Date: September 17, 2018
To: William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
From: David Schultz, Hamline University
Re: #2016-4400/ Final Report/Minnesota Communities Assemblies

This Memorandum and the accompanying documents constitute the final report from Hamline University regarding the design, delivery, and implementation of the Minnesota Community Assemblies.

This final report consists of the following documents:

* This letter
* Financial report on the disbursement of funds
* City selection memorandum
* Individual reports on the assemblies in Red Wing, Willmar, Brooklyn Park, and Maplewood.

Introduction/Summary
Hamline University through its principal researcher Professor David Schultz received a grant from the Joyce Foundation on April 13, 2016 for a total of $250,000 to complete two community assemblies within an 18-month period. This grant was matched by an equal amount from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The grant was matched by a $100,000 grant to Forge Works to provide some video and web-based materials, and $100,000 to the Jefferson Center, to serve as the facilitator. Grants to these latter two entities were for them to provide services for two assemblies.

Because of some delays in funding to the Jefferson Center and pre-existing commitments that they had, scheduling issues with community residents, as well as necessary planning to create the assemblies, the first one was not held until June 2017. We completed not two but a total of four assemblies, in the cities of Red Wing, Willmar, Brooklyn Park, and Maplewood. The last assembly was completed in May 2018. The first two assemblies were conducted in conjunction with Forge Works and the Jefferson Center. Forge Works was also involved with the third assembly but not the fourth. After the first two assemblies the Jefferson Center was replaced with Wilder Foundation as the facilitator.

Design and Implementation
        Hamline University and its collaborators had a lot of design work to do to create these assemblies. The reason for this is that the original concept and design for the assemblies was on a march larger scale, taking place provincial-wide in British Columbia or Ontario, or state-wide in Illinois, involving many more individuals and several months for deliberation. We had to scale down the scope of the assemblies to where each community would have a total of eight days for

learning and deliberation.

As part of the design, Hamline undertook several tasks. First, an advisory board was constituted to provide some guidance and insights into the assemblies. During the course of the entire grant we had two physical meetings with the advisory board along with providing information and seeking feedback on numerous other occasions.

Second, drawing upon the original grant proposal, criteria were developed for the selection of cities that would be the site of the assemblies. A copy of the city selection memorandum is attached. The researcher ("David Schultz") developed a short list of cities that met several criteria for inclusion in the assemblies. These criteria include geographic and racial diversity, and an emphasis on the communities going through changes politically. Finally, the emphasis was on home-rule charter cities that allowed for citizen-initiatives. Based on these criteria, three initial cities–Red Wing, Willmar, and Brooklyn Park were selected. Maplewood was on the short list also and eventually added as funds became available.

Early in September 2016, the researcher visited with Forge Works in Illinois to begin preliminary curriculum and technical design for the assemblies. We met to discuss the basic outline for the assemblies, seeking to determine the Web/Internet needs for the project as well as production of videos to support the assemblies. Subsequent to this meeting the researcher development a first draft of the overall curriculum, emphasizing several points. These included working with assembly participants to learn about what local government does, inform them on specific details on their local government, values important to them in local governance, and possible reforms. This curriculum was shared with the advisory board, Forge Works, and the Jefferson Center, and it became the outline for all four assemblies, subject to slight modification for each of the four. Based on this curriculum the three parties began their work.

By January 2017, Hamline hired a project manager or assistant to work with the researcher. Her job was to help facilitate and coordinate among the three partners. The assistant was fluent in Spanish, hired in part for that reason because of her ability to communicate with Spanish-speaking individuals. The assistant also had knowledge in curriculum design and project management skills.

Red Wing

Beginning in February 2017, we began the process of recruiting and advertising for participants for the Red Wing assembly. Jefferson Center's normal process was to mail out postcards to contact residents and then to do some additional outreach. For a variety of reasons, Hamline University and its research contended that this was inadequate. It was made clear on several occasions that such a process was deficient in terms of reaching out to people of color, especially the Native-American population in that community. The researcher insisted that a more inclusive process be developed and that we (Hamline) be more actively involved in the recruitment process.

