Policy making and civic involvement: Apathy or impotence?

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Policy making and civic involvement: Apathy or impotence?

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POLICY MAKING AND CIVIC INVOLVEMENT;

APATHY OR IMPOTENCE?

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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in

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the current problems surrounding civic participation. Conventional political wisdom tells us that many people have become apathetic when it comes to getting involved in politics. However, I will argue that policy makers misconstrue their perception of the public because they are operating from paradigms which are not democratic. When policy makers operate from these faulty paradigms, the role of the public becomes subordinated and the public is effectively "locked out" of the political decision-making process. I will offer an alternative to the current paradigms in an attempt to restore the proper role of the citizens to public decision-making, in order to promote the principles of representative democracy. To provide clarity and proximity to this national problem, I will contextualize my analysis within the circumstances surrounding the Sunrise Manor Township of Clark County, Nevada.
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Writing this thesis has been the culmination of an academic pursuit which began more than fifteen years ago. It has been an arduous journey, wrought with seemingly endless distractions. Nevertheless, with the help of a few good friends, I have managed to complete this work. With much appreciation, I would like to thank the following; all the students with which I have had the pleasure of studying while at UNLV; Dr. Barbara Brents, for providing a much needed feminine perspective; Dr. Paul Schollmeier, for re-kindling my love of philosophy; Dr. Craig Walton, for creating the EPS program which made all this possible; and especially, Dr. Ira H. Peak, for supporting and encouraging me, for freely giving much of his time, and for help in making sense out of my thoughts and ideas. Additionally, I would like to express my deepest thanks to my family and, in particular, my wife and partner in life, Lynn, whose feedback was invaluable, and whose patience and support was greater than any man should ever ask for.
"As soon as any man says of the affairs of state, What does it matter to me? the state may be given up as lost" 
Rousseau

In reference to citizen participation in the political process today, the general public perceives that apathy has become the rule rather than the exception. It is no news that the average citizen feels disconnected from the political process. Moreover, it has become common for us as American's to turn a blind eye to social problems which do not affect us personally. We are under a constant barrage from the media with examples of this apparently callous attitude which seems to permeate our culture. We witness the expulsion of children with AIDS from our schools, we see opposition to help for the homeless, we hear of resistance to halfway houses in our "own back yard", and more recently, many of us are "opting out" of society itself, instead choosing to live in protected or gate-guarded communities.

Furthermore, as we are all well aware, voting, the most basic form of political action in democracy, has declined drastically in recent years. A recent survey, conducted by People for the American Way, reports that only 18 percent of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 voted in recent elections. They also claim that only 12 percent of 15-to-24 year olds agreed that voting
is a basic tenet of good citizenship. These statistics serve as grim reminders that 'apathy' has spread throughout our society to the point where our sense of civic interest is almost non-existent. This condition is not only prevalent among seasoned voters, but it has spread to our youth, whom we would rank traditionally as the most enthusiastic and hopeful citizens.

How has this attitude of 'apathy' developed? Under what political climate has 'apathy' been allowed to flourish? What is the proper role of the citizen in American democracy? What is the role of the politician? Do current political mechanisms function as barriers in promoting democracy? What has happened to the concept of representation through the active consent of the governed, as suggested by our forefather, James Madison? These questions give voice to a range of serious problems facing the American republic.

In this thesis I wish to devote my attention to a single expression of what is commonly called 'apathy', the lack of citizen involvement in politics. Towards this end I will begin with a critical overview of some of the current conceptions of the problem which we tend to conceptualize as civic 'apathy', in order to provide the reader with an orientation to the central problem at which this thesis is aimed. I will contextualize these problems so that they take on a less abstract character. Thus, in the next section, I will describe broadly the conventional wisdom regarding civic activity and 'apathy' in the United States today.
Conventional Wisdom

The cry of citizens for actively determining their own destiny has been ringing for centuries. Recent events in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have renewed the call for giving power back to "the people". As Americans we support and rejoice at the spread of democracy worldwide. There is the sense of hope that democracy will remove many of the social ills which other countries have suffered so long. Many countries do not expect to remove their problems entirely, or to attain a kind of "utopia" by adopting democratic practices; what they do want is to be able to make decisions themselves.3

Yet in thinking about the causes of many of our own social problems, political apathy among Americans themselves has become an excuse for not becoming involved. Conventional wisdom informs us that Americans appear, as Sartre once said, to "dwell in the quietism of despair" (Sartre 1949, 345). We appear to have become resigned to the fact that the political process somehow has a mind of its own and is indeed inaccessible to the individual citizen. As William Greider says, the public has "lost hope" in their ability to access the current political system in any authentic manner (Greider 1992, 17).

Many scholars have also reported that apathy has gained a sense of acceptability. Jeffrey Goldfarb observes that cynicism has become a form of "legitimation through disbelief" (Goldfarb 1991, 1-2). Daniel Yankelovich reports that the average citizen feels lost in the maze of special interest groups, lobbies and political action committees. Yankelovich claims that the public perception that
politicians are responsive to these groups exclusively, and not to individual citizens, is in fact accurate (Yankelovich 1991, 2-4). David Mathews, former secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, sums up the reasoning of the citizens today when he says:

"Being a citizen today is essentially a spectator sport...The disinterested citizen becomes disengaged, the disengaged citizen becomes disillusioned and disillusionment leads to despair".

(Kettering 1991, 23).

During a recent interview with Dr. Howard Margolis from the University of Chicago School of Public Policy, I discovered that he had encountered similar findings. His institute's research revealed that an overwhelming number of poor people have lost all hope in making any meaningful political changes. Further, these people looked with disdain at anyone who was "foolish" enough to attempt to "get involved". His concern was that the people who need to access the system the most, are the ones least likely to make the attempt, further entrenching the attitude of 'apathy'.

So, it appears that we may conclude, along with many politicians, and scholars, that people simply do not care about their fellow citizens or important issues, and that, as a result of the perceived impossibility in accessing the system, 'apathy' has become a legitimated response. We often hear people complain that, for example, "My voice doesn't count", or "What can one person do?" and "It does not matter who gets elected. Nothing changes". We acquiesce to the view that the political mechanisms are inaccessible to the common person; and, so, all that remains is for us to "work" the system for our own preservation (Berry 1989, 22-30).
In spite of all the dismal reports, the negative statistics, and the drop in voter activity, I will maintain that the American civic spirit has not died. Upon closer examination, the characterization of the American citizen as 'apathetic' may indeed be false. Yankelovich further reports that "Average Americans...hold deep and passionate convictions on many issues of public concern" (Yankelovich, 2). He says that the reason people do not vote is because they think that their vote will not make a difference. This is not to say that they do not care. The inference that inactivity on the part of citizens emanates from attitudes of quiet despair, of truly not caring, may be wrong. What initially appears to be an attitude of 'apathy' may in reality be described as one of impotence. People want to be involved, but they feel that they simply cannot.

In 1990, The Harwood Group and The Kettering Foundation undertook a study of how we, as citizens, see ourselves in politics. The Kettering Foundation reports that, contrary to popular opinion, most people are not apathetic about their role in politics (Kettering, 1991). In fact, Kettering's researchers have found that a great number of people are desperately concerned with issues which affect their lives, both directly and indirectly. The people surveyed signaled a sense of impotence in impacting their politicians at the national, as well as the local level. This inability to access the system appears as a recurrent theme in their research, indicating that what appears as 'apathy' may only be symptomatic of an even more entrenched problem (Kettering, 1991).

