

Hospitality Resource Alliance

Tuesday, June 24, 2008, 1:00 – 2:30 pm
Fireplace Room Municipal Courthouse

Attending:

Alisha Holland, Ranch Room / Horseshoe Café
Allen Matsumoto, Sehome Neighborhood Assn
Blair Smith, Liquor Control Board
Brad Howard, Cap Hansen's
Devlin O'Donnell, CASAS
Jen Westover, Cap Hansen's / Tivoli
John Tsimouris, Downtown Johnny's

Joshua O'Donnell, Men's Violence Prevention Project
Katie Jacobsen, Casa Que Pasa
Lara Welker, Campus Community Coalition
Marcus Hayes, Downtown Johnny's
Richard Hartnell, Bellingham's Downtown Alliance for Music & Nightlife
Wendy Henerlau, Campus Community Coalition

Introductions

Lara welcomed everyone and members introduced themselves. Attending for the first time was Allen Matsumoto from the Sehome Neighborhood Association. Lara reviewed the key tenets of shared responsibility and reviewed the HRA discussion ground rules.

Case Study for Responsibility Hospitality Institute

Lara told the group that the Responsibility Hospitality Institute (RHI) is soliciting case studies. The Responsible Hospitality Institute's motto is "Assisting Businesses and Communities Create Safe and Vibrant Places to Socialize." It is based in Santa Cruz, California, but supports the work of communities across the country that are dealing with the same challenges that Bellingham is: downtowns becoming more residential and related conflict around noise, creating a nighttime economy that is both vibrant and safe, etc.

They focus on what they call "Six core elements":

1. Music and Entertainment
2. Community Policing
3. Quality of Life
4. Security, Service and Safety
5. Multi-Use sidewalks
6. Late Night Transportation

Every year the RHI holds a networking conference for people to share and learn about successful approaches. They encourage a team to come from a given community, with people from different groups or perspectives.

Bellingham has been invited to submit a "case study" about efforts here related to one of the six core elements. Lara talked to the director of the RHI, and described the various activities of the HRA, B'DAMN, and the Downtown Renaissance Network, and he encouraged her to submit something describing and sharing what the HRA is doing. If it is selected, it would get published in their booklet, "Planning, Managing and Policing Hospitality Zones: A Practical Guide," or possibly be featured as a session at the RHI conference.

Lara asked if the group would support the idea of "showcasing" efforts in Bellingham if she were to write and submit the case study. Marcus Hayes asked what category the case study would address, and Lara opened that question up to the group. Marcus mentioned the value of

the communication, and wondered if having different community members and stakeholders coming together to meet could be considered a core element.

Brad Howard asked if the RHI was a lobby group. Lara clarified that it is an organization that serves community groups and supports broad-based collaboration. They also provide consultation to cities to address issues, especially where there is no group like the HRA.

Brad said that the HRA meetings might be a good case study and that the process itself could be considered substantive. Allen Matsumoto asked the members if there were things they did differently since attending the HRA meetings. Marcus replied that after police officers explained their very limited resources he understood why enforcement efforts were handled in a particular manner. He pointed out the value of bringing together different perspectives, not only those of bar owners, but others, too, such as Crime and Sexual Assault Services.

Lara then asked the group which core element would be the best “fit” for a HRA case study. Brad pointed out that the group addresses all the elements, not just one. Richard Hartnell observed that most of the meeting discussions focus on security, service and safety. Relationships with the Liquor Control Board and the Bellingham Police Department were the focus of earlier meetings. He feels that there is a sense of camaraderie now between nightlife businesses and law enforcement.

Jen Westover agreed with Brad that the structure of the HRA meetings and the different people at the table could be a good case study. Blair Smith pointed out that his agents work in five counties, and there is nothing else in any of those counties that is comparable to these meetings. He felt that the HRA is special in that members communicate and resolve issues.

Jen asked how the HRA had started; what was the rationale, the process, and the motivation for this group coming together? Lara replied that the Straight Talk About Responsibility (STAR) Task Force and WWU’s Prevention and Wellness Services worked with the RHI to establish the Hospitality Resource Alliance in 1996. The intent was to create a way for bars to contribute to responsible hospitality. The group has met off and on since then.

Blair asked what the benefit of submitting the case study would be, such as having it published and distributed. Lara said she thought that the most valuable aspect of participating with the RHI would be to network with other groups and communities around the country to learn about new ideas and approaches that could help with our efforts here.

Lara stated she will talk to the RHI further about how to categorize the HRA’s case study and then write it up. She asked who would be willing to review a draft; many in the group volunteered, so she agreed to send it out to everyone and those who wanted to could review it and respond. She also asked who would be interested in attending the conference on November 11-15 if the case study is selected. Several people indicated an interest.

Educational/social marketing campaign

The discussion then turned to planning an educational/social marketing campaign. At the last meeting the group agreed to start working on an educational campaign focusing on customers. Lara asked the group to consider the goal of the campaign, listing four possibilities: change behaviors; inform/give information; sell goods and services for a profit; promote services, organizations, or causes. The group discussed informing/giving information and changing

behaviors, and Lara explained that changing behaviors is the goal of social marketing. While the group had discussed customer education, in some ways it would be more accurate to call it social marketing, since the goal is for people to DO something differently.

