Williamston Rotary

Service Committee Minutes

**August 23, 2024**

Present: Committee Members - Laska, Naomi, Bob, Narda

Absent: Wanda

Also Present: Jim C., Wendy, Sharon

Meeting opened with an overview of the current status of the Blessing Box project. Jim and Wendy have been managing the project along with Naomi.

The group then brainstormed - resulting in observations, questions, and suggestions which are listed as follows:

* This is the only project that our club has that is continuous (day by day all year long.).
* There are mixed understandings of the purpose and the process within the club.
* Check on the origins of the Blessing Box. (Sharon clarified that the high school Rotoract group was three seniors. The idea was not discussed as a club - rather it was brought to the club as a project that was underway by the high school group. Process on managing was not clearly defined and when the seniors graduated, the project was left to the club to manage.
* Finding a spot for the Box was resolved when the Methodist Church agreed via a Memo of Understanding to let it be placed on church property. Wendy had spoken with Julie at the church and it was clearly stated that the church was not a partner.
* Wendy shared that the Box should be seen as a blessing….offer of blessings for the community. During the meeting, ideas were generated by Wendy and others that the Box could also have other “blessings” such as grooming items, seeds and potting soil, etc.
* Instead of individual cans and packages, items could be donated and packets could be put together for meals.
* The Box could be available at flexible times
  + - Specific meals could be publicized to target what items should be donated (ex. spaghetti sauce and pasta; chili and corn bread) Could be “Meal of the Month” or “Meal of the Week”
    - Monthly collections stored at church
    - Group meets once a month to package meals and make available.
      * Would need lots of communication with community
* Discussions of partnerships with others to support Box - High School groups, Scouts, Kiwanis, etc. - could be a part of the plan

**Other Points:**

* Sharon shared that state and federal laws is not liability involved for Rotary with offering this jot community.
* Bob asked about any data available on who the users are and satisfaction/meeting needs? Sharon pointed out that the intent to ensure usage is anonymity.
* Posting on FaceBook created problems - no control over the items (ex. fresh produce being put in Box and rotting) and donation of money creates another situation.
* Statement of situation - we don’t know users; is the Box satisfaction/meeting a need;
* purposefully set up that way. question asked is what is the intention? (Short term food needs)
* Sharon - Food justice is lacking….equal opportunity …. need in overall sense. people access the Box…we know that. Hoping it is for food justice.
* Food justice/securityiis real. There are food needs in Williamston. We need better understanding of what those are. ….what is in place and what does that suggest as an opportunity for Rotary. Does the Blessing Box fit into that?
* **What do we want it to be?**
* **Then how do we do it?**

**Considerations:**

* Food Bank is open only for two days, once a month. Is there anyway to influence that? The limited hours are creating more of an emergency and a need for short term access to food. Is there a way to work closely with the Food Bank?
* Should we limit ourselves to one partner? What if there were a “Partner a Month”.
* Would VFW take it on? The idea originated from one of the members there.
* How to communicate with membership.
* Question to pose to membership is “Does Rotary want to continue being responsible for the Blessing Box - are we as a group invested in this project?
* First we need to determine WHY? How? and What? come after.
* What is a manageable way to meet the need at a local level?
* Who else is addressing this need in community.
  + Methodist Church
  + Farmers Market
  + Williamston Food Bank
  + Lansing Food Bank - WSK??
  + Blessing Box
  + Open Table
  + Some church that does meals in summe r
* Food justice/security is real. There are food needs in Williamston. We need better understanding of what those are. ….what is in place and what does that suggest as an opportunity for Rotary. Does the Blessing Box fit into that?
* Focused discussion with all members at a meeting.

**TO DO:**

* Narda will follow up with Adam to see if Lansing Food Bank is still delivering weekend survival packets of food to K-5
* Narda and Laska will put together a “tight process” for a meeting discussion that will fit into 45 minutes. (It can be done)
* The following is a process that works in tackling complexity with simplicity. Conditions set for the discussion: FIRST and most important - this is brainstorming and all ideas are captured. (Clarification can be sought but not statements of why it won’t work or “its already been tried” or “not possible” or …..well., you get the picture. Facilitators job is to capture (with no opinion…..only clarification if not sure what is meant)
* Three questions addressing:
  + A. current opportunity What is positive about this project? What are problems?
  + B **Ideas** on how to address the concerns …also called “Probletunities
  + C Words that capture “intent” of the project.

**Process (45 minutes from start to finish)**

Step 1: ( 3 minutes tops) Introduce task and purpose (Cleared understanding of membership perceptions)

Step 2: (5 minutes top) Those present are divided into three groups. (Wendy, Jim and Naomi will be the facilitators - one per group as the Professional Blessing Box Monitors also known as PBBM :) Each group will have three chart papers and magic markers - with t he question A on one chart, B on another and C and the last one.

Step 3: (7 minutes for each topic Notification when times up. ) Group Discus sions

Step 4: 15 minutes to share ….that’s 5 minutes per group. (As first group shares - the other two put check marks by similar item on their sheet) So actually first group has more time and it drops down as we go along.)

**Last step** is collation of the charts for committee to review and discuss.