Stephanie Coontz has uncovered similar findings in her research. In writing about the current state of the American family,
Coontz argues that the crisis of the family is a symptom of a much larger social problem. Her report calls for the rebuilding of larger social ties in order to strengthen private family relations. She notices that some of the same problems which plague private families also permeate the nation's attitudes about social relations. She claims that "people are deeply disturbed with the lack of community and larger purpose in their lives". Moreover, she claims that her research has indicated that Americans "ache to do the right thing". This, she states, is evidence that outrage and impotence, rather than apathy, best describe American's attitudes towards the political system (Coontz 1992, 228-229).

Further investigation has revealed that the cause for this apparent gap between the citizenry and the politician is compounded by the current trend in government to limit the conception of the activity of political action to policy making. That is, this is a trend to rely on "policy experts" first, in the formation of policy and then to turn to the public only for "rubber stamp" approval. This has the effect of limiting the focus of democracy to what Robert McCollough calls the "managerial approach to politics" (McCollough 1991, 4-6). If managers or "experts" in matters of policy are seen as better suited to make decisions, they take on an "elite" status, which in turn alienates the citizen from the policy making process. On this rendering the citizens' only role is to listen and to accept.

The problem to which I am directing attention in this study may now be formulated in the following way: It is civic impotence not civic apathy which has become the norm rather than the
exception. Yet, given this conception of the citizen as impotent, how can the existing political mechanisms be adapted in such ways as to re-introduce the idea that citizens can access the political system, can be effective, must be active participants if democracy is to flourish, and that policy-making itself must be truly democratized?

I see the problem of civic impotence as a national one, but for the purposes of this thesis, I am going to limit my investigation to the analysis of how civic impotence is manifest locally, within my county township. Therefore, this will not be an examination of the purely abstract, theoretical dimensions of the problem. I will discuss the problem of impotence as it emerges from the concrete problems within the Sunrise Manor Township Board (hereafter referred to as the SMTB, whose nature and relevance will be clarified below). My hope is that this will provide my analysis with a proximity to the problem, its particular quirks and nuances, which an abstract or more global discussion might miss. Since the aim of this thesis is to engage and evaluate an applied ethic, it is necessary to deal with the problems phenomenally. By this I mean that I will address the larger domain of civic life in the nation by utilizing my own township's problems in this domain as a kind of a case study of phenomena in the larger body politic which beg to be engaged.

More specifically, I will offer a recommendation regarding how my local town board meetings might be modified in an effort to counter civic impotence. Within the scope of this paper, it is my intention to offer some insights into the causes of citizen impotence at the local level, and to explain why current efforts by
various citizens' groups which are currently active in the area are ineffective in implementing changes, either phenomenal or systemic.

**Research Methodology**

In an effort to communicate the immediacy of this problem, I have chosen to use the Participant/Observer method of research. I have taken on three distinct roles in order to broaden and legitimate my investigation. The first role will be that of a student. During my studies for a master's degree in Ethics and Policy Studies at UNLV, I have taken a variety of courses which have exposed me to the people who are at the forefront in the literature surrounding the issue of citizen participation. I have become familiar with the theoretical bases for their observations. This study has enabled me to understand the role of citizen participation from a variety of different perspectives.

The second role I will take will be that of the interested citizen. As an actual resident of Sunrise Manor, I have a proximity to the problems which an outsider might lack. I understand how the area is composed, and I am also in tune with the concerns of the residents, as they are my concerns as well. This leads me to the next role.

The third role I will take on is that of the participant/observer. Here, I am intentionally engaging the system in order to ground my research in actual events, giving credence to my findings which might not be available in a more theoretical research methodology. I will offer some personal background as to how I
became involved in the problem in order to contextualize my position within the discussion.

**Personal Involvement**

My personal understanding of the importance of an active government stems from a conglomeration of observations, feelings, and intuitions I have experienced over the last fifteen years. They grew in part out of my professional career in the highly competitive hotel/casino supply business in Las Vegas, Nevada. I was involved in the day to day bidding between my company and other firms, vying for the business of the various casinos. During the last three years of my involvement in the business (1988-91), I was astonished by the increasing intensity in the competition.

As a result of a variety of factors, competitors gradually began a vicious cycle of price cutting. Service and quality ceased to be a factor in determining who was awarded bids. Whoever could produce the lower price was awarded the business. Those who could not offer a lower price were eliminated, regardless of past associations or performance. This form of competition was not only intense, but unfair as well. Those companies which engaged in price cutting were able to eliminate their competition only by breaking the law. They would drive competitors out of business by selling products below cost. Although this is a direct violation of the Sherman Act, the companies involved in these activities are rarely prosecuted; because their victims were not able financially to afford to bring them to trial. The effect of this was to give the unfair
competitors a sense that they were unaccountable for their activities.

The consequences resulting from the breakdown in fair competition was particularly disturbing to me, although, at that time, I could not consciously articulate the problem. It seemed to parallel the problems big business as a whole was facing during the waning years of the eighties. I sensed that the public did not care about the effects of increased competition, so long as it did not affect them personally.

Moreover, the lack of substantial consequences to those participating in these questionable activities evidenced the inequality between those in the business world, and the general public. I came to the conclusion that anyone engaging in unfair business practices somehow became irreproachable or above the law. Further, since politicians are intimately related to those engaged in unfair business practices (through special interest groups, PAC's and lobbyists), I deemed those same politicians also to be unaccountable in their activities. Since the public, in practice, is held to more stringent legal codes, in comparison to persons engaged in unfair competition, I felt helpless in seeking justice in dealing with the unfair competitors. This serves as evidence of yet another way in which civic impotence is cultivated.

Nicholas Brady comes to a similar conclusion when he identifies politicians and big business as the "power elite" which, he claims, has become inaccessible to the common man. He argues that we have become alienated from the power elite because politicians, in association with unfair businessmen, have become
unaccountable for their actions (Brady 1990, 20-23). This sense of alienation from the power elite, on the part of the general public, adds to the notion that the common person cannot impact the political system.

During this period, I was also involved in two civic organizations; the PTA and my local community town board. The PTA in my son's elementary school had only seven active members. The school had over seven hundred students at that time. Despite myriad problems, ranging from truancy, overcrowding, gangs and drugs, parents were resistant to any efforts we made in attempting to enlist their services. In fact, we were warned by the principal that we were probably wasting our time and that it had been his experience that parents simply do not care. While I initially resented his advice, I came to agree with his observation. There appeared to be no acceptable alternative explanation of the facts.

Concurrently, I was active in the local county government. I attended meetings of the local town board as a concerned citizen. Here, too, I observed a lack of concern among the general public. During the board meetings, very few residents ever attended. If they did attend, it was exclusively as a reaction to a decision which would affect them immediately and personally. When I inquired as to why the residents were not encouraged to attend, the chairman of the board replied that "they simply do not care". Again I was puzzled at the apparent apathy among the general public.

At the time, I could not articulate my intuitions and feelings surrounding these issues. Nevertheless, I sensed that something was the matter. I had a conscious sense that Rousseau's warning (cited
at the beginning of this Preface) had been ignored. Upon further investigation, I discovered that I was not alone in these sentiments concerning an apathetic public. During a meeting of the American Management Association, in which the topic was fairness in competition, I found that throughout the country, people in business were deeply concerned about the problems I had experienced locally. I was able, finally, to communicate with people who were active in business and who shared the concerns I had. About this same time I read the study by the Kettering Foundation (mentioned earlier) which detailed the apparent trend in apathy on a national level. This study struck a chord in that it described the same feelings I had experienced locally in business, politics, and the PTA.

