

# National League of Cities Congress of Cities

Nov. 13-17, 2007

## Attendance Report\* from Nancy Chaney, Mayor

### Tue 11/13:

10:15AM Departed Moscow

9:25PM As our plane approached New Orleans Airport, I was struck by amount of darkness below, rather than expanses of lighting, pre-Katrina. To be sure, downtown & French Quarter were fully lit but where so many neighborhoods once existed, there was darkness.

### Wed 11/14:

<http://nlc.org/> Conference registration of ~3,500 local officials from across country was efficient & noteworthy for friendliness. Attendees passed through gauntlet of high school-aged youngsters who cheered, clapped, smiled, shook our hands & welcomed us one-by-one to New Orleans. ***It was a nice model for engaging youth.*** Conference schedule included 40 how-to workshops focused on public safety, finance, sustainability, best practices, infrastructure, community development & housing. Attendees chose from among 20 mobile tours of post-hurricane recovery areas & had working breakfasts, lunches & receptions for networking. Idaho attendees included mayors of Nampa, Caldwell, Twin Falls, Meridian (not yet a member) & Moscow, as well as Moscow Council member & AIC Exec Director. Neighboring Pullman joined this year.

1:30-4:30 As a member of the Energy, Environment & Natural Resources Policy & Advocacy Committee <[http://nlc.org/inside\\_nlc/committees\\_councils/1940.aspx](http://nlc.org/inside_nlc/committees_councils/1940.aspx)> I participated in discussions about proposed resolutions & changes to National Municipal Policies. Adopted positions guide NLC advocacy efforts at federal level, affect public debates, convey positions to news media & leaders, & address key local issues. ***Calling sustainability a “defining issue of our time,” NLC deemed it a priority topic*** & asked EENR to offer ideas & solutions to cities, provide direction on federal implications, & to set an example by assisting with internal NLC organization. (Regrettably, because of the loss of recycling facilities & market for recyclables in the area hit by hurricane, this conference did not offer recycling as hoped.) Water issues figure prominently in EENR & my proposed amendment to resolution urging Congress to adequately fund water infrastructure was adopted unanimously & would be similarly approved by voting delegates at business meeting on Saturday. Amendment added language to recognize the ***growing need for funding re-use systems for treated effluent, such as that employed by UI & anticipated by City of Moscow. Other topics that might apply locally include renewal of resolutions for low income energy assistance, land & water conservation funding, urban park & recreation recovery, federal attention to sustainability & support for local green efforts.*** A new resolution involved global warming & threat of rising sea levels to Nation’s cities. An existing resolution that became permanent NLC policy involves opposing preemption of local authority for siting & permitting energy infrastructure. EENR solicited “best practices” for the printed City Practices Guide, & I intend to submit information about the sustainability matrix prepared by Dr. Bill Budd’s WSU graduate students (including Moscow’s Sustainability Intern). This year ***Moscow & Pullman participated in sustainability assessments based on that portable, flexible matrix that other cities may find helpful & informative as part of an NLC toolkit on sustainability.***

6:30-8:00 Visited Exposition Hall (***NewCities, roadway safety equipment, wastewater treatment, recycling, playground equipment***)

### Thurs 11/15

7:00-8:30 University Communities Council Steering Committee Breakfast. Refer to “***Best Practices***” page on UCC Web site. New links to submit experiences & ideas, participate in a town-gown forum, or search database. Ideas shared this morning included:

“The Big Event” in Bryan TX, the largest ***student-run volunteer day of service***, now in its 17<sup>th</sup> year. Eligibility not related to socio-economic status. Public Works Dept puts chosen project sites on GIS maps for students.

Another idea from Texas A&M is its new “College 101” program to *orient new students as to how to get along in family-friendly neighborhoods*. <http://university-cityrelations.tamu.edu>

There’s the “*Neighborhood reservation & conservation program*” that allows neighborhoods to petition City Council to change zoning classification of their platted subdivisions to protect family-friendly atmosphere. (So far there are 45 such neighborhoods.) Existing renters are grandfathered in but reportedly with influence from realtors & in response to the new program, student renters have “cleaned up their acts” to better fit their neighborhoods.

In College Station, students are encouraged to hold block parties for their neighborhoods when they move in. The Princeton Review touts College Station as *#1 in town-gown relations*, but criteria for earning that award were not clear. Other UCC members expressed interest in vying for that title. A&M’s example involves partnerships with university, city, chamber of commerce, visitors bureau & “Research Valley Partnership” (potentially, akin to our Knowledge Corridor/LEDC alliance).

Mansfield CT holds a *meet-&-greet* function with elected officials & university presidents. A version of this could work in Moscow at the beginning of school years, etc.

