

# **THE UTILIZATION OF CONSENSUS BUILDING TECHNIQUES IN THE PUBLIC POLICY FORMULATION PROCESS**

## **PROJECT IRB SUPPLEMENT**

**BY**

**DEREK M. THIEL, MPA CANDIDATE  
CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
ANSPACH HALL 247**

### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of my plan B paper is to produce a high quality research study analyzing citizen consensus building techniques within the public policy implementation process. The literature review portion of my paper will discuss three important topics. These topics include what consensus building is, the importance of building consensus between stakeholders when developing public policy, and a explanation of which consensus building techniques are most effective for use in the public sector and why. The empirical portion of my paper will be a study of consensus building techniques utilized to resolve differences in the formulation of a recreation master plan for the Township of Grosse Ile, Michigan and their level of success.

The case which I will be studying occurred during my tenure as intern with Grosse Ile Township in the summer of 2005. Consensus building techniques were utilized during the Township's five year recreation plan development. I will analyze which consensus building technique or techniques were used, whether those techniques were best suited for the situation, how closely the technique was followed, and how effective it was. A survey will be conducted in order to gauge stake holder's participation in consensus building process, if they were satisfied with the plan that emerged, and whether they believe they were adequately involved.

Upon its conclusion my plan B paper will provide the reader with a clear understanding of what consensus building is, why it is important, and what techniques to utilize to insure success. In addition, by conducting a survey I can demonstrate the effectiveness or the ineffectiveness of utilizing consensus building in the development and implementation of public policy.

### **PROTOCOL**

The research will be conducted by the investigator, MPA graduate student Derek Thiel. This research will involve online surveying of participating individuals and groups associated with the 2005 development of the Township of Grosse Ile's recreation master plan. A list of participating groups has been included for your review on the next page.

## **INSTRUMENTATION / INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Attached is a copy of the questionnaire that will be administered to the directors of the organizations listed here:

Grosse Ile Soccer Association  
Grosse Ile Youth Recreation Association  
Grosse Ile High School Sports Boosters  
Grosse Ile Schools Athletic Department  
Grosse Ile Crew (Rowing)  
Luton Riding Academy  
Island road Runners  
Tae Kwon Do  
Golf Leagues (Waters Edge Country Club)  
Grosse Ile Tennis Center  
West Shore Yacht Club

Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy  
Island Beautification Committee  
Grosse Ile Garden Club  
Grosse Ile Evening Garden Club  
Grosse Ile Herb Society  
Greenways/Open Space Committee  
TAILS/Animal Shelter

Grosse Ile Senior Citizen Club  
Grosse Ile United  
Grosse Ile Art Alliance  
Grosse Ile Historical Society  
Islanders  
Dance Grosse Ile  
Grosse Ile Fun for Teens(GIFT)  
Eye of the Storm  
PAT/PTO  
Island Co-Op Nursery  
Music Boosters  
Grosse Ile School board  
Grosse Ile Student Council

Kiwanis  
Grosse Ile Education Foundation  
VFW  
Lions Club  
Grosse Ile Rotary  
Boy Scouts  
Girl Scouts

YWCA  
Grosse Ile Power Squadron  
Churches  
Township Board  
Township Commissions  
Planning Commission  
ZBA  
DDA  
Road Committee/Bike Path

The survey is 15 questions in length. It will be available online via the website [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). Organizations that are listed above will receive a letter of solicitation to participate, a reminder email informing them of the availability of the survey online. The survey is designed to determine the level of satisfaction participating individuals and organizations had with the consensus building process and the design of the process. The survey data collected will then be compared to the literature review portion of the paper. This will allow the researcher to determine if Grosse Ile Township's use of consensus building techniques were similar to literature and if it resulted in satisfaction rates typical of other consensus building processes.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF SUBJECTS**

Respondents of the questionnaires will consist of public officials, and leaders of the organizations listed above. Because of their participation in the consensus building process they are relevant to the study. The list of participating groups cited above is publicly available. Participation in the survey is strictly voluntary. (See attached solicitation letter requesting approval for data collection.)

### **PROJECT BENEFITS**

There are numerous benefits associated with the completion of this project. First, graduate student Derek Thiel will use the information that is gathered to assist in the completion of his Plan-B paper required to complete his master's degree program. In addition this paper will provide further evidence of the success of consensus building techniques in the development of efficient and effective policy implementation.

### **RISKS AND PROTECTION OF SUBJECTS**

Confidentiality will be of utmost importance in conducting survey research. The design of the internet survey will insure this confidentiality. Participation in the survey will be completely voluntary. This survey will not ask for personal or organizational names. In addition it will not ask for any other information such as social security number, address, or phone number that may in any way be able to identify the participant. Because of the steps taken in order to ensure confidentiality this project does not pose any risk to those that volunteer. Because of this there are no protection issues that should be addressed.