It was during my studies at the Institute for Ethics and Policy Studies, that I was able to come to terms with the problem I naively had thought I alone was concerned about. Soon I discovered that there were many writers concerned with the problems of public participation and apathy. For example, Yankelovich details how a "gap" exists between the experts within government at all levels and the public. He argues that this is the major source for the alienation of the public from the political process, which in turn creates an "invisible barrier" to participation in policy decisions (Yankelovich, 3-5). Jeffrey Goldfarb writes that cynicism, expressed in the apathetic response of citizens, is "the single most pressing challenge facing American democracy today" (Goldfarb, 1-5). Furthermore, the authors of The Good Society have argued that Americans have abandoned the "democratic impulse" which the rest of the world has
looked upon as an ideal. They argue that as individual Americans, if we "allow the operations of the economy and the government to go on 'over our heads', we are dangerously close to falling into a kind of fatalism from which there may be no escape" (Bellah et al 1991, 22).

Furthermore, the recent 1992 national elections brought out a cry for bringing politics back to the people. Declarations from quarters as diverse as conservative Pat Buchanan, liberal Jerry Brown and independent Ross Perot, announced their claim to be the "peoples' candidate". Indeed, the Perot campaign was initially successful in tapping an electorate tired of politics as usual. It was also successful in allowing the platform planks for Perot's candidacy to develop from grassroots organizations within each individual state. Many reporters noted that, perhaps, the American spirit had been re-awakened.

Yet in spite of these apparent strides in quelling apathy and empowering the general public to "live out their creed", a rise in citizen participation has not occurred. Exit polls in 1992 national elections reported that most people viewed the election as a choice between the least of three evils. They still express hopelessness at affecting meaningful changes through increased participation. The results of my own informal poll of local voters revealed the same sentiments. Some people even made excuses for their chosen candidates, citing the limits of one man in bringing about changes in the economy. Indeed the sense that we live in a world beyond our control is still a strong conviction held by the general public. Why?
We begin to address this question in the first chapter where I will detail the problem as it has unfolded in my local community.
CHAPTER NOTES/PREFACE


2 Apathy seems to have two distinct definitions. Normally, we define the term to mean the absence of concern. However, when I use the word 'apathy', I am referring to the way in which the term is misused by people in accounting for the lack of civic involvement.

3 For a detailed account of the "faith" of democracy in Central Europe, see Jane Mansbridge, "Hard Decisions". *Philosophy and Public Policy,* V#10 1, (Winter 1990): 2.

4 Interview with Dr. Howard Margolis from the University of Chicago School for Public Policy, conducted at the Institute for Ethics and Policy Studies UNLV, January 17, 1993.

5 The Sherman Act was enacted by Congress in 1890 as a safeguard against monopolistic competition. See Kintner, 1973: 82-83.

6 Meeting of the American Management Association, Palace Station Hotel, March 15, 1992.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Setting the Problem.

Citizen Participation in Clark County Politics: Apathy or Impotence?

It has been my experience as an active participant in local politics for the last ten years that many of the national trends concerning citizen participation can be aptly illustrated within Clark County, Nevada. In my efforts to organize and involve citizens within my county township, formally known as the Sunrise Manor Township Board (SMTB), I found that a wide variety of groups already existed. They included twelve different religious organizations, two trade unions, one support group for the handicapped, fourteen PTA's, as well as many Neighborhood Watch programs.

After speaking with many of the leaders and members of these groups, I discovered that, although these groups had disparate functions, they all shared one thing in common. The groups unanimously expressed that they were tired of politics as usual in the neighborhood. Along with the special interests of each given group, they were very concerned about the issues confronting the residents in the entire area. Furthermore, they complained that they
simply did not understand the system and that their efforts to learn how to access the system were repeatedly met with confusing directions from county officials. They all said they had been "given the run-around" by county employees.

The attempts by these organizations to solve problems and address issues within the existing framework had proven to be in vain. However, the resolve of the people within these groups could not be questioned. They had great concern for all the residents in the area and were unwilling to give up simply because they had run into a dead end. Although these groups could also be characterized as ineffective in their efforts to communicate their concerns with county officials, they could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be called apathetic. Many of these people were dedicated to making progress on issues of local concern, as well as larger issues. They devote great amounts of effort, time and resources in organizing meetings, knocking on doors and sending out mailers. They spend countless hours in tedious county meetings, hoping to voice their opinions, even though they have little hope of being heard.

In fairness to the claims of local politicians, I must report that many people have become hardened and indifferent in their attitudes towards local politics. These citizens testify that the "good old boy" network cannot be budged. Sadly, cynicism has usurped their feelings of impotence, though these people represent a distinct minority within the community.
What is the Matter?

Background: Southern Nevada has a very confusing geographical-political organization. Within the greater metropolitan area, commonly referred to as Las Vegas, there is a variety of governments, each controlling overlapping sections of the area. In Clark county, within which the greater metropolitan area falls, there are six districts, each of which is represented by a county commissioner. The city of Las Vegas proper falls within a portion of each of these districts and city laws and ordinances take precedence over those of the county. The remaining portions of the county districts, which fall outside the city limits are divided into thirteen townships.¹

Current Policy: According to Mr. Alan Pulsipher (the liaison between the county commissioners and the town advisory boards), the town boards exist as a communications' tool. The members of the board are to meet bimonthly to discuss wide-ranging issues within their communities. The findings of their meetings are then reported to the commissioners who take their recommendations into consideration. The town boards, thus, become the “eyes and ears” of the commissioners, reporting on the issues within the community at large. Each of the five town board members is responsible for a defined area within the town and is the representative for the people within that area and the town as a whole.

The "matter" with the current system is that individual members of the town boards exercise no effective method by which to “listen” to the voices of the community. There is no active role
for the citizen. Although legal notices are posted on issues such as zoning problems, and a time is allotted at the end of every meeting for general public participation, too few people attend. I sought to discover why this was the case.

My research\(^2\) revealed that the commissioners' claim that "citizen input is important" appears to be just so much lip service. Some might argue that it is up to the individual citizen to work within the system and become involved. Too often this type of participation takes place only as a reaction to a problem which is immediate and severe, or else highly emotional. While this is a valid form of participation, it is not the only form. Such reactionary participation is not under the scrutiny of this thesis.

Who has the Problem?

I discovered that the lack of public involvement is due in part to an apathetic attitude towards politics, but it is also attributable to an ignorance by those with genuine concerns, as to how the system is designed to function. This in turn translates to a feeling among citizens of political impotence. The problem in question is, therefore, the direct concern of the citizens. It may now be re-framed in terms which are local and specific. If the county government recognizes the importance of citizen involvement, then as a concerned citizen within Sunrise Manor, how can I make my voice heard? What avenues are available to me as a private individual to participate in the process? How can I contribute anything meaningful to public discussions? How do I relieve my sense of civic impotence?
Residents of the SMTB area are woefully under-represented. There are five representatives serving a population nearing 150,000. The citizens face continued exclusion from the decision-making process which is contrary to the intent of the county's open meetings law. They are forced to trust that the SMTB will decide the direction of the development of the area in the same way the citizens would. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Some of the effects of this problem will be described in the following examples.

One of the findings of my informal survey of the groups in our area revealed that most people within the area do not want to allow any more development of the desert areas. Sunrise Manor has been a semi-rural area, consisting of many "ranch-style" homes. Many of the residents have horses, and most of the area has been zoned for larger-sized lots, providing some protection from the encroachment of high density development. During the last five years, as a direct result of decisions made by the SMTB regarding zoning changes, much of the rural atmosphere of the area has been lost. There have been many successful efforts by a variety of developers to have the zoning restrictions on the size of building lots relaxed. As a result, the residents who enjoyed their rural life-style have been forced to adapt to their new neighbors at a very close range. This has caused many of the horse owners to sell their horses since there is now considerably less land on which to ride the horses.