We received push back from the Jefferson Center which refused at times to cooperate. At times we also felt they were dishonest with us. For example, we asked them to reach out to the Native-American community and were told that they did. Subsequently we received telephone calls from the Native-American community there informing us that they had not been contacted. In addition, after the assembly was completed, the researcher gave a public talk in Red Wing to community residents and found out that several other requests made by Hamline in terms of reaching out to people of color had been ignored. We found that our request to provide culturally-appropriate food for the event was ignored. Finally, in facilitating the Red Wing assembly, the Jefferson Center used all White-Caucasian males as facilitators, and the researcher instructed them

that moving forward that this would not be acceptable in the remaining assemblies.

In the course of providing the Red Wing assemblies we changed the name from the original "citizen assemblies" to community's assemblies." The word citizen had already become an exclusionary terms even before the 2016 election. However, that election changed the meaning and connotation of the word, suggesting that non-citizens were not welcome in the assembly.

Overall, as the Red Wing report indicates, we did complete this assembly. We were reasonably able to secure our demographic targets in terms of participation and the participants did come up with recommendations. Unfortunately, the City of Red Wing did not act upon these proposals. There were several reasons for this. The Jefferson Center placed too much emphasis upon producing a final report by participants and less upon helping to develop them as future leaders and activists. One example of that was that when the Assembly was completed the Jefferson Center took it upon itself to present the report to the Red Wing City Council, instead of following Hamline's recommendation to work with the assembly participants to present.

Upon conclusion of the Red Wing assembly it was clear to the researcher that several adjustments to the assembly process in terms of recruitment and facilitation needed to be changed. Unfortunately, and this became a major problem, the Jefferson Center failed to cooperate. Their failure to cooperate became a source of growing tension in the second assembly.

Willmar

Willmar was the second assembly. It is a city located in a rural area about 100 miles west of Minneapolis. It has a large Hispanic and African population. Its politics was different from Red Wing, and the issues facing the community were also different from the first city. This required a different recruitment process for assembly members, as well as more emphasis on issues relating to diversity and cultural competence.

Initially the Jefferson Center approached recruitment for members the same way as it did with Red Wing. The researcher insisted that this process was deficient and made it clear that a greater grassroots process of talking to local leaders in the different communities of color was needed. Jefferson Center said it would do this, but it did not. We know they did not because the researcher and his assistant visited with many members of the different communities out there and found that no contact had been made with them by the Jefferson Center. When we approached the Jefferson Center about whom they contacted they refused to provide information on their contacts.

As a result, the researcher and his assistant had to make alternative arrangements in recruitment. We met with several communities of color to recruit. We met with the local newspaper editor to secure an editorial and an article about the assembly, and we worked with the local radio station for news stories and advertising. We also did leafleting and posters in local businesses to advertise the assembly. As a result, we did meet the demographic goals for the assembly. The researcher also met with several vendors to ensure local food that was culturally appropriate was served.

After the Red Wing assembly and at the researcher's insistence, the Jefferson Center hired a person of color who facilitated part of the Willmar assembly. This was an improvement over the first assembly in Red Wing. Again recommendations were produced by the participants, and a final report (attached) was issued. Some of the recommendations were considered by the Willmar City Council, but again the researcher was not happy with the way the Jefferson Center facilitated the process.

By the time we had begun the Willmar Assembly it was clear that there was a problem with our working relationship with the Jefferson Center. Those problems centered on several issues.

First, we had insisted on them being more flexible in terms of adopting recruitment and facilitation strategies based on differences across communities. Repeatedly we experienced push back from them, refusing to change what the researcher saw as a "cookie cutter, one-size-fits-all" approach to doing these assemblies. It was clear that their experience was doing something different–citizen juries"–a process involving a different concept and set of goals different from what we were trying to do with the assemblies. They had a business or game plan and they were not going to change it. Part of the proof of that was that the recommendations for Red Wing and Willmar were almost identical, despite significant political and demographic differences in those communities.

