



The Treasure Coast: After the Boom

Dinner at the Home of Charles Shinn

NRLI Alumnus hosts class dinner

Charles Shinn, NRLI Class VIII Fellow, graciously invited Class XI to his home for a wonderful dinner on Friday evening. The Shinn home is situated in a citrus grove owned and operated by the family. The dinner was wonderful and the hospitality was even better. Our sincerest thanks on behalf of Class XI!



Fellows enjoy a meal at the home of Charles and Kay Shinn. (photo Candy Kaswinkel)

Anita Neal Welcomes NRLI to Port St. Lucie



Anita Neal, CED for St. Lucie County. (photo TCPalm.com)

The third NRLI session of Class XI was held in Port St. Lucie and focused on the housing Boom and Bust as experienced in this area of the Treasure Coast. The session began with lunch at the Dockside Inn followed by an introduction to St. Lucie County by St. Lucie County Extension Director Anita Neal. Anita discussed the Boom and Bust experienced by the county and made particular note of the continuing importance of agriculture to the economy of the county.

Facilitating Effective Group Decision Making

Jon Dain began the session's curriculum module by focusing on some of the facilitation concepts behind facilitating effective group decision making. He noted that all groups have a purpose be it formal or social, and that we all have roles/behaviors that we are accustomed to playing within a group. To be effective, groups need to focus on both their task, be it a decision or a product, and their members, in terms of maintaining effective levels of trust and participation. "Tasks" generally define the reason for the existence of the group, and "Maintenance" serves to "oil the machine", to allow people to work together effectively. Often when things do not work out in a group or when a poor decision is made it is due to the lack of attention paid to group maintenance. Having all task focus and no maintenance focus leads to short-term efficiency but not long-term quality in decision-making. The opposite is also true, just because a group is made up of happy, listened to individuals does not mean that a good product will emerge. (**Group Decision Making.** continued on page 2.)



Jon Dain leads the Fellows in the Group Dynamics and Facilitation exercise during the first day in Port St. Lucie. (photo by Candy Kaswinkel)

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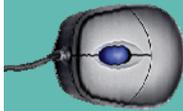


Becky Raulerson discusses social media best management practices and how Fellows can incorporate social media into their programs. (photo Candy Koswinkel)



Lost at Sea

Group Dynamics and Individual Roles



Social Media

Becky Raulerson, a Class XI Fellow, gave a presentation on the use of social media. Her presentation covered the different types and uses of social media, and included a video entitled, "Social Media Revolution 2011" which illustrated the importance of social media. The importance of using social media can be quickly summarized by the fact that everyone else is using it! Becky's presentation also included planning for the use of social media and the need for "best management practices" in using these new and evolving tools.

To illustrate group dynamics, Jon Dain led the Fellows in an exercise entitled, "Lost at Sea." In this exercise, eight Class Fellows took turns playing different roles as they attempted to come to consensus on 5 key items to load in a lifeboat as their vessel. The rest of the Class was tasked with watching the "shipmates" and identifying the different roles they fulfilled in the exercise. The exercise demonstrated Tasks and Maintenance roles as well as some of the challenging behaviors that one encounters in groups

After "lost at Sea" the group was presented with a framework for understanding group decision making (Sam Kaner's Facilitator's Guide to Participatory decision-Making) that highlights its "messiness". As ideas diverge, groups can enter into the "groan zone" of decision making where frustration with lack of progress can lead to challenging behaviors on the part of group participants. For a facilitator (or group member) the groan zone is a time to focus on both task AND maintenance issues to help move the group into convergent thinking that will hopefully lead to a decision. The discussion on understanding the dynamics of group decision making concluded with a discussion of the role of a facilitator in working with groups. Facilitators are responsible for the process and for helping the group to accomplish what they can't do alone, but *not* for the content of the meeting. Specifically, the facilitator should seek to fill missing maintenance and task roles.

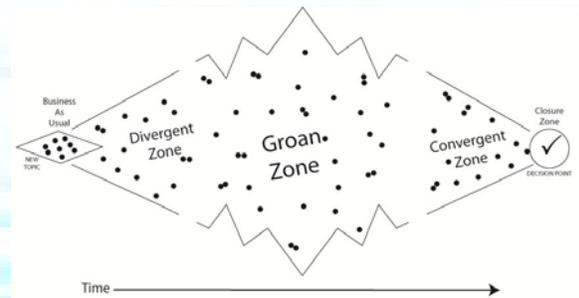


Illustration of Kaner's "Groan Zone"

Group Decision Making. (continued from page 1.) Roles required for effective group performance are listed at right.