Safety, too, has become a concern, resulting from the increased traffic in the area. In part this concern is attributable to the fact that crime has risen dramatically. Moreover, the vast
majority of homes in Sunrise Manor soon will be of the high density type, further restricting the use of the area by the original owners. Furthermore, even those of us who have moved into some of the newer developments feel that enough is enough. We are forced to suffer unwanted changes in our own community in the name of progress. Still, the SMTB, the "eyes and ears" of the commissioners', do not seek our input on these issues (or any others) and development continues unabated.

What is at Stake?

The residents are forced to trust the decisions of the board members even though they may not endorse them. This ignores the rights of every citizen to add input in these decisions; and it is an affront on their status as democratic citizens, indeed even as human beings. The politicians on the board believe that they know what is in the best interest of the area residents. What is at stake, then, are the rights of the individuals to have representatives who will listen and then act in light of the wishes of the public in matters that directly affect them. The danger is that the citizens will be guided by guesses at best, or politicians interested in their own agendas at worst. The public might also be expected to conform to general expectations and will be kept from becoming deviant through coercion. At stake then is the ability of the citizens to have a say in the destiny of their own community and lives, the very heart of democracy.
Alternative Framings of the Problem. The Platonic Ship: Who is the Helmsman?, Who is the Crew?, Who are the Passengers?

In this section I am proceeding on the assumption that a problem is not merely determined by what constitutes the "facts", but also by how the problem is stated, i.e. in the communication of the problem. Therefore, any comprehensive and fair account of a problem must examine not only the facts, but also the various metaphors in which the problem is articulated, understood and responded to.

Towards this end, I will describe other renderings of the current debate surrounding the SMTB. In Plato's Republic, Socrates compares the relationship between the passengers, the ship's helmsman (the navigator), and the crew, attempting to explain the role of the philosopher ruler, the person who will lead the state, as well as the role of the citizenry (Plato, 488a-491). Drawing from the heuristic versatility of this analogy, I will develop three metaphorical descriptions of the helmsman, crew, and passengers. As such, this analysis is not intended as an exegesis of Plato's political philosophy itself. Rather, these metaphors will function as symbolic representations of the current range of potential interpretations, pertaining to the role of the decision-makers, experts, and citizens within the SMTB.

Contextualizing the problem in this manner, I hope to provide the reader with a critical vantage point from which to envision, evaluate, and finally act upon the situation. I will articulate three
diverse perspectives which represent the principal paradigms operative in the contemporary socio-political milieu.

Model I: Government by Expert, Secondary Expert as Crew Member, and Citizen as Passenger.

In the Republic, Plato puts forth an argument defending the position that only a select few are appropriate to become society's leaders. He argues that only those people who are trainable in philosophy have the "excellence" necessary to lead the state. This excellence consists of complete knowledge regarding politics. To explain this claim, Plato composes an example which illustrates the relationship between the activities of the passengers, crew members, and the helmsman on board a ship. He skillfully shows the reader how it would be reckless to trust a voyage to anyone except the one who has the special knowledge necessary to bring a ship to port safely. Socrates, Plato's protagonist in the dialogue, argues that if trust is placed in those not specially trained in navigation, mutiny might overcome the voyage, and disaster would result. The danger is that the ship might become hopelessly lost and/or vulnerable to attack.

Socrates bases this argument on his observation that people have different functions, as a result of differing natural aptitudes. He also notices that humans are not self-sufficient and do indeed need a society to sustain life itself. He concludes that a voyage can proceed safely only when the passengers behave like members of a "crew", performing their specific tasks while leaving the navigation to the helmsman.
Modifying Plato's model to fit the current social structure, the primary expert is the decision-maker who is played by the navigator, the one who has the necessary knowledge required to guide the ship. The secondary experts are the crew members who have specific knowledge concerning the operations of the ship. The citizens' role is to allow the experts to function without interference.

The parallel can be made that governments perform best when those with an excellence in politics are in control. Within this system, citizens, like the passengers, are required to do the job they have an excellence for and to "mind their own business" with regard to jobs they are not fit to perform (Plato 342c). When someone meddles in an area in which he or she is naturally incompetent, a less than efficient outcome may result. Therefore, when everyone performs the tasks he or she is best suited for (the decision-makers, the experts, and the public), a balance is attained and the state progresses effectively.

This analogy might similarly be applied to the actions of the SMTB members. As navigators, the board members treat the residents as passengers whose job is to not meddle in affairs of state. The members believe that they have the wisdom to guide the future development of the area. They also believe that, if the citizens get involved, then chaos could replace their orderly direction. The board's strong-hold on the process by which citizens can access the agenda is a clear example of this attitude. The "crew" in this model are the experts to which the board members might turn to for technical advise.
Any deviation from this system is viewed by the leaders as an error in judgment by the citizens, i.e., they are not doing their appropriate "job". Thus, the citizens' political duty, their job as "passengers", is relegated to the task of simply voting in elections and minding their own business. Therefore, the citizens who feel impotent have made the wrong assumption; they are not expected to contribute any input. Rather, their role is to elect and then support and trust in the expert knowledge of the SMTB members.

"Mutiny" in the SMTB would be seen as the attempt by an average citizen to become part of the process of the decisions of the board. The danger is that citizens, who are untrained in politics (and thus lack the knowledge necessary to make those decisions), would gain control. The township would be hopelessly lost in a maze of unfounded opinions; and anarchy might result.

Model II: Government by Greatest Good, Expert as Crew Member, and Citizen as Customer.

One way that the helmsman/crew member/passenger analogy could be modified would be to acknowledge that anyone has the potential to become a member of the crew or to become the navigator. As Michael Walzer points out in his book, *Spheres of Justice*, even in the Platonic voyage, ultimately the passengers decide their destination, not the helmsmen. The key difference in this perspective would be that passengers do in fact have the ability to know what is best for themselves and that there is no natural excellence assigned to each passenger. Here the role of the
passenger would switch from acting as a subordinate "passenger", to that of a freely-choosing "customer".

The guiding principle of this perspective is that all passengers have the rational capacity to decide their own activities and destinations. In this analogy, the passenger can be likened to a paying customer on board a cruise ship. The crew maintains their role as having expert abilities regarding the operations of the ship. The helmsman has the task of making sure that all customers are allowed to maximize the pleasure of their trip. The job of the helmsmen becomes the optimization of the greatest good for the greatest number of passengers. As facilitator, the helmsman also needs expert knowledge in determining the greatest good. This is the standard he appeals to when competing individuals have conflicting interests.

For example, one person might want to smoke and another might want smoking prohibited. The helmsman would have to decide how smoking would affect the majority of passengers. He or she would use his or her authority to ensure that the liberties of the majority have been maintained. Thus, the helmsman might ban smoking in the interest of the health of a majority of passengers. The passenger who wanted to smoke is now reconciled in the fact that, although in this particular instance he or she could not smoke, majority preference itself was maintained.

The individual passengers are free to act in their own self-interest, confident that the helmsman will provide for their protection while the crew runs the ship. Each passenger has no obligation to other passengers. The goal of the passenger/customer
is to maximize his or her own goals, which has the indirect result of enriching the lives of others by ensuring that their liberty will not be intruded upon.

Mutiny on this ship would occur when an individual attempted to gain control over others by force. The passengers would be subject to his or her rule, disabling their pursuit of personal pleasure. For example, some customers might be forced to endure cigarette smoke in previously designated non-smoking areas.