## **INFORMED CONSENT**

A solicitation letter will be sent to all of the organizations listed above asking them to visit the website [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) (see attached letter). It describes the study, its purpose, its benefits, and that participation in the study is voluntary. The letter also states that upon request the findings from the study will be made available to all those who participated. The informed consent form will be online at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). Prior to completing the survey the participant must select the next button at the bottom of the page. This as the informed consent form states is an indication of giving their agreement to participate in the survey. A copy of the informed consent agreement is attached for your reference.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Survey data will be stored online at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and is password protected to ensure the researcher is the only individual with access.

March 12, 2006

SURVEY PARTICIPANT  
555 ANY STREET  
ANY TOWN

Dear Survey Participant:

My name is Derek Thiel and I am currently a student in Central Michigan University's Master of Public Administration program. As a requirement of my degree program I am mandated to conduct a final research project. The study I chose to conduct is concerning the utilization of consensus building techniques in the public policy implementation process.

In the summer of 2005 your organization was invited to participate in a planning process. This process was developed to solicit your organization's opinion on what you would like to see included in Grosse Ile Township's updated five year recreational plan. It is the purpose of my study to determine satisfaction levels associated with this process and the overall satisfaction with the outcome of the consensus building activities.

I am requesting your participation in voluntarily going to: [http://www.chsbs.cmich.edu/political\\_science/mpa/Surveys.htm](http://www.chsbs.cmich.edu/political_science/mpa/Surveys.htm) and filling out the questionnaire entitled "Consensus Building Satisfaction Questionnaire." If you were not the individual representing your organization in the consensus building process please pass this information on to the member of your organization that was involved. Your answers will be kept completely confidential. The survey does not ask for any information that may in any way identify you or your organization. The survey is password protected to ensure those who receive this letter are the only individuals participating in the study. The password is **grosseile** (one word, all lower case). You will be prompted for this password before you are directed to the survey.

I appreciate greatly your consideration in participating in my study. I hope that the results of my study will shed further light on the importance of soliciting public opinion when developing public policy.

Sincerely,

Derek M. Thiel  
25100 Hazelnut Ct.  
Grosse Ile, Michigan 48138  
734-341-9192  
thiel1dm@cmich.edu

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project: "The Utilization of Consensus Building Techniques in the Public Policy Formulation Process"

Principal Investigator: Derek Thiel, Master of Public Administration Candidate, 25100 Hazelnut Ct. Grosse Ile, Michigan 48138. Phone: 734-341-9192; email: [thiel1dm@cmich.edu](mailto:thiel1dm@cmich.edu)

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this research study is to demonstrate the effectiveness or the ineffectiveness of the utilization of consensus building techniques in developing public policy. This research is being conducted in fulfillment of requirements for a Masters in Public Administration from Central Michigan University.

Your organization has been selected to participate in this study because of your involvement in the consensus building activities utilized in Grosse Ile Township in formulating their recreation plan in the summer of 2005.

Your voluntary participation in this study involves the completion of a 15 question online survey located at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). This survey will take approximately five minutes to complete. The results of this study as well as the complete report will be available to any participants that are interested. This information will then be used to determine the satisfaction levels of participants in the consensus building process. Permitted usage of the material obtained will only be used to determine satisfaction levels with the process. Upon completion of the study, the information obtained will be deleted from the online, password protected database.

The researcher does not anticipate any risks associated with completing the survey. Because of the design of the survey there is no way in which the participating organization can be linked with their answers. The results of the survey are password protected and available only to the researcher.

Benefits of completing this survey include aiding the researcher in meeting the requirements of Central Michigan Universities MPA program. In addition survey results will help prove or disprove the effectiveness of utilizing consensus building techniques when formulating or implementing public policy.

It is your option to refuse to participate in this study. You may change your mind about being in the study and quit after the study has started. If the study design

or use of the data is changed, you will be informed and your consent obtained for the revised research study.

If you have any questions at this time, or in the future please contact the researcher Derek Thiel at the contact information listed at the top of this form.

By selecting the next button at the bottom of this page you are agreeing to participate in this research project.



Consensus Building Satisfaction Questionnaire

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## Consensus Process Satisfaction Survey

The following survey seeks to analyze the utilization of consensus building techniques during Grosse Ile Township's five year recreation plan development. The survey is designed to determine the level of satisfaction participating individuals and organizations had with the consensus building process and the final outcome of the process. The survey data collected will then be compared to data received during the literature review portion of the research. This will allow the researcher to determine if Grosse Ile Township's use of consensus building techniques resulted in satisfaction rates typical of consensus building processes.