Second, they were inexperienced or unable to work with cultural diversity. We saw that in terms of their uncomfortableness in working different communities of color. My assistant–a female of Latino background, as well as my two student assistants who were female and African–found the Jefferson Center disrespectful toward them. This concern was communicated to the Jefferson Center on more than one occasion.

Third, we developed a concern that the Jefferson Center was spending too much money on program and over-charging Hamline for services. This point came to a head when disputes centered on them billing us extra for hiring a person of color for facilitation. In consultation with my finance person at Hamline, we concluded that the Jefferson Center was either trying to double-bill us or charge us excessive amounts for basic services. When we sought clarification of charges we again experienced push back. I made it clear we would not pay these additional costs and my plan was to discontinue their services after completion of the Willmar assembly. Instead, they informed us they would not do the third assembly because it would not be profitable to do. The researcher was very happy this occurred, and plans had to be developed to find a new facilitator.

Fourth, the Jefferson Center appeared to act as if the cities were the customers for the assemblies and they were unwilling to recognize or take direction from the researcher. Simply put, for reasons noted below, the funding structure for the initial assemblies was not appropriate, resulting in an inability of the researcher to implement some of the goals.

Finally, to underscore the difficulties Hamline had with the Jefferson Center, they initially refused to provide or return to us with the instructional and other materials we had developed for the first two assemblies. These were materials that Hamline had proprietary rights in and which, according to our agreement with the Joyce and William and Flora Hewitt Foundations, were to become public domain and shared with the public. The researcher had to go over the head of the Jefferson Center's executive director and write to the president of its Board to secure these materials.

Our working relationship with Forge Works was good. They developed a good web page and produced several instructional videos. Unfortunately, we had found out that the Jefferson Center had not been using these videos. Also, in designing a Web presence we met with several experts on web pages, including social media coordinators for KARE 11 and WCCO television. We learned from them that no one had great ideas on doing social media outreach, but that their experience was that the shorter the better in terms of videos and outreach. This suggested, and no fault to Forge Works, their videos and web materials were too long, and we had to hire someone else to break them up into shorter or briefer videos.

We also struggled with language issues in terms of how many languages to have the web page in (as well as other materials). While some of the Web page materials are multi-lingual, most everything was provided in English. If we could have changed one thing overall in the assemblies, it would have been to offer materials in more than one language. Unfortunately, cost prevented this. It is possible that language barriers hampered some participation by people of color, but we believe

that we addressed some of this issue by reaching out to community leaders who helped us reach people of color, especially those who did not speak English as a primary language. We used these outreach efforts to address some of the language issues.

Forge Works remained a partner through the third Assembly in Brooklyn Park. At that time their grant ran out and they had exceeded the time they had allotted for their participation. They had successfully designed a Web site that we eventually transferred to Hamline. This website hosts all the assembly materials and makes available the materials we designed.

Brooklyn Park

Brooklyn Park is the largest majority-minority city in Minnesota. Our Assembly there was an over-whelming success for several reasons. First, the Jefferson Center was replaced with the Wilder Foundation as a facilitator and partner in the assemblies. Wilder has a proven track record of competence in working with diverse communities. Evidence of that was the diverse facilitating team they had. Second, they shared Hamline's goal in believing that the it was not simply important that the participants develop a final report but also that the emphasis be upon enhancing the social capital of them and developing them into future leaders who would become active beyond the assemblies. We were successful in that goal.

Working with Wilder, we exceeded our recruitment number estimates. Beyond doing mailings to recruit, we met with many community leaders. We did radio and print advertising in outlets reaching specific populations–gays and lesbians, Asians, Latinos, and Africans. We also developed an outstanding working relationship with the community affairs office for the City of Brooklyn Park. This can be shown by the fact that some of the public officials from Brooklyn Park presented at the assembly to explain the structure of their local government. Overall, we had a very engaged community and we hit our targets for diversity.

In the process of preparing and implementing the actual assembly, we made several changes. For example, we made sure all of our student assistants were people of color, including from Brooklyn Park. Second, almost all our food and other vendors were from that community. Third, we placed more emphasis on facilitating to get participants to talk and work together. Fourth, unlike the first two assemblies, the researcher–an experienced professor of political science and expert in local government–did some of the technical training.

