, beautifying the town was discussed at each, though not recorded/presented formally.

[8] Forkland did not discuss Agriculture topics at its meeting. The subject of Agriculture was introduced at the second meeting, Junction City, and used in the remaining two meetings, as well. However, note that the development of community gardens was voted in the top 2-3 for Junction City, Danville, and Perryville.

[9] Forkland did not vote for a farmers market in its top2-3 votes; however, the idea of a farmers market was discussed at the meeting. Danville also did not vote for a farmers market, seeing how Danville already has a running farmers market.

allow them to legally sell their goods outside of the Danville Farmers Market. At the Perryville meeting, members stated the want for a farmers market because, without one, the community members only opportunity for fresh food is to go to Danville. During the Perryville, meeting it was stated that Perryville rarely has fresh food to sell. Thus, in all three communities, aside from Danville, a farmers market was discussed.

Outliers

During the course of the four administered meetings, there were outliers presented. A topic is considered an outlier if the topic was discussed at only one meeting, and if the topic received minimal votes.[10] Following are the topics deemed outliers.[11]

Increase Partnership between BCTC & EKU

Special Taxation for Development Projects and Recruitment

Domestic Violence Shelter

Publicity for Museums, Festivals, and Other Events

Big Brothers Big Sisters Program

Dog Park

"I have an Idea" Billboards

> *The concept of an "I have an Idea" billboard was presented by one member of the county with the intent to spread creativity and innovation throughout the county. These*

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[10] Minimal vote would be two or less. The reason that it can have been voted in favor of and still be an outlier is due to the fact that more than likely the person who suggested the topic will vote for it. Therefore, if only that person voted for the topic and one other, it was deemed as an outlier.

[11] Explanation for selected outliers is only given for those which would appear vague to the reader.

billboards would be created by members of the county, rather than local or national businesses.

Vineyards

Employee "Star" Training

Way Finding Signage

Distillery

Public Transportation

<u>Countywide goals</u>

After the completion of the four Community Visioning meetings, and viewing the top 2-3 topics within each subject from each of the meetings, a list of goals was able to be formulated. In order to be a communitywide goal, the topic had to be representative at no less than two meetings, be voted in the top 2-3 topics, and lastly must be a goal which would improve the entire county, rather than one community, individually. Following, in order of prioritization, are the goals selected to improve and better Boyle County.

Wi-Fi/Internet Access: Internet access was the number one concern among every single community. The community members in Boyle County want to seek ways to improve the availability of internet access, not just in their homes, but in public spaces, as well. It was stated several times that if there were better internet resources available, it would not only help individually among families, but that it could also foster better educational opportunities and help with economic development.

Cell Phone Reception: Tied for a close second was cell phone reception. In all communities but one, Danville, cell phone reception rang as a leading issue. The concerns with the current cell phone reception for Boyle County include several complaints of dropped calls, areas where all cell phone reception was lost (especially noted in parts of Junction City and Forkland), and poor cell service is a safety hazard.

Trails: Danville, Forkland, and Perryville all voted in their top 2-3 votes that connecting trails from one community to another should be a goal. It was stated that by connecting these trails, it would allow for Boyle County to be more attractive to guests, thus helping Boyle County economically and also that these trails would be beneficial for community members under the subject of Health.

Historic Preservation: In all communities aside from Junction City, the concept of preserving the history of Boyle County was a main concern.[12] Ideas for this ranged from digitization of old documents, books, journals, and diaries, to recording/writing of oral histories given by members of each community. The fear of many community members is that in Boyle County there is not one single entity which has taken on the task of recording the history of the county, and, therefore, with no centralization, many stories go untold, and many artifacts and primary sources are lost. The idea is that by making this a countywide goal, perhaps there could be a centralization of resources, and a better institution present for those wishing to record history.

Hands-on/Real World Education: Undoubtedly, the education of the children of Boyle County is of concern for community members. Perryville, Danville, and Junction City all placed in their top 2-3 votes the idea of having schools present real-world problems to students and let them try

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[12] Junction City did not vote for historic preservation in its top 2-3 votes; however, the topic was discussed at the meeting.

to solve them.[13] More than one community suggested having an open connection between students and local companies. There are three distinct aims behind this initiative. First, by having real-world experience, it allows students to think outside of their usual bounds, and it engages students. This allows students to see the impact of their education in tangible usage. Second, this allows there to be an attachment between the student and the county. Thus, those who are working inside the community will perhaps be more willing to return/stay in Danville to work once their highest level of education is complete. Third, this allows for leadership opportunities and networking to be established.