Confidentiality will be of utmost importance in conducting this survey research. The design of the internet survey will insure this confidentiality. Participation in the survey is completely voluntary. This survey will not ask for personal or organizational names, or any other information such as social security number, address, or phone number that may in any way be able to identify the participant. All survey data will be maintained in strictest confidentiality. No identifying information will be presented in any writings about the data gathered in this survey.

For additional information about this research, you may contact the researcher, Derek Thiel at (734) 341-9192. The supervising faculty member at Central Michigan University is Dr. Rick Kurtz. You may also call him if you have any questions about this research. He can be reached at (989) 774-3436



Project: "The Utilization of Consensus Building Techniques in the Public Policy Formulation Process"

Principal Investigator: Derek Thiel, Master of Public Administration Candidate, 25100 Hazelnut Ct. Grosse Ile, Michigan 48138. Phone: 734-341-9192; email: thiel1dm@cmich.edu

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completing the survey. Because of the design of the survey there is no way in which the participating organization can be linked with their answers. The results of the survey are password protected and available only to the researcher.

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If you have any questions at this time, or in the future please contact the researcher Derek Thiel at the contact information listed at the top of this form.

By selecting the next button at the bottom of this page you are agreeing to participate in this research project.

**Process Questions** [Edit Page](#) [Delete Page](#) [Copy/Move](#) [Add Logic](#)

The following are questions related to the design of the consensus building process.

[Add Question](#) [Add Page](#)

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**1. Was the organization that you represent involved in the Recreation Master Plan Focus Group Work Sessions held in June of 2005?**

Yes

No (If you answer no to this question please do not fill out the survey)

Other (please specify)

Add Question Add Page

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2. To what extent did the organization that you represent prepare for the planning sessions before the event?

- Allot
- Some
- No Opinion
- Very Little
- None

Other (please specify)

Add Question Add Page

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3. Did the organization that you represent and the other participants establish your own ground rules for behavior, agenda, and decision making?

- Yes
- No

Other (please specify)

Add Question Add Page

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4. Within the planning process were votes taken or did participants make

decisions upon agreement?

Votes

Agreement

Other (please specify)

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Survey Questions

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5. Was the organization that you represent satisfied with the final Recreation Master Plan that developed as a result of the planning sessions?

Very Satisfied

Somewhat Satisfied

No Opinion

Somewhat Displeased

Very Displeased

Other (please specify)

Add Question

Add Page

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6. Do you believe that the Recreation Plan that was developed met all

**of your organizations interests?**

Completely

Some

No Opinion

Very Little

None

Other (please specify)

Add Question

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**7. Was your organization satisfied with the level of involvement that the Township allowed you to have in the development of the Recreation Master Plan?**

Very Satisfied

Somewhat Satisfied

No Opinion

Somewhat Displeased

Very Displeased

Other (please specify)

Add Question

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**8. Did the organization that you represent feel that there was "consensus," or general agreement between all stakeholders on what direction the Grosse Ile Recreation Master Plan should be moving?**

- Complete Agreement
- Some Agreement
- No Opinion
- Some Disagreement
- Complete Disagreement
- Other (please specify)

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**9. Did the organization that you represent feel that you had ample time to voice your organization's views on what you would like to see included in the new Grosse Ile Recreation Master Plan?**

- Ample Time
- Somewhat Ample Time
- No Opinion
- Would Have Liked More
- Not Ample Time
- Other (please specify)

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10. Does the organization that you represent feel that participation in this planning process was important and worthwhile?

- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- No Opinion
- Not very Important
- Not Important
- Other (please specify)

Add Question

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11. Did the organization that you represent feel that the meetings that were held in a manner that allowed all participants voices to be heard, respected, and allowed to participate?

- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- No Opinion
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Other (please specify)

Add Question

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**12. Did the organization that you represent feel that information was accessible and fully shared among participants?**

- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- No Opinion
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Other (please specify)

Add Question

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**13. Do you or the organization that you represent feel that the consensus process produced creative ideas for action?**

- Completely
- Somewhat
- No Opinion
- Very Little
- None
- Other (please specify)

Add Question

Add Page

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**14. By participating in the planning process, the organization that you represent gained knowledge and understanding of Grosse Ile Recreation.**

- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- No Opinion
- Somewhat Disagree
- Disagree
- Other (please specify)

Add Question

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**15. Did the organization that you represent create new professional relationships with other stakeholders that participated in the planning process?**

- Completely
- Somewhat
- No Opinion
- Very Little
- None

Other (please specify)

Add Question

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**Thank You**

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I would like to thank you for your participation in the survey. I realize your time is valuable and appreciate your involvement in my research.

Sincerely,

Derek M. Thiel

Add Question

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