The highlight of the assembly was the preparation of recommendations by the participants themselves. The practiced the last day in terms of developing a presentation and in the closing hour they made a presentation to the major and two city council members. Afterwards, participants created their own Facebook page to stay active. They also formally presented to the City of Brooklyn Park which is still deliberating their proposals. Finally, several members of the assembly have become active, including at least one person finding employment with the city.

The one problem we confronted with Brooklyn Park was in trying to accommodate different religious needs and holy days. We addressed that in part with a separate community room for prayers or meditation. But overall, we found that the change in procedure and process had a big difference in terms of results and process. One of the major recommendations we walk away from this report is that there is no one-size fits all process and that each community assembly must adapt to local needs. We also learned that the focus has to be on developing longer term community engagement and social capital.

Maplewood

When we originally applied for the grants the researcher indicated that he could do three

assemblies. The Joyce Foundation thought only two were possible. We were able to do three eight-day assemblies. However, at the conclusion of those assemblies we still had some money left over to do a mini two-day assembly with 20 people. A mini-assembly would test to see if we could scale the assemblies down even more, providing for a way for a more affordable way to deliver something that would require less time commitment by participants and still achieve similar results.

Hamline and the researcher were frugal in the spending on money which resulted in enough money to do a fourth mini-assembly. This cost-savings occurred especially in Brooklyn Park. Had we partnered with Wilder with all the assemblies instead of the Jefferson Center we believe we could have done it more efficiently and perhaps delivered five or more assemblies.

In the fall of 2017 the researcher was approached by the city manager of Maplewood–a city on the original shortlist. After consultation the researcher informed them if we had extra money we would do a mini-assembly in that community. We met with city council and they were enthusiastic about the assemblies. Maplewood was a city undergoing significant and rapid demographic and political change. It was also a city which local newspapers once called "the most dysfunctional in Minnesota."

We approached Maplewood similar to how we worked with Brooklyn Park. We did some mailings, advertising with local newspapers representing communities or color, and we also met with community leaders. We met also with the editorial board for the *Pioneer Press*, the major daily newspaper in the east metro, including Maplewood. The newspaper de facto embraced the assembly and ran an editorial supporting it. We were close to securing our targets in terms of people of color and other demographics as indicated in the attached Maplewood report.

The two-day assembly had to move quickly to get residents comfortable working together. Wilder and Hamline focused on a shortened curriculum that emphasized participants developing shared goals and objectives for what they want to see in their local government. They did that and more. They also produced several recommendations for the city and presented them to the city manager and one council member at the closing ceremony. As of the writing of this report the residents are still preparing to formally present their recommendations to the city government. The local government officials have expressed to me and the assembly participants their interests in a formal presentation by them.

Policy Recommendations

Each of the assemblies produced unique recommendations specific to the needs of their communities. The four attached reports detail those recommendations.

When the assemblies commenced it was explained to each of them that the purpose was to prepare recommendations that would address the structure of government. By that, the researcher explained to them that the goal was not for the assembly to be a "complaint session" or come up with specific recommendations regarding how, for example, to address why the pot holes or garbage in front of their houses was not being picked up. Instead, it was about the structure of how their local government was set up or the decision-making process in place that might affect how or why the pot holes are not fixed or garbage not picked up. All the participants understood this distinction. Of course, we used basic city service concerns as a spring board for residents coming up with the deeper structure and process recommendations.

One of the things that we learned and heard several times from participants was how much they learned about their local government. Many expressed astonishment at learning what a city manager is, or that in fact is if permissible to contact or call their local official. This was the case because many of them were immigrants, coming from countries where basic civil rights and liberties

are limited or non-existent and therefore contacting a local official would have been illegal or punishable. Much of what happened here was really civics education, and a getting a chance to see that neighbors and others from different parts of the community shared similar interests and concerns.