Marcus pointed out that not all patrons need to change their behavior. Jen said that it's important to define whose behavior to change and how. Brad cautioned to be very careful about social marketing because the target audience is young and media savvy, and it's possible for the group's efforts to backfire.

Lara distributed a handout showing the steps involved in planning a social marketing campaign, explaining that social marketing can be very sophisticated, and the worksheet was a "pared down" version of basic steps. She then reviewed the steps:

- 1) **Understand the situation.** It's important to understand and agree on the issues.
- 2) **Set a goal.** What is the group trying to accomplish?
- 3) **Select "target markets" or "target audiences."** A campaign doesn't need to – and can't – reach everyone. It's best to choose a specific audience that is more likely to change.
- 4) **Set objectives.** What specific thing would the group like people to do? It's best if the action has an immediate and recognizable result so that people will know that they have done it.
- 5) **Consider the benefits and barriers.** How do people perceive the costs and benefits of changing their behavior?
- 6) **Strategies.** What does the group want to say? How will it get that message across?

Lara emphasized that much of this work has already been done in previous HRA meetings. She distributed a page with the ideas from HRA discussions, divided into three categories:

- **WHO** is the "target audience"—whose behavior does the group want to change?
- **WHAT**—what are the specific behaviors the group would like to change?
- **WHY**—what are the bigger issues the group wants to address? [along with: What is an "ideal downtown Bellingham" like?].

The group reviewed the list of issues identified by HRA members and considered what "bigger issues" the campaign should address. Richard identified violence, assault, and fighting as the biggest problems, and attributed it to people conforming to media stereotypes, glamorization of drug use, and social cues or messages that stress being cool but that don't encourage positive behavior. Alisha Holland wanted to see actions result in a happy, healthy community. Jen identified antisocial behavior in general. Brad felt that DUIs, crashes and injuries were the most relevant to the HRA because they are specifically caused by consumption of alcohol. He would also like to dispel the negative public image of the hospitality industry, and highlight the fact that hospitality workers are licensed and take their responsibility seriously.

John Tsimouris wanted to see a change in people's attitudes towards alcohol and behavior, and make people realize that drunkenness is not socially acceptable. Marcus agreed with a focus on changing antisocial behavior. He noted that most people are "well adjusted" and suggested changing *their behavior* to *not* accept the negative behavior of other patrons. Action by "well-adjusted" patrons might stop some problems before they start and would show that there's a price to be paid when patrons don't behave in an acceptable manner.

Blair said that public safety was the biggest issue to confront. Allen felt all the issues were important, though he felt that litter and noise were results of urban development, not specifically of liquor consumption. He said that DUIs and sexual assault have the most possibility of personal damage. He asked Brad as a bar owner, if he would prefer that patrons tell him of problem people, and Brad replied that he would always want to be informed of any problems.

Devlin O'Donnell pointed out that violence is not always *caused* by alcohol; a person may choose to behave violently, regardless of alcohol consumption. She educates students about the importance of "bystander intervention." Jen felt it was important to communicate to not get directly involved themselves, but to let the bar staff know about a problem, since they are more experienced at diffusing situations. Joshua O'Donnell said that he works with male students who perpetrate violence. They see images on MTV about college life, and think that they are "supposed" to get into fights. When he brings up the issue of respect, people say, "Oh, I was drunk," and blame the alcohol instead of taking responsibility for the action.

Lara observed that the idea that "drunkenness is not socially acceptable" seemed to create a lot of energy in the group's conversation. Richard clarified that he felt it was not drunkenness, *per se*, that was the key problem, but the negative behaviors that can arise from drunkenness.

Lara recalled the "80%-20%" notion that had been discussed in other HRA meetings. Members have noted that "80% of the patrons drink responsibly" and only 20% cause any kind of problem (*percentages do not reflect actual statistics*). She noted that the group seemed to be suggesting leveraging the behavior of the 80% to influence the 20%, or to minimize the problems caused by the 20% by mobilizing the 80%.

Jen cautioned that there's no way to eliminate all the problem drinkers. Blair agreed, and said that some come into a bar, "feel they own the place," and create problems. He felt they could be marginalized through "social norming." There could be education about rules and laws, but the greatest impact might come from their peers' opinions and actions. Richard cautioned against excluding or alienating people, but educating them instead. Lara suggested seeing it as changing the boundaries around social acceptability, rather than "getting rid of the bad apples."

Lara asked what specifically the group would want the "well adjusted 80%" to do. Devlin said they should feel a sense of entitlement to enjoy a safe space. Jen said that it's a privilege to go out for alcohol, not a right. Others said that they would like customers to speak up and tell bar staff that there's a problem. Marcus said it's important not to ignore or reward the problem behavior, and that if people saw the disruptive patron face consequences, they would feel empowered to speak up. Devlin noted that a good customer base is built up by dealing with a responsible patron's complaint about a problem.

Richard felt that giving information was important, and he shared B'DAMN's new brochures, "I'm not your bro: How to get on the good side of your bouncer" and "50 things your bartender wished you knew." Lara pointed out that the brochures were a good example of conveying messages about the things the group would like people to do more of (*vs. things it DOESN'T want people to do*).

Lara closed the meeting saying that the discussion would continue at the next meeting, talking about specific messages and how to get those messages out. In the meantime, she will draft and send out the case study. She is working with Wendy Henerlau on getting the HRA meeting minutes posted to the Campus Community Coalition web page.