As UCC explores association with a national *Town-Gown Network*, ideas I plan to share include: Moscow’s Noise Ordinance, campus-downtown connections contemplated by URA, MHS-UI class credit arrangements, UI-WSU cross-listed classes & cooperative scheduling, Wheatland Express/Moscow Valley Transit use by faculty, staff & students, human rights efforts including Finding the Center Conference & status as “Inclusive Community,” Boarding House Ordinance (Others at meeting said enforcement challenges are great enough that they’re contemplating reducing the number of unrelated residents to two, as compared to four in Moscow)

8:45-11:00 General session speaker Terry Tamminen, former Sec of CA EPA & former Chief Policy Advisor for Gov Schwarzenegger, told us that CA uses 40% less electricity per capita than any other state. I was surprised to hear updated comparative figures for owning & operating incandescent lightbulbs (\$10/year) vs. compact fluorescents (\$3/year). He recommended <<http://www.solarsantamonica.com/main/index.html>> to learn what Santa Monica is doing with solar energy. Paring it down to a few standardized options, having formulas to calculate costs & savings, offering low interest packages, utility rebates & tax credits enhance the attractiveness, affordability & ease of understanding of program. As *Moscow faces increased energy costs & needs for affordable housing* examples like this have merit. With regard to other community-scaled projects & water, he cited Sun Valley, CA where they plan a million-gallon cistern to manage stormwater & provide additional water for irrigation. I jotted a few notes about how that might be a *model for Palouse River Drive ballfields*, as I suggested previously. (Sun Valley CA has flooding & drought problems, while we have limitations as to how much treated effluent could be available when we’d need it, relative to when UI is using it.) When I investigated the CA project, I was drawn to this statement: “Besides the million-gallon cistern, the group expects to install a subterranean storm water treatment device at a city park.” See <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1594/is\\_5\\_13/ai\\_99118805](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1594/is_5_13/ai_99118805)> & associated links to learn more.

11:30-1:00 University Communities Council Membership Meeting. I invited Mayor Glenn Johnson to become involved in UCC & in light of our *common interest in growing the Knowledge Corridor*, was glad to see Pullman represented there. Topic: *Emergency preparedness*. Speakers: Vice Chancellor Campus Services (facilities, engineering, police, student housing, food services) & Asst Vice Chancellor Public Safety, Univ New Orleans. They thought they were prepared, but weren’t. Learned necessity of self-sufficiency. Be able to trailer emergency communications equipment. Store supplies of water & food. Recommend hardened police shelter & police specifically dedicated to campus. UNO law enforcement are all being trained SWAT-certified. Dual-commissioned city/state officers have authority outside city limits. Former Commander of field operations in Superdome during Katrina said, “Everybody was afraid, even the police.” UNO can now operate computer systems from three remote sites. Learned that rechargeable radios & flashlights are worthless without power. UNO installing natural gas generators that will stay up & running & not be turned off, so as to protect pipes from filling with water. (Other generators were rendered inoperable.)

1:00-4:30 Mobile Workshop. “Back to School: Building Partnerships in Education.” In 2003, Louisiana voters approved constitutional amendment to allow state to take over failing public schools. In cooperation with corporate sponsor Capital One & governance by non-profit (501(c)(3) New Beginnings Foundation Network, UNO developed an open-access public charter school network to “provide a seamless pre-kindergarten through college learning community...& (offer) high quality public education to neighborhoods damaged by Hurricane Katrina.” [www.unocharternetwork.net](http://www.unocharternetwork.net) We visited two of those schools. Student to teacher ratio 20:1. Students who earn 20+ college credits more likely to graduate. State provides grants & Foundation has built-in \$ to cover costs of college credits for high schoolers. **Instructors at high school qualified to teach on-site college credit coursework. UNO profs certified to teach state-mandated coursework for high school.** Special ed students immersed in system. Program includes public bus transportation at \$2.56/ride for any number of students from the same household. Other area colleges cooperate, so that by the time college-bound students are high school seniors, they spend 2/3 of their time on college campus.

6:00-7:00 Joint Members Council Networking

### **Fri 11/16**

8:30-10:30 General Session. Speakers: NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Terry McAuliffe (past chair, DNC), Kenneth Mehlman (past chair RNC). Political climate at various jurisdictional scales. Presentation awards for municipal excellence, a chance to shine.