While this summary will defer to the broader reports to describe policy recommendations of each assembly, a few do stand out. For example, all sought greater transparency and openness in government and wanted to make it easier for residents to participate. Others were concerned that a part time mayor was not sufficient for the tasks of local government and recommended a full-time position. Some also supported a full-time mayor because of concern that a part time position would make it difficult for those of modest means to run for office. Others were concerned about racial disparities and interactions with the police and sought to create a process for more law enforcement oversight. There was also a recommendation to reconsider how council seats were drawn as the city's demographics were changing and to make sure that representatives lived in the neighborhoods they represented.

In summary, for each of the four assemblies, they developed a list of values they wanted or ranked as important for their city. They then developed broad recommendations that reflected those values and, in some cases, specific policies to further or explicate the values. The researcher was very impressed with the ability of each of the assemblies to forge varying levels of consensus on developing values linked to structural or process reforms that were then linked to specific programs or policies.

Best Practices for Replicating Deliberative Democracy Processes in other Communities

One of the flaws in the citizens assembly process that we inherited is "one size fits all" or "cookie cutter" approach to deliberative democracy. When the researcher first became involved in the grant development and then project design, he communicated with many others involved in previous assemblies or citizen juries and there appeared to be a set formula or process that had to be rigorously followed. A design flaw in this model is that it assumes they every community is the same and one treats each one the same way. It is also a process that appears to tell each community what it needs to do. From the beginning, I rejected this approach. The virtue in doing three or more assemblies as part of one grant is that it allowed one to introduce some social science research into the deliberative democracy process. By that, a typical assembly grant funded one project, leaving it difficult to ascertain why it worked or failed. Doing multiple assemblies and varying them to fit local needs allowed for better information gathering to determine what works best.

As noted earlier in this report, this researcher's criticism of the Jefferson Center's approach highlighted the limitations of the cookie cutter approach to deliberative democracy. They approached and facilitated the first two assemblies exactly the same way, inattentive to cultural and local needs of the communities they served. In partnering with Wilder we were able to respect local needs better, able to work with local community leaders, and make changes in recruitment or curriculum as needed.

Part of the way I describe or criticize the cookie cutter approach is by using the phrase "Democracy Inc." Part way through the first assembly it became clear to me there was a basic problem in the way deliberative democracy projects were funded and managed. By that, foundations were funding specific projects that were then run in a one size fit all manner by a small group of non-profits who had a set business model for how to run deliberative democracy. Funding and managing deliberative democracy had a goal displacement or mission-drift problem where the focus

for non-profits was to make money running these deliberative democracy programs, and less upon really fostering locally-based resident participatory programs. This was at least what I saw in the Jefferson Center and in other groups I talked with. As a result, I am not surprised that many foundations have soured on funding deliberative democracy projects. Too little emphasis was placed on doing multiple projects at the same time to learn from variance, and too much emphasis was placed on the business of running assemblies as a business.

Thus the first recommendation is that there needs to be a break from this Democracy, Inc., model. The focus needs to return to encouraging deliberative democracy and community engagement and there needs to be a move away from making the assemblies a business.

Second, while the basic idea or structure of the assemblies is valid, one needs to remember that each community is different. Be attentive to local needs, drawn upon local community leaders, and be willing to change the process to reflect local needs. In short, as one is designing a deliberative democracy program, do not become so rigid in terms of the process and instead seek buy-in and insights from residents. We heard repeatedly two things from communities: "Do not experiment on or with us and leave," and "do not displace local organizations but learn how to work with them."

Third, reaching out to nontraditional voices is difficult, time consuming, but worthwhile. One needs to move beyond the traditional faces, voices, and institutions to find new participants. Simply mailing out letters or postcards, contacting city hall, or using mainstream media is not enough. One needs to build trust and contact with local leaders and invest them in the deliberative democracy process.

Fourth, one should not forget that deliberative democracy is a civics education process. Local residents often know little about the different levels of government and what they do, or what their local government does or how it is organized. Participants in the four assemblies really appreciated this leaning process and felt it took the mystery and fear out of local government. Thus, do not be afraid to spend more time on the civics learning process.

Fifth, the success to creating the assemblies is trust. Participants must trust one another, and they must also trust the facilitators and organizers of the deliberative democracies. Spend time building this trust.