A comparison can now be made. The state can also run smoothly if politicians seek to maximize the good of the greatest number of people possible. This good, expressed as the pursuit of happiness, is traditionally found in the appropriation of property from nature. Property is acquired through trade in a free marketplace. This is accomplished by minimizing the role and size of the government, allowing for the free choices of individuals, while at the same time providing protection for their properties (Bellah et al, 67). The goal of the government is to provide a framework for the competing individuals. The individual must relinquish his or her choice if it interferes with others and the way this is brought into a balance by the government is to base any decisions on providing for the greatest good for the largest number of individuals possible, or majority rule.

The SMTB could be explained in these terms as well. The role of the board members would be to allow for the free choices of individuals within the community. The SMTB would only serve to balance the goals of the competing individuals so that the greatest good could be preserved. In this way, the good of all could be
maximized and freedom can be served. If this balance is destroyed, one group could gain control and have the power to thwart the greatest good rule for its own gain.

On this model, the role of individuals would be to act in accord with the rule of the majority while simultaneously preserving their own rights, as consistent with the preference of the greatest number of citizens. The role of the expert would be to provide technical advice. For example, if there was a new road under consideration, an expert in the area of procuring services and goods might be consulted by members of the SMTB. This expert could provide information regarding the most prudent means for building the new road. Without his or her advice, the board members might not make an efficient choice, resulting in the waste of taxpayers funds. A less than efficient decision would not bring about the greatest good.

Mutiny here would occur if someone were able to control the decisions of the board for his or her own gain. The danger is that the citizens would lose their freedom to determine their own course of action, and tyranny would result by usurpation.

As an example, we might consider that if most of the residents wished to preserve the area for ranch style homes, the role of the SMTB would be to prevent others from changing the direction of the area towards high-density homes, thus promoting the greatest good for the greatest number of residents.
Model III: Government by Co-operation, Expert as Crew Member, and Citizen as Colleague.

Another way to modify the helmsman/crew member/passenger analogy is to state that the passengers do in fact choose their destination, but that the choices are made within the context of a common good for the voyage itself. Within this configuration of the analogy, aspects of both the previous versions are developed. Borrowing from the first rendition, the claim that people are not self-sufficient is maintained, while the idea that we all have particular aptitudes is dropped. From the second rendering, the idea that people have freedom of choice is maintained, while the criterion for achieving this, expressed as the greatest good for the greatest number, is dropped. What is left, then, is a ship where the passengers can bring about their own choices, but since they are not self-sufficient, they must rely on the efforts of one another in realizing their individual goals. The passengers can thus be characterized as "colleagues".

Unlike the previous model, here all passengers share in the stake and welfare of one another. The passengers' choices are guided by their relation to a common good for all those on board. Without the community effort, the passengers realize that the voyage itself could not have been made possible. Therefore, it is the commonality among the passengers (as non self-sufficient individuals) which is the basis for the activities of those on board. In this way, the individuals can safeguard and maintain their own identity, by first preserving the institution which allows those choices, the community of colleagues on board the ship.
Here, the navigators are considered the caretakers of the voyage itself, providing the possibility for people to reach the next port. All colleagues, over a period of time, must share in the responsibilities of decision making when problems occur if the ship is ever to arrive at its destination. The standard by which decisions are made then depends on seeking contributions from all "colleagues" in order to tap the potential wisdom of a greater number of contributors. This will enable them to forge an agreement from which action on the problem at hand can proceed. The ship can now be described as being governed from the bottom up, rather than from the top down. Progress in problematic areas is made, not by appealing to special knowledge or the greatest good, but rather by individuals participating in a forum, contributing to the discussion, in search for an agreement which will produce action. They rely on the collective wisdom of the group to provide a solution, which has more truth than a solution attainable by any particular individual.

Mutiny on this ship would happen when someone went against the good of the voyage for personal gains. Unfortunately, those gains would become hollow when the mutineer finds s/he no longer is part of the community of passengers and, as a consequence, life loses its security and value.

We can now make the comparison to the state. Here, the function of the government is to maintain the agreements people forge and provide a forum by which citizens can contribute to the process. The role of the individual is to be attentive to the good of the community, for it is from the community that the individual's
own rights and identity are legitimated. Since the existence of the community, framed as agreements concerning how society functions, is prior to the potential for the individual, the community thus allows for the existence of the individual, and, therefore, the individual is defined in terms of his or her relation to the common good.

Another important assumption within this view is that it is necessary for the progress of society to solicit a variety of diverse perspectives which can add richness to discussion. It is assumed that, while it is possible for a person to know what is best for him or herself, this knowledge is 1) limited and 2) always found within a specific, value laden context, i.e. the community. One consideration is that it is impossible for a solitary person to ever fully comprehend the entire range of thought and experience in such a way as to claim to be fully competent in decision making for oneself or for the community no matter what one's aptitudes are. Consequently, those seeking knowledge need to access the perspectives of others in an effort to gain a deeper understanding, by combining and comparing their knowledge. Similarly, the state can run smoothly and reach accords on otherwise unresolvable issues when the knowledge of a variety of concerned people is taken into account. In this way, they respect the views of each individual while reaching an agreement on how to proceed.

Mutiny in this state would occur if any one individual assumed s/he had the ability to know the complete truth about humanity. The danger is that if only a few people are allowed to contribute to the direction of the state, they might, due to their limited visions,
miss some important considerations and delay or end progress in finding solutions to problems. Thus, the collective decision of the body politic would guide the direction of the ship. The addition of multiple perspectives will afford a greater clarity in viewing problems, their consequences and personal impacts.

This analogy could be applied to the SMTB members as well. On this framing the board should actively encourage and seek out input from the citizens in order to inject wisdom into the discussions of issues. The area residents should be treated as equally important members of the community (i.e., colleagues). The needs of the community should be paramount to the members. The role of the board members then would become perfunctory, overseeing the discussion of issues by the residents and reporting the results of the discussions to the commissioners. The board members would then become the "eyes and ears" of the community. They would have an expertise as overseers and facilitators of the forum itself.

The role of the expert is once again to provide technical advice to the board members so that they can provide more complete information to the commissioners. For example, a board member might need technical advice concerning the possible effects of building a park in a flood plain. Without this advice, the decisions of the commissioners could be flawed.

The role of the citizens is to acknowledge the priority of their acceptance of democratic principles of plurality and not attempt to violate this view by trying to impose a unitary perspective. The citizen also should contribute to the discussion of issues and have
genuine concerns for the welfare of the community. For it is the community, through its various institutions, which allows the individual to flourish. These institutions are comprised of families, churches, schools, work places, neighborhoods, as well as many others. It is in and through these institutions that personal values are realized. Only through multi-vocal discussion of issues can the community progress to realize the goals that are inherent to its raison d'etre. Mutiny in this model would result if the members were able to manipulate the agenda in order to lock out the in-put from residents.

As an example of this type of government, the residents of the SMTB would be expected to discuss the issues of ranch versus high-density housing. Each person could add personal input in the discussion, ultimately resulting in a more informed decision by the commission.

**Personal Perspective,**

**Normative Assumptions.**

In this section I will acknowledge the perspective which I will bring to bear on the various interpretations of the SMTB. Within this study, I am aligning myself with the third description of the ship analogy as "co-navigator/colleague". I believe that this description more fully upholds the notion of a "representative democratic ethic". I begin defining this ethic with the assumptions contained in the thoughts of our forefather, James Madison. In *The Federalist Papers* (specifically #10), Madison calls for a republic which is guided by citizens who take an active role in informing their
representatives of their opinions and concerns. He views involvement in decision making as paramount in protecting the country from the powers of various factions. Madison acknowledges the legitimacy of factions, but suggests that, in order to temper decisions, the voice of all people must be brought to bear on problems, but by way of a medium which is selective. In arguing that this is the only way to protect freedom, Madison hopes to ensure that representative democracy does not degenerate into a tyrannical form of majority rule.