- Maintenance
- Monitor Participation
 - Encourage Others
 - Set Standards
 - Build Trust
 - Mediate
 - Monitor Dynamics
 - Seek Feedback

- Tasks
- Initiate/Propose
 - Seek Information
 - Provide Information
 - Clarify/Elaborate
 - Summarize/Restate
 - Monitor Progress - (test for Consensus)



Mark Satterlee gives an overview of the St. Lucie County growth management issue. (photo by Candy Kaswinkel)

St. Lucie County Boom to Bust 2007-2011

An overview of a county in crisis

Mark Satterlee, the Planning and Development Services Director for St. Lucie County, gave a presentation on the Boom and Bust experienced by St. Lucie County between 2007 and 2011. His presentation included a history of the county, including the historical predominance of the citrus and cattle industry. He noted that the Florida Cracker Trail ends in Fort Pierce; the Cracker Trail being important to the heritage of Florida as described in the book, "A Land Remembered."

By the 1990s construction had become a huge industry in the county, with development moving out of Palm Beach County. Between 1980 and 2010 the county's population increased by over 200%, with the city of Port St. Lucie growing by over 1000%. With the Bust came significant reduction in taxable

property values in the county and a significant reduction in taxes and impact/development fees received. By 2010 the unemployment rate was between 13-15.1% in the county. As of August 2011, the foreclosure rate in the county was rated 16th in the state.

Since the Bust, the county has strived to diversify its economy in order to prevent or lessen the impact of future Booms and Busts. The county has been working to do this by attracting high paying bio-tech jobs. However, challenges remain for the agriculture industry in the county due to the impacts of canker and greening on the citrus industry, and the overall lack of suitability for the county to support more diversified crops.

READING DISCUSSION

This session's reading discussion was led by Class XI Fellow Curt Williams. Curt led the discussion by having groups of Fellows act out skits related to the reading assignment. Each group acted out a potential result to a conflict. The skits illustrated that conflicts become more complicated as the number of stakeholders and/or emotional elements of a conflict increases.



Fellows work together in groups to discuss the assigned reading. (photo Candy Kaswinkel)

THE FIELD TRIP



Above: Bill Blazak of Culpepper and Terpening speaks with the Fellows at the Creekside subdivision, while Anita Neal with the St. Lucie County Extension Office and Marta Hartmann look on. Creekside is a stalled subdivision in Port St. Lucie. (Photo by Candy Kaswinkel)

Friday morning began with a field trip to several affected subdivisions in the area. The first, named Creekside, was a former citrus grove and was still “alive,” in that it had not been foreclosed and was still planned in the indeterminate future. Bill Blazak, with Culpepper and Terpening, Inc. and lead engineer on the project, described to the Class how the project dovetails with environmental protection goals in the region as well as how parts of the property were currently being used as grazing lands in the interim. The next two subdivisions visited included Bent Creek and Celebration Pointe. In these subdivisions much of the infrastructure had been installed, but very few houses had yet been built.



Above top : With infrastructure in place, portions of Bent Creek Subdivision stands vacant. Above: Harbour Isle, a condominium community on Hutchinsonson Island, is experiencing the effects of foreclosure with many vacant units..

Boat Tour of Indian River Lagoon

Captain “Chop” Lege took Class XI on a leisurely tour of the Indian River Lagoon. The “leisurely” pace of the tour was evident by the number of Class Fellows that were lulled to doze by the gentle swaying of the boat and light hum of the engine! Captain Chop pointed out oyster bed restoration projects in the lagoon and pointed out the old inlet which has been untouched by man thus far.



Above: Fellows enjoy a visit to the Indian River Lagoon during the second part of the fieldtrip at Port St. Lucie.

Stakeholder Panel Discussion

This session's stakeholder panel followed a very different format than those of previous session. Rather than having the entire group ask questions of the panel, small groups of Fellows met individually with a stakeholder. This approach provided for a more intimate, informal setting where the panel member was not answering questions in front of other panel members. The result was a more intimate conversation that reflected the kind of interview one my do if actually designing a stakeholder process.

The panel members for this session included:

- Dennis Murphy, Culpepper and Terpening, Inc.
- Tom Babcock, Developer of Master Planned Communities
- Anthony Westbury, Columnist for Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers
- J.P. Gellerman, Sarasota County Extension, Growth Management and Community Development (formerly of St. Lucie County)

The stakeholder interviews included questions about the individual's background, the "group" they belong to, the impact of the Bust was on their stakeholder group, the positions and interests of their stakeholder group, and their perspectives on the future. In debriefing the interviews later that afternoon Class Fellow Thomas Ruppert had each of the small Interview groups field questions from the other Class Fellows based on what they learned from the person they had spoken to. It was notable that a common interest of the stakeholders seemed to be a desire to see the employment situation improve in the region. However, each of the people interview also felt that the future for the region's economy looked bleak and would require considerable time to improve.