Sixth, deliberative democracy projects have failed in the past because of short-sighted horizons that emphasize producing specific recommendations. As the Brooklyn Park and Maplewood assemblies showed, the real emphasis should be on building participant and community social capital that seeks to engage and build a new generation of leaders for the future.

Engaging Non-Traditional Residents

The researcher's assistant described the people we wanted to engage as the "passionately disinterested." These are the people who have generally not engaged. They do care about their communities but do not know how to engage or what to do. This group of people include the young, people of color, immigrants (documented and non-documented). This researcher placed significant emphasis on engaging them and, compared to other assemblies that others have performed, we did well in securing our goals. Why?

As noted above, the researcher and his team worked hard to develop community contacts. It involved researching a community, locating its official and unofficial leaders, visiting the local stores, shops, or places that serve as local gathering points for people who might not normally engage. We also made sure to keep a distance from the official city governments in many cases so that participants did not think we were acting simply as arms or agents of them.

The researcher was also attentive to his limits in reaching out in terms of his race, gender, and ethnicity. By that, the research team employed a diverse group of workers and volunteers who often times could gain access to different communities.

Fourth, payment for time, providing meals, and reimbursing for travel and child care were instrumental in encouraging engagement.

One clear weakness–language and religion. It would have been terrific to operate the assemblies in a multi-lingual fashion, but time and resources prevented that. Also, there was some concern that no matter what days for the assemblies were selected there would be some excluded because of religious reasons. We did the best to accommodate by creating prayer rooms, but it is possible that this was not enough.

Earned Media

It was hard to secure earned media, but we did succeed for all of the four assemblies. In each community we were able to get at least one newspaper to cover the event and in the cases of Willmar and Maplewood, the newspapers did editorials favorable to our assemblies. Maplewood also earned a good article in the *Hmong Times*, and Brooklyn Park was featured at least twice in its local television station, and Willmar was the subject of several radio news reports and interviews. Paid and earned media facilitated recruitment of the participants and in the case of Brooklyn Park and Maplewood, it helped encourage the city governments to become more open to the assemblies' recommendations.

Conclusions

In general the researcher believes that much was learned from the four assemblies. The audiences and lessons can be seen on multiple levels.

Clearly other groups interested in fostering deliberative democracy should care about what happened and learn a lot from our experiences. The hope is that groups involved in the design and facilitation of similar projects will take notice of the suggestions here.

Second, foundations should be considered a second audience. What we have begun to establish are factors that influence success that can be applied when looking at future grants. By that, look at assemblies as adaptive processes, not cookie cutters. Appreciate the civics education component, and also the longer-term goals of creating individual and community social capital. Focus less on a specific short-term policy outcome.

But just as important, the researcher wants to highlight what he saw from the start as a problem with the funding problem with this project. Joyce had previously committed $100,000 to Forge Works to produce materials for a different variation of the assemblies that was never funded. Their grant and work were attached to this grant and it was never clear–despite the good intentions on the part of all–that their funding really added value here. Similarly, separate funding for the Jefferson Center created significant problems for the researcher in terms of being able to manage the project. As noted above, the mission and business model of the Jefferson Center did not align with what this project was supposed to be. It is also the belief of this researcher they the Jefferson Center did not spend wisely, and had we controlled the money more directly we can have used the resources better. Future funding should be attentive to the way the projects are organizationally funded and structured.

A third audience for this report is city governments. The researcher already did an interview with the Minnesota League of Cities and have spoken with some city managers regarding what we

learned about engagement. They are interested in how to engage their residents, not just in the development of the comprehensive planning process, but also recruiting a new generation of leaders to serve on commissions, in elected positions, or as employees. The researcher will also be presenting to the Minnesota chapter of the American Planning Association in September 2018. They too have expressed interest in learning how to adapt and adopt some of the engagement practices into their work.

Overall, the four assemblies were a general success and this researcher is still gathering information and learning some lessons and hopes to be able to generate other instructional materials for scholars, foundations, communities, and those who care about deliberative democracy at the local level.

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