Madison suggests that, in order to safeguard society, we ought to:

"...refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through a medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations" (Madison 1961, 47).

I will argue that the first two models (government by expert and government by greatest good) violate this representative democratic ethic, in that both limit the role of public input into the political forum. As such, these models encourage impotence and are, therefore, not fully democratic.

This representative democratic ethic could be defined as follows: the first and foremost consideration, prior to any individual's interests, is that progress in society must be based on agreements forged in dialogue with the full diversity of citizens who constitute the body politic.

I am calling for the renewal of the acceptance of other perspectives (particularly those concerning human nature), even if
they are radically opposed to one's own. Hence, I am not advocating any particular secular or religious position. Toleration can be redefined as the recognition of the legitimacy of other perspectives in view of the fact that any individual perspective is but one of many on the human situation. I contend that our forefathers intended pluralism to integrate a co-operative understanding of other views, rather than creating the radical opposition and factioning which is prevalent in social relations today.

The architects of our democracy also supported the notion that a variety of perspectives was beneficial by adding richness to society. Thomas Jefferson declared that:

"differences of opinion will arise from difference of perception...but these differences, when permitted as in this happy country...purify themselves by free discussion, [and] are but passing clouds overspreading our land transiently, and leaving our horizon more bright and serene" (Jefferson 1961, 129).

One might ask, "On what basis should we accept the perspectives of another, even if we disagree with them?" I contend that in a pluralistic society, it is possible to sympathize with the views of others and realize that they may "see" a side of an issue that we cannot. Further, a variety of perspectives is necessary to insure that a majority does not become overly influential. But more importantly, we need to allow the enrichment of discussion by adding perspectives; because as humans, we are simply incapable of seeing the world in its totality. Fred D'Agostino relates this view as well, stating:
"We unavoidably approach the world, our lives, and our fellows from some particular perspective which offers us only limited access to the full range of considerations-bearing on our understanding of the world and our actions in relation to it and to our fellows—which might be available from other perspectives [from] which we are...denied access" (D’Agostino 1990, 451).

If we recognize that any particular viewpoint is but a partial rendering of life, the quest in solving the world's problems, by finally understanding the "truth" concerning human nature, becomes irrelevant. Therefore, it is impossible for anyone (i.e. the helmsman in the expert model) to attain the status of expert in political knowledge. Here I acknowledge that there simply is no one, complete, and final philosophical anthropology. Instead, the analysis of human nature itself should be understood as an aid in the discussion, contributing a richness and depth of perspectives which are unattainable by any particular individual. Bellah also describes democracy as an "ongoing moral quest, not an end state" (Bellah et al., 22).

Conversely, anyone claiming to know "The Truth" about the human situation, faces the prospect of alienating all those who rightfully disagree with his/her interpretation. For this person, truth takes on the characteristic of self-righteousness and becomes counter-productive to open-minded discussion. As Christopher Barry exclaims:

Ironically, in a country whose chief virtue is the recognition of the limitations of all men bearing on the truth, we seem to have a natural disposition to view
doctrines which we personally identify with as if they do indeed lay claim to the complete and final truth (Berry 1989, 11).

In the attempt to persuade others, by limiting the scope of human nature to one interpretation, he or she has kept the discussion in an adversarial mode, which serves to stifle progress, and, potentially, to paralyze those involved from acting on issues that affect them in common, except through means of power or force. Here I would include all those supporting either the "government by expert" or "government by greatest good" models.

It is mistakenly understood by those who claim to know the truth, that opposing beliefs are incommensurable and that one party in any dispute is simply wrong. The common solution is to force the party who is wrong to acquiesce, either by coercion or force.

Essentially, as co-habitating individuals, as Fred D'Agostino emphasizes, we must "feel the tug" of another's view (D'Agostino, 457). We can be sympathetic to opposing views if we realize that they too are limited in their scope. In this way, a productive communication can take the place of battling and power struggles associated with conventional oppositional or adversarial tactics. The realization can be made that within the plurality and incompleteness of any view, it makes sense to be willing to examine all views in the hope of coming to a greater understanding of common issues. When we become committed to better understanding of one another, we can be made of one mind, and a new truth, in which action can be implemented in the areas we agree upon, is brought about.
Communication, structured as open-minded discussion, can replace communication in the form of power and opposition. This can unite men and women in their common goals and advance society in a common enterprise towards freedom and equality. Then society will proceed on the basis of a common truth. Richard McKeon argues that productive communication shifts the issue from opposition of theories to "the application of reasons for the actions formulated to resolve the problem, ...[which] might open the possibility of coming to agreement [emphasis mine] on common action or policy" (McKeon 1970, 61). Productive communication shifts the issue because reasons are discussable and can be strengthened through discussion. Moreover, if there is no agreement, then the losers know why their views were not successful.  

American democracy can serve as the structure which will uphold personal values and allow humankind to progress in its enterprise of creating a society where all beliefs and interests are allowed to flourish. Finally, in acknowledging the value and legitimacy of input from the public, apathy and impotence can give way to more responsive citizenship.

In Chapter IV, I will use this personal perspective as a foil in my analysis of the alternate theories and I will view the alternatives as contributing perspectives themselves in the ongoing resolution of the problems of civic impotence. In Chapter V, I will apply my theory to the problems facing the residents of Sunrise Manor and I will defend my perspective by showing its strengths (and limitations) in comparison with the other paradigms.
Although the thoughts expressed in my personal perspective are my own, I am indebted to the work of Richard McKeon, Walter Watson, James Ford, Fred D'Agostino, Thomas McCollough, Richard Benjamin and Michael Walzer and Daniel Yankelovich, as well as a host of others. Their works have illuminated and helped me to articulate my own thoughts.
CHAPTER NOTES/I

1 For a detailed description of the political organization of Clark County, Nevada see the published report: Local Government in Clark County, NV. Public Administration Service. Chicago, IL. 1968.

2 My research consisted of a year long informal study of the attitudes among SMTB residents. I questioned people at meetings of various organizations such as church groups and the PTA. I also listened to their comments during discussions and formal SMTB meetings.

3 Nevada's open meetings law requires that the public be informed as to the agenda of all meetings and be allowed to attend all meetings which effectively eliminates "closed door meetings".


5 Amelie Rorty offers a thorough analysis of the values of acting in community in "The Value of Plural Morality". Social Philosophy and Policy, 9(2), Sum 92,38-62.

6 Allison Dundes Renteln argues that the chief strength of human nature is found in peoples diverse perspectives and aptitudes. This, Renteln argues, provides the basis for discussion; while also addressing the complaint that relativism is tantamount to unaccountability. "Relativism and the Search for Human Rights." American Anthropologist, V90 #1 (1988): 56-72
CHAPTER II

Current Status of the Problem.
How is the Problem in the SMTB Unfolding?

The results of a year long study of the SMTB indicate that the members of the board operate on the principle of political efficiency, i.e., government by "experts". The board members believe that they are capable of making decisions for the general population and that any input from the citizens only serves to cloud the issues or disrupt the meetings, working against the efficiency of their system. For example, board members frequently express the opinion that the average citizen is apathetic towards citizen participation and deserves to be ignored, at the very least.

