

ARTS, EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

November 21, 2006

4:30 P.M.

Chairman Rutherford called the meeting of the Arts, Education and Culture Committee to order, with Councilpersons Bennett, Benson, Rico, Robinson, Page, Gaines and Franklin present. City Attorney Randall Nelson; Management Analyst Randy Burns; and Shirley Crownover, Assistant Clerk to the Council, were also present.

Others present included Dan Johnson, Daisy Madison, and David Eichenthal.

DAVID EICHENTHAL'S STUDY

Chairman Rutherford stated that this meeting had been called in order for David Eichenthal to bring us up to date on his recent Study. She turned the meeting over to Mr. Eichenthal.

Mr. Eichenthal stated that he was happy to come back and share with the Council the Study done by the Community Research Council, noting that he had been with the Research Council since 2005. He noted that this was a State of Chattanooga Regional Report and was a difficult topic to boil down to a short summary.

He first gave an overview, noting that the entire Study was a 360-page Book with 200 tables and maps. The information was compiled from the Hamilton County School System, Police Department, Sheriff's Department, EPB, Business Licenses, and Property Assessor to name a few who had supplied data.

Mr. Eichenthal explained that they reported not on a county-wide basis but on a neighborhood level; that they administered 120 questions with a survey to 1,000 residents. At this time he took time out to introduce Staff members who were present. He continued, stating that they collected information from the survey and concentrated on mid-size communities to give a comparative context. He mentioned the difficulty in breaking this down to the neighborhood level, noting that boundaries crossed, stating that there were 36 different neighborhoods across the community.

He stated that he would focus on highlights—that the good news was that most people are generally satisfied with their Quality of Life and went on to talk about the factors that determine the Quality of Life. He noted that place and change are important in communities and continued with their Plan.

Mr. Eichenthal explained that they asked questions relative to Quality of Life and came up with 15 factors, beginning with Safety from Crime and ending with Shopping Opportunities. Health Care, Clean Streets and Neighborhoods, Clean air, Good paying jobs, Quality Schools, Affordable Housing, Religion, Sense of Community, Parks, and Art and Culture were among the factors.

Councilman Benson made mention of the fact that Arts and Culture ranked right down at the bottom with Shopping Opportunities. Mr. Eichenthal noted that this had been mentioned before, stating that different things matter to different people. The good news, however, was that most people are very satisfied with their Quality of Life.

Councilman Page asked about the sampling. Mr. Eichenthal explained 1,000 per sample—that there was a phone survey in April.

Mr. Eichenthal stated that they asked people if they worried about their personal safety and 75% responded that they never or rarely worried. As to Health Status, 25% thought theirs' was excellent and 25% thought good.

Councilwoman Robinson asked if they used race factors, noting that that the Multi-Cultural Office was wanting a Report and questioned if we could use this data. Mr. Eichenthal indicated he would touch on this later.

He went on to say that as much good news we had, that some was not so good. In determining Place, we looked at the context of mid-size cities and mid-size regions, in other words parts of the country that were roughly the same size as we are. He stated that they looked at the issue of murder rate, and we did not do too well; that our murder rate is 2nd out of a 14 benchmark and 75% higher than other mid-size cities. Since 2000, our homicide rate has gone up 25%. He noted that in this area, we don't fare well. He noted a dramatic difference in Hamilton County, however—parts of the County are below the Country-wide rate. Also, the burglary rate for East Brainerd is about one-half the rate of the county overall. Highland Park and Bushtown is double the rate for burglary. He went on to point out that the aggravated assault rate at the neighborhood level is the highest in downtown neighborhoods and also Soddy Daisy.

Mr. Eichenthal explained that education showed a real difference in terms of Place. This data was obtained from the Hamilton County Schools. Third Grade Reading Tests in such places as Signal Mountain, Walden, and Middle Valley were 10 times higher than in the downtown area.

Mr. Eichenthal noted that there were similar differences based on “Place” for Health data. He noted that there had been a lot of good attention to people being obese, and we are comparable to the Nation in this respect; however we are lower in alcohol consumption; that in some parts of the community there about 40% of current smokers.

He went on to say if “Place” is important, so is “Change”; that between 1990 and 2000 Latinos had tripled; that they are 75% of our net increase in population, and this is not unique to Chattanooga. From 2002 to 2006 the number of Latinos doubled in our schools. He noted, however, that immigrants in Hamilton County are from 81 different countries. Also, 50% of the Latinos in Hamilton County are outside the City of Chattanooga; 60% outside of the City are White; 91% of the African-Americans in Hamilton County live in the City.

Mr. Eichenthal went on to talk about the flip side of Economic Transformation. Like the rest of the country, the majority of jobs in our region require a college education; from 2001 to 2004, we were different from other mid-size cities. In job growth we don’t fare well—we were 9th out of 14 and looking at the higher education requirement we are 3rd out of 14. He went on to talk about college attainment—back in the 1970’s Hamilton County and the City trailed the national college attainment rate—by 2005, the college attainment rate is now higher than the national level.

He stated that the reason they did this Study was because they wanted people to use it—particularly members of the Council. He stated that they had tried to answer a lot of questions; however, they could not begin to answer the “why” question—why there are significant differences based on geography, race or income. Also data relating to jail activity and arrests—who winds up in jail for what crimes and who stays the longest? He reiterated that we could not say “why”, but we can begin to answer the questions and see what we can do to change and improve. He stated that he was happy to talk to people in the community; that he had talked to the Rotary Club and had tried to use this document as a catalyst for discussion. He stated that they were looking towards 2008 and hoping to make something like this done every two years in the community.

Councilwoman Bennett noted that we had been talking about the homeless and asked if he had any calculations or trends that were typical. Mr. Eichenthal responded that he did not look at the homeless, number one because it was semi-personal, as he had spent his life looking at the homeless in City Government. He also noted that nothing was pointed towards animal services either. He did say that it was historically difficult to count the homeless.

Mr. Eichenthal ended by saying that thinking about personal quality of life, a lot of people in Chattanooga are in great condition; that housing is affordable; that significantly lower income people do not have the resources to get into permanent housing. He added that one of the things that was attractive to him concerning the homeless in Chattanooga was that there are attainable goals.

Chairman Rutherford thanked him for coming, stating that she was looking forward to reviewing the book because she loved numbers and charts.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.