Community Goals

While administering all Community Visioning meetings, it was noted that several of the topics suggested were not countywide goals, but rather they were specific to the community itself. Thus, following are what have been deemed "Community Goals." These goals were selected by using the top two overall most voted for goals in the community *and* using only goals that were not listed as countywide goals.[14]

Forkland

The top two community goals for Forkland each received twelve votes. The first goal is to enhance/rebuild the fire and rescue sector of Forkland. At the meeting, it was noted that while Forkland used to have its own Fire and Rescue squad, now they do not; for emergencies, the Danville Fire and Rescue team now is contacted. The reason this is such a problem for residents of Forkland is that due to its location, it takes a long time for the fire department or ambulatory

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[13] Forkland did not place real world issues for students in its top 2-3 votes; however, better educational opportunities for students was a theme present in discussion.

[14] This means that if one of the top two overall voted for topics was listed in the countywide goals, then it will not be listed as a community goal. Instead, the topic with the third most votes would be selected, etc.

service to respond and arrive in Forkland. It was stated that it takes 40 minutes to have an ambulance show up at a resident's home.

The second community goal for Forkland is to increase the safety of roads. When discussed, community members stated the need for safer roadways, along with improvements to the roads, such as having shoulders and guard rails. With these two improvements, community members think that the roads in Forkland will be more accessible and better for their community.

Junction City

The top two community goals for Junction City each concern structural developments for the community.

The top community goal for Junction City, receiving five votes, is to create a new community center. This community center would be a central location for all city-government work.

The second community goal for Junction City, receiving four votes, is to improve the school building and grounds. It was stated that the school building is old and that there had not been recent upkeep for it. By updating and improving the school building and grounds, it would foster a better environment for students to learn, as well as make the town more attractive.

Perryville

The top community goal for Perryville, receiving eleven votes, is to promote more community hands-on learning. While under the Education category, unlike most other topics, the community hands-on learning is not specific to high school/middle school students, but rather this is a broad topic encompassing all members of the community. It is believed that by providing hands-on learning opportunities for community members, community members will have better access to

resources for the job market, create a personal attachment to the community, and also foster an environment that promotes community support.

The second community goal for Perryville, receiving ten votes, is to put a crosswalk in front of the Methodist Church for children to use. It was stated that by not currently having this in place, it is a major safety concern.

Danville[15]

For Danville, the top community goal is a combination of two topics which each received thirteen votes: greater environmental awareness with green buildings/transportation/public space, and more natural areas in the community. These two topics were combined into one goal because of their direct shared interest. Community members stated the need to make the community more environmentally friendly. It was discussed that by promoting more natural areas in the town, it would not only beautify the town, but it would also preserve the rural nature of Boyle County. By using this green space, along with a campaign for greater environmental awareness, community members would like to see an initiative for more green businesses and transportation to come about in Danville.

The second top community goal, receiving ten votes, is to improve the condition of the downtown sidewalks. This was a topic listed under the subject "Quality of Life" that the community members created themselves, and was stated that by improving the downtown sidewalks, it would not only be safer, but would also have a better appeal for the city, itself.

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[15] Danville has three top community goals because there was a tie in the number of votes for second place, each receiving ten votes.

The third community goal, receiving ten votes, is to preserve/save the former Methodist Church. This was listed under the subject of Arts and Culture. Much discussion was raised around the concern of the owner selling the church to a business/private owner. Community members believe this is a staple in the city and its history, and believe that it should be preserved by the city.

Conclusion

The Community Visioning Meetings were planned as a way to allow individual voices to raise concern for the future of their county. While many goals were specific to a certain community, there was a large majority of the goals which, if implemented, could improve the county as a whole. Undoubtedly, most everyone knew the concern for county internet and phone service. Without these meetings, other county goals, such as community gardens and agritourism may have not been mentioned. Thus, these meetings allowed the voice of every individual who attended to be heard, and a culmination of concerns came together to present a list of ten countywide goals, and nine community-specific goals to be made. While it is unclear the direction in which the goals will be taken, as well as unclear as to what institutions will take the lead for implementing said goals, the Danville-Boyle County Chamber of Commerce has conducted these meetings so that county members are aware of the concerns of the residents of Boyle County

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