11:00-12:15 **Transportation & Land Use: Connections that create better cities.** Featured city: Charlotte NC <http://www.charmeck.org/living/home.htm> Speaker: Susan Burgess, Mayor Pro Tem. Key message: “The best transportation strategy is the right land use strategy.” Challenge: Rapid increase in population, sprawling development pattern & vehicle miles traveled (VMT) increasing proportionately faster than population. Plan: “Create an integrated system for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists & transit... (& integrate) transit with land use as a way of managing rapid growth.” Transit consists of buses, bus rapid transit, light rail, trolley, streetcar & commuter rail. Voters approved sales tax increase for transit. Desired development patterns encouraged through “Transit Oriented Development Zoning Districts” (TODs) to direct growth/density where transpo supports it, reduce costs & environmental impacts associated with traffic, provide for economic development & encourage reuse, redevelopment & infill. Express bus service extended to surrounding counties. Despite opposition from chamber of commerce & development community, Charlotte just adopted urban street guidelines that include planting strips to accommodate very large canopy trees.

12:00-12:45 & 1:30-1:45 Western Municipal Conference Luncheon Meeting. Regional issues include water, economic development, global warming, energy efficiency, transportation, pollution, immigration, land use, endangered species, natural resources. Forum affords info exchange, collaboration, cohesive policy development

12:45-1:00 Women in Municipal Government Membership Meeting. I popped in briefly to talk about my revered colleague & WIMG member Linda Pall.

1:00-1:30 “America Downtown Program” individualized consultation with HyettPalma, per invitation by Twin Falls Mayor Lance Clow. Council member Tom Lamar also attended. Discussed low- or no-interest loans & sale of bonds to support local economic development projects.

2:00-5:30 Mobile Workshop with Mayor’s Office of Recovery Management. Title: “A City Being Reborn: 17 Targeted Recovery Zones in Progress.” Bus tour of areas affected by hurricane & flooding. Many buildings are still boarded-up & neighborhoods abandoned or non-existent. Funding from CDBGs, FEMA, City GO bonds, state revolving funds, tax credits, blight bonds, industrial revenue bonds, federal grants, private investment.

### **Sat 11/17**

7:00-8:30 Municipal Officials Breakfast

8:30-10:30 General Session: ***Rebuilding Community after a Crisis***. Panel discussion moderated by Henry Cisneros, formerly mayor San Antonio, secretary HUD & president NLC. Talked about Hurricane Katrina, Columbine shootings, youth violence prevention, red tape vs. accountability in disaster recovery programs.

10:45-12:00 Facilitated Dialogue Sessions: University Communities Council Networking Session. Shared “best practices” & current challenges.

Housing: Problems widespread with conversion of single family homes to student housing, particularly by out-of-state investors with no vested interest in community. Some disallow boarding houses. Some contemplating reducing # of unrelated occupants to two.

Town-gown relations: A) Community-campus partnership with monthly meetings. Members appointed by mayor & univ president, include FD, PD, students, faculty, staff, govt officials. System to deputize members, authorizing them to distribute door-hanger warnings for nuisance problems such as garbage/litter. B) One community (Mannsfield CT?) implemented “Housing Code & Landlord Registration Ordinance” based on universal (international?) property maintenance code. They’ve had 100% compliance among property owners. 50% of inspection costs are offset by landlord registration fees. County assessor cooperated by identifying rental units & providing contact info for out-of-area property owners. C) Discussed interest in college students mentoring grade schoolers & high schoolers. D) Increasingly, retirees want to audit university classes affordably.

Alcohol: Having campus “dry” increased problems with off-campus parties. In one instance, Dept of Mental Health provided a grant to address underage consumption & alcohol abuse.

Economic development in an education-based economy: Glendale AZ has grown quickly from 30,000 to 250,000. Council member Phil Lieberman said Glendale enticed Cabela’s & recouped investment many times over. City also gave land, permitting & zoning incentives + housing, & transpo/freeway interchange concessions for development of Midwestern University Medical Center, now with 22 buildings, 1,000 students & new college of pharmacy. Considering rezoning for college of dentistry, med school, & osteopathic college (with 1,000 students unto itself).

12:15-2:00 Delegates Luncheon. KaBOOM! Playful City USA award still eludes us. Let’s apply again to enhance our City’s playspaces. 1) Create local play commission; 2) design action plan; 3) conduct playspace audit; 4) identify spending on capital & M/O of playspaces; 5) celebrate annual “Play Day.” Author Daniel Pink spoke about logic, emotion, social needs, economic wants, personal values & objectives in a changing workforce.

2:30-5:00 Annual Business Meeting. As Moscow’s delegate, I voted on a wide variety of resolutions reflecting collective interests of NLC to be carried forward to Congress, and on leadership for NLC for the upcoming year. (The manual for the business meeting is 122 pages long.) The League’s new president, Cynthia McCollum, articulated three goals for this year: 1) Strengthen & enhance value of NLC membership; 2) Increase national influence; 3) Leave NLC “stronger”

7:00-10:00 Host City Closing Event (social)

**Sun 11/18**

4:45AM departed hotel for 6:45AM flight

12:30 PM Arrived home

***\* Locally-applicable ideas highlighted in bold italics. Please word-search this document for topics of particular importance to you.***