STAKEHOLDER PANEL FEEDBACK

Carolyn Cox led the feedback on the stakeholder panel for our session in St. Lucie County. When asked how we felt about the format of the stakeholder panel, Fellows appreciated the intimate setting with the panelist's but missed hearing the opinions of each panelist and the interaction between panelists. Fellows thought that the information received from individual panelists in the small groups may be more genuine than the one received in a more formal panel due to isolation from the opinions and influences of other panelists.



The stakeholder session took on a different look as Fellows use their interviewing skills to find out the stakeholder participants views on the "Boom to Bust" issue. (photos by Candy Kaswinkel)



Practicum Overview

As part of the development of Fellow Practicum, the Fellows met with others with similar themes to discuss where they are in the development process. The discussion lasted 20 minutes and helped Fellows to define their objectives and understand ambiguities in their practicum proposal. Following the small group discussions, Fellows returned to the meeting room to share their discussion points and the “next step.”



Top: Lindsay Cross and Thomas Ruppert work on their practicum during the Saturday session .
Above: Shannon McGee and Holly Abeels discuss their practicum . (photo Candy Kaswinkel)

Designing Effective Meetings

Following the stakeholder interviews and subsequent feedback session, Dr. Marta Hartmann led the Fellows in an exercise focused on designing effective meeting agendas. Tips included a rule of thumb that designing effective meetings should be 50% planning, 20% actual meeting, and 30% follow-up. Marta noted that three essential ingredients for effective meetings are: 1) Focusing on objectives and outcomes, 2) Considering the people, and 3) Selecting the collaboration tools that will make it happen. As part of the exercise in designing effective meetings, the Fellows broke into small groups and focused on creating an agenda that included both the “what” and “how” of a meeting. The “what” parts of the agenda are simply the agenda topics while the “how” parts are the activities by which the “what” parts of the agenda will be accomplished



As part of the experiential learning process, NRLI Fellows work in small groups to design and develop an effective agenda using the tools given them by the Project Team. (photo by Candy Kaswinkel)

Sights from around Port St. Lucie



FACTS to consider:

- St. Lucie County was officially established on July 1, 1905.
- St. Lucie County has a land area of 571.93 square miles.
- A total of 485.7 people live per square mile in St. Lucie County.
- The population in St. Lucie County grew 44.2% population growth between 2000 and 2010.
- The homeownership rate jumped 77.1% between 2005 and 2009.
- St. Lucie County became known as the Treasure Coast as a result of the abundance of gold and silver buried offshore after a 1715 hurricane sent 11 Spanish ships to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean.

Tough Policy Choices: It's Not All About You



Rod Clouser speaks with the group on Saturday morning. *Photo by Candy Kaswinkel*

Saturday morning began with an interesting presentation by Dr. Rodney Clouser of the Food and Resource Economics Department at the University of Florida. The presentation, entitled “Tough Policy Choices In Florida: It’s Not All About You and Natural Resource Issues!” provided background information on the economics of “the Bust” and the politics and policy associated with it. Some of the big questions concerning Florida’s future included:

- Economic recovery, development, and employment
- The outlook on population growth?
- Population growth, housing and land values
- Immigration issues
- State financial issues

Dr. Clouser described these myriad issues (and others) as the 1000-piece 3-D puzzle that will require Superior Problem Solving, Perseverance, and Creativity to solve.

Feedback and Debrief

Class XI Fellow Gregg Eason led the debrief of this session. As a lesson to other Fellows, Gregg emphasized the notion of being outside of one’s comfort zone. Since Gregg is one that normally likes to have a set plan when presenting material or running meetings, he purposefully did not plan for the debrief session so that he could place himself outside of his comfort zone.



NRLI Fellows work in small groups to discuss the pros and cons of the Port St. Lucie Session. *(photo by Candy Kaswinkel)*



NRLI Fellows evaluate the Port St. Lucie Session by using the automated response system, TurningPoint *(photo by Candy Kaswinkel)*

Patricia Negreros-Castillo, Becky Raulerson, and Brad Etheridge elevated the Fellows’ feedback experience by utilizing Turning Point technology to provide the NRLI Team Members with instant feedback on this session’s activities. Turning-Point was explained as a polling technology that can be used to avoid politically charged answers during conflict resolution or for feedback on facilitation processes. Patricia, Becky, and Brad included serious feedback, such as the effectiveness of the subdivision tour, with some fun questions to create an inviting and friendly feedback environment.

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This report forms part of a series written by current NRLI Fellows. Reports represent and are a product of the experiential learning process that is a highlight of the NRLI program and have not been formally peer reviewed.