

Alicia Philipp, President of The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta provided a brief overview of the organization and their reason for involvement. She noted that the Community Foundation has been around since the 1950s assisting donors and their families and working with nonprofit partners in 23 counties in the greater Atlanta area, including Cobb County. She explained the Foundation's role in helping to bring nonprofit agencies and individuals together to solve problems and address needs that may be too broad for one organization to address. She emphasized an interest in hearing about critical community issues that might result in philanthropy to meet those needs.

Krautler invited all present to introduce themselves and led a facilitated discussion focused around the following questions:

- ◆ What made you decide to do business and or live in Cobb?
- ◆ What are some of the things challenging the positive things that made Cobb so attractive to you?
- ◆ What should be happening to keep the positive things moving forward?
- ◆ What are some ways that Cobb government can reach out more to involve you?
- ◆ What are some things citizens might do to become more involved?
- ◆ How can we work together as our community grows in new and different ways?

Discussion Summary and Observations – Mr. David Connell

David Connell, Region Manager, Georgia Power, summarized the discussion and provided observations. He also noted that Cobb is aggressively working to address the issues and cited planning efforts to establish an International Center

Connell summarized comments and personal observations and facts as follows:

Why made you decide to do business and or live in Cobb County?

- ◆ The quality of the education system, the best in Georgia .K-12 public schools, Life University, North Metro Tech, Chattahoochee Tech, Southern Poly, and Kennesaw State University.
- ◆ Openness to others, such as Hispanic and Latino families, by most in of the Cobb Community.
- ◆ Shops that offer Hispanic and Latino foods and other items now exist.
- ◆ Taxes are low.
- ◆ Great government services.
- ◆ Good roads that are constantly maintained.
- ◆ Strong leadership -progressive, yet conservative.
- ◆ Affordable housing, although this is beginning to be a problem.
- ◆ Opportunities to earn a good living and to fit in.
- ◆ Safe and comfortable place to live.
- ◆ Spirit and willingness to work through issues.
- ◆ Seniors are allowed to exempt the school component of property taxes.

- ◆ Social and community services to help such as the Latin-American Association centers, KSU Center for Latin-American Studies, Church outreach programs (like ECCOC), CFR, Boys and Girls Club, etc.

Issues, Opportunities and Challenges in Cobb

- ◆ Truly understanding and embracing diversity -its importance and power, how to make it become a real asset, etc.
- ◆ How to deal with English as a Second Language issues and other social challenges in public education.
- ◆ Some public schools do a better job of creating an environment where all kids and parents feel welcome. We need to make this a reality in all our schools.
- ◆ Working together for the good of the entire community, especially the minorities (African-Americans, Hispanic and Latinos, Asians, etc.) who sometimes work at odds with each other.
- ◆ Cobb has some image problems based on two significant events from its recent past:
 - Cobb's decision not to be part of the MARTA system, sent a signal that we did not want to be a team player in the region and don't want certain elements of Atlanta to have easy access to Cobb.
 - Cobb's policy statement on the Gay issue during the period surrounding the 1996 Olympic Games.
 - The hanging of Leo Frank, a Jewish business owner, in Marietta years ago.
- ◆ Problems created by this misperception: a) Effective recruitment of high caliber teachers and public safety professionals who think Cobb is not "Hispanic/Latino friendly." b) Difficulty of businesses to find bi-lingual professionals to work in key jobs who don't think Cobb is good place to work and live, and c) Recruitment of students to Cobb's Colleges and Technical Schools.
- ◆ Managing social and economic equality throughout Cobb -avoid the have's and have not's.
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- ◆ Re-development activity in certain parts of the County is needed -in a big way. And, we are working on it. Need to recruit the Asian community.
- ◆ Broad engagement of the Hispanic and Latino families and individual into community activities and leadership roles.

General Observations

- ◆ History dies very slowly. We have some history to overcome and we know that. Again, that is why we are trying to do something positive in Cobb.
- ◆ There is safety in numbers. Anyone trying to make diversity a strength, must figure out a way to integrate people from all backgrounds into one community culture. But, this is hard to do. As an example, the Coretta Scott King memorial last month at Turner Chapel AME.

- ◆ Our two Universities in Cobb are very, very diverse and very international. They also have two great presidents leading those schools. This is a great place to start.
- ◆ As we look to the future, we must recognize that Cobb County is not a homogeneous community. We have subcultures -East Cobb is very different than South Cobb. Marietta is very different from West Cobb. This suggests that solutions must be somewhat customized to the community -making our task difficult.

Response/Comments/Next Steps – Mr. David Hankerson & Dr. Lisa Rossbacher

Rossbacher commented on the role and commitment of Southern Polytechnic State University, including participating with the presidents of the colleges/universities in the county on establishing an International Welcome Center in Cobb.

Hankerson observed that this group is the most diverse that he has been with in a long time and emphasized the importance of involvement and working together. The group was challenged to identify what the next steps should be. Should we have another meeting similar to this one? Is there a need to develop an action plan? What do you want to do about the issues and opportunities identified? How do you want to be involved?

Comments: Individually, we need to “look at the man and woman in the mirror.” Is diversity on your mind at board room level? Are you speaking up? Are you embracing diversity in the kind of decisions that are being made?

Group Comments and Next Steps

Individually, we need to “look at the man and woman in the mirror.” Is diversity on your mind at board room level? Are you speaking up? Are you embracing diversity in the kind of decisions that are being made?

Get together/continue the dialogue

Establish some benchmarks in terms of where we want to go

Move toward deliberate steps to reach and engage diverse people/Expand the discussion to include additional community organizations

Participants agreed to continue participating as a plan is crafted for the county. It was agreed that the comments would be reviewed and a follow-up plan put in place that expands the discussion.