Warrant for this claim comes from the board members' experiences with the public over many years. SMTB members claim that very few people ever access the system, seldom attending the bi-weekly meetings. They also argue that the only time that people do attend is when an issue being discussed affects them directly. Further, they state that the average citizen is incapable of adding any meaningful input to the meetings because they are not "up" on current affairs within the community.¹

Board members also claim that the average citizen lacks the sophistication and experience, necessary in making the kinds of decisions appropriate to the meetings. The board members do
recognize the time-slot on the meeting agendas which is specifically for the input of the general public, in accordance with the open meetings law. Thus, the board members conclude that the average citizen does not care about what happens in the community. Therefore, the board members are best equipped, indeed necessary, to care for the citizens within their district.

While the members claim to be sensitive to the concerns of the public, their actions do not bear this out. They discourage people from accessing the time period allotted for citizen participation by minimizing the importance of the time. They do this by requiring a written request to be put on the agenda, subject to their approval. This limits the number of people who would otherwise be willing to participate in a spontaneous discussion. They also place the time slot for public discussion at the end of the meeting. This discourages people from remaining to the end, having to wait through several hours of tedious discussions concerning zoning.

Those that do attempt to participate in the meetings are further discouraged by the attitudes of the board members. The people who do participate are made to look foolish or silly, their concerns often trivialized. Public comments by board members such as "Are you done yet?" or "Can we get back to our important business?" and "You don't understand the big picture", are used by the board members to differentiate their expert knowledge from the "non-sense" of the public and to intimidate would-be citizen participants.
What are the Specific Problems?

During this one year span in which I studied these meetings, fully 95% of all issues discussed by the SMTB were devoted to issues of property zoning. Their limited agenda has served to define the singular purpose of the SMTB as a zoning board. This, according to County Commissioner Jay Bingham is not the proper image for the SMTB to be presenting. Bingham, the overseer of the board reiterated the claim that "the purpose of the board is to be the eyes and ears of the county commissioners in matters pertaining to the people who live in the various districts". Because no active engagement of the SMTB and the public ever takes place, few people even know about the existence of the board. Those that do rarely attend either because they think that the meetings are solely for the purpose of zoning, or because previous action has yielded negative results. Thus, while the members do adhere to the letter of the open meetings law (to include public input), they choose to ignore the spirit of the law (to take that input into consideration when making policy). This briefly describes the outward appearance of what comprises the SMTB.

Furthermore, when asked to attend a special PTSA meeting at the high school served by the SMTB, no one from the commissioners' office or the SMTB was in attendance. The topic of this special meeting was the safety of high school students in the aftermath of a recent murder of one student by several others. Many parents were outraged by the apparent lack of concern on the part of local officials. None, however, was surprised that they were
absent. If they were truly interested in public opinion, why did they ignore such an important meeting?

This most difficult question of why they act this way will now be dealt with. Often the motives of an individual or group are obscured, either accidently or intentionally. However, this does not preclude the possibility of finding evidence explaining their behavior. My initial investigation of the various board members was very revealing. They were most eager to tell me why they had wanted to be appointed to the board; a two year, voluntary position.

One member of the board claimed it was his "civic duty to be active in politics", donating his otherwise "valuable" time out of a sense of obligation. He often stated that his years as a businessman gave him "valuable insights" which were unavailable to the "common" citizen. He always framed his discussion in business terms and he frequently used business jargon, which presumably no one understood except him. He was overtly resentful and condescending towards the participants in the meetings, acting very recklessly in his decisions, doling out his vote as if he were doing the parties in question a favor. He rarely discussed the merits of an issue, constantly looking at his watch and continuously asking those giving testimony to "Hurry it along". His attitude was apparently that it was a waste of time to discuss the merits of issues since he and the other board members already had the prescription figured out. Thus, the input from citizens was, in his opinion, an intrusion on his time.

Curiously, one day, an attorney presented a proposal for a zoning change on a 100 acre piece of property. The attorney was
requesting that the property be changed from residential to commercial. There were several people who protested the change, because their homes were near the property in question. They wanted the lawyer representing the developer to answer some of their questions concerning the impact of the development on their neighborhood. These citizens were concerned about increased traffic and the potential for a loss in their own property values. They originally purchased their homes in a rural area with the assumption that it would remain zoned for rural use, unless they agreed to any changes.

Immediately upon hearing these questions, the board member began to get very excited and anxious about some of the objections. The member, described above, called for an immediate vote on the proposed change, claiming that the objections were only clouding the issues and that they had better vote while the picture was still clear. Curiously, he asked to abstain from the vote. The other board members and the attorney agreed. Against the objection of the people opposed to the change, the board took a vote without further discussion. They voted in favor of the change unanimously.

Upon leaving the meeting I spoke to one of the people who were there to protest the change. She informed me that the member who pushed for passage of the change was a partner in the development company who wanted to develop the land. This might explain why the member in question abstained from the vote, but it cannot justify his or the board's action!

Another member of the board assumed the role of politician, a self-appointed spokes-person for the board, though not the
chairperson. He was often the only board member to engage in any
discussion with those in attendance. He would give eloquent
responses to questions that only required a yes or no answer. He
would quote laws and ordinances with the skill and sophistication of
a trial lawyer. He would address the people in the discussions as if
they were indebted to him. My favorite quote from one of the
meetings is, "You people can't possibly understand what's best for
you. That's why I was appointed to this board". This exemplifies the
arrogance of the first model. He claims an expertise and uses it as a
right to scorn his fellow citizens.

I soon found out from a friend that this person had another
reason for being on the board. He was seeking higher office and was
using his position on the SMTB to impress his superiors and refine
his political skills. This was confirmed by the member at the next
meeting.

**Policy Proposal**

The **Objective**: Return Control of
Politics to Citizens.

Central to the thesis is the belief that radical individualism, as
well as alleged expertise in politics, are perversions of the
democratic paradigm intended by our forefathers and, in fact, are
not democratic at all. I will attempt to reveal how individualism and
expertism are the sources of the breakdown in communications
between politicians and citizens. Thus, I am calling for
interpretation of the radical reduction of citizen participation as
symptomatic of inept communication, at best, and deliberate attempts to exclude participation, at worst.

This is not to say that there are not other factors which bear on the problems of non-involvement. Civic education and a sense of responsibility and tradition may also be lacking in citizens. While these are important factors, relevant to the problems at hand, I think that, without instituting the proper mechanisms, even those who are educated and responsible will have a difficult time accessing the system. Therefore, the main objective of my policy proposal will concentrate on providing a forum by which communication can take place in an authentic democratic form. What that form is will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Given that a system for public participation exists, the difficulty rests in increasing public participation, if the town board is to represent the community accurately and fairly by providing a forum for open discussion. If there is no discussion between the individual board members and the community, the board's recommendations cannot accurately reflect the concerns of the residents. We simply cannot trust that one person will choose to promote the same values as those within a diverse community of many thousands of people. Moreover, the acknowledgement of the limited wisdom of the few speaks loudly to involving as many perspectives as possible. By actively involving people, on a regular basis, the diversity of many perspectives and concerns can serve to enhance the richness of discussion and better serve the entire community more effectively.
The Method of Change

As I have explained, a great majority of the people within the community are active in organizations such as the PTA, church groups, homeowner associations, labor unions and many others. The proposal which I will make recommends tapping the existing resources within the community as a practical and manageable method of increasing citizen involvement and facilitating discussions between the citizens, board members and commissioners.

I propose that the town boards initiate meetings with the citizens' groups within their respective townships. Since most interest groups are concerned with common problems, it would not be necessary to meet with all the members within a given group. A consensus could be sought within the group; and, then, they could send a delegate to the town board meeting to inform the board members of their concerns. An ongoing dialogue could begin, and communications could be increased dramatically, thus improving the foundations of democratic citizenship. The board members would then be able to give a more accurate accounting, of the concerns of those within their districts, to the commissioners. While this proposal does not provide a way for people who are not members of an organization to increase their participation, the hope is that in building a community of dedicated individuals, working on common problems, everyone will begin to see results, and everyone may be encouraged to participate.

In the next chapter I will more fully develop the current interpretations of the situation. I will detail the history, the people
and key approaches which influence the policy making decision in order to contextualize and also unpack the issue of civic impotence.
CHAPTER NOTES/II


2 Letter received from Clark County Commissioner Jay Bingham on May 25, 1992.

3 Observed and recorded during meetings of the SMTB held between Feb. 1990 and August, 1992.

CHAPTER III

The problem of citizen impotence currently plaguing the Southern Nevada community seems to reflect many of the concerns researchers, scholars, and ordinary citizens have raised regarding national politics as well. With this in mind, in this chapter I will deal with the contemporary state of the question of impotence in citizen participation. I see the problems of the SMTB as reflection in part of a national condition. In an effort to unpack the various ways in which the issue of citizen participation can be interpreted within the SMTB, I will first deal with the more general issue of how the problem of political impotence has evolved at the national level. Secondly, I will discuss how the problem is interpreted by the key thinkers and/or approaches currently being employed to interpret political trends at the national level. Finally, I will detail how these more general alternative interpretations might be applied to the issues surrounding the lack of citizen involvement within the Sunrise Manor area.

Current State of the Issue

It is no surprise that citizen involvement within the Sunrise Manor area mirrors trends reported nationally. William Greider points out that the common person has become "locked out" of participating in policy making at all levels of involvement. Greider
argues that the current political environment is hostile towards the concerns of the common person. American politics, he says, has deteriorated from a process which responds to "conflict and deliberation, debate and compromise" to a process which responds to the interests of a select few. The leaders of our country, charges Greider, have degenerated to a point where they are only responsive to those people who can afford to bargain for their influence. Therefore, he contends our leaders no longer represent the views of the people. Consequently, the principle of active consent of the governed is no longer respected. Greider concludes that, within this environment of unbalanced power, people with limited resources become locked out of the decision-making process whenever and wherever they attempt to engage the political system (Greider 1992, 20-29).

Greider traces this problem back to the policies of the New Deal era which brought about interest group bargaining as a solution to existing power imbalances. While the New Deal was crucial in reforming American democracy, over time interest groups have become transformed from the interests of various citizen groups, to the interests of those with real money--the lobbyists, corporations and PAC's. Following this change in focus, politicians have become sensitive to the concerns of special interest groups at the expense of the concerns of citizens' groups. No longer does the voice of the citizen inform politicians' decisions. Rather, those decisions are based on satisfying the needs of the special interest groups (Greider, 30).
In order to protect their interests and maintain control over the decision-making process, those in power have differentiated themselves from the common person. This effectively prevents citizens from engaging the political process (Greider, 33-37). Regarding their abilities to run the government, politicians see themselves as superior to the general public. These politicians maintain the separation between themselves and the general public through various methods.

Yankelovich argues that one of the most effective ways in which politicians keep the public from the political decision-making process lies in the politician's ability keep the public confused, as well as ignorant of all the pertinent information bearing on issues. Furthermore, the politicians have adopted an attitude which assumes that, even if the public had access to all the information surrounding the issues, they lack sophistication in sorting through the information; and, therefore, the decisions of the public cannot be trusted. This, then, allows the politicians to dismiss the concerns of the citizens out of hand, on the grounds that the citizens' concerns are either trivial or misinformed, effectively barring them from entering the political debate (Yankelovich, 47-55).

The Kettering Foundation, a national organization devoted to researching public issues, has observed similar findings in some of its most recent research. In their group discussions with a cross-section of ordinary citizens, the most compelling reason given for the lack of citizen involvement was that people felt locked out of the process; because politicians only respond to those who are able to pay their way. The researchers reported that people are
desperate to get involved in the decision-making process, yet they feel helpless when it comes to making their voices heard. Some of the remarks made by the citizens interviewed during their study aid in revealing the true sentiments many Americans now have regarding politics. They include the following:

"People have gotten so disappointed that they don't want to get involved anymore." - Seattle Woman
"Citizens don't have a voice; lobbyists, special interests—they have a voice." - Seattle Man
"Policy makers just completely ignore us, that's what bothers me." - Denver Man
"The problem is government is not doing what we want [it] to be doing." - Los Angeles Woman (Kettering 1990, 6).

The Kettering report concludes that most citizens regard the attitudes of politics as usual as an affront to their very standing as Americans, but they do not know how to make any improvements on the current situation. According to Kettering Foundation President, David Mathews, the common person has the perception that the very heart of our social contract has been abrogated; because money and/or privilege have usurped the power of the voter. People all over the United States recognize the problem of under-representation at the national level, and within their own communities as well (Mathews 1992, 11).

David L. Kirp, writing in *The Responsive Community*, also reports that the public is poised to enter into a political dialogue, but ordinary citizens are barred from this process by what he calls the "cultural elite"; particularly special interests and lobbyists (Kirp 1992, 48). Kirp reports that politicians, in his words, "have messed
up almost everything they touched—the S&Ls and the health system, the deficit and the tax code." He claims that the influence of the cultural elite is so widespread over our society that politics has become incomprehensible to the ordinary citizen. But in spite of the apparent entrenchment of these conditions, Kirp says that people are struggling to find new ways of cracking the stranglehold those in power have over the common person. He tells of the enthusiastic reception presidential hopeful Ross Perot garnered for his idea of electronic town hall meetings as one example of this claim (Kirp, 53-57).

Kirp concludes that although Perot was not elected, his idea has struck an extremely sensitive nerve among parties on both sides of the issue of public participation. He further notices that there was much resistance and criticism of Perot's idea by those in power. This, he says, warrants the accusation that those in power are deliberately attempting to keep the public from engaging in politics. Finally, Kirp says that these problems are not limited to national politics, rather they permeate every aspect of the common person's role as citizen (Kirp, 57).

Many other political commentators, researchers and writers concur with the findings of Greider, Yankelovich, the Kettering Foundation, and Kirp. People such as philosopher Robert McCollough, economist Amitai Etzioni, political scientist Harry C. Boyte and the Public Agenda organization attribute the majority of the difficulties in sustaining a public dialog to the barriers constructed by those in power. They also observe that such de facto policies and procedures of national politics has permeated the
fabric of citizen participation from national to state, county, municipal, and neighborhood institutions and organizations. These observations are offered to provide the reader with a brief description of how the problem of political impotence has developed nationally. Therefore we can reasonably expect that evidence of political impotence with respect to the activities of the SMTB, as a part of the national trend, are neither unique, nor did they necessarily originate within the SMTB.

**Current Interpretations of the Situation**

In this section, I will identify key models employed by those people currently active in the study of public policy formation, implementation, and evaluation. I will do this in order to discover their respective assumptions concerning the appropriate roles for citizen participation. I will offer an overview of the general theories assumed by the different models and I will provide examples of how each might be applied in the decision-making process within the SMTB. I will not try to explain the thoughts of any individual thinker, nor will I articulate the (often immense) differences between them. In formulating an overview, I will concentrate on the concepts and claims they have in common. This should suffice in giving the reader a working knowledge of the principles of government by "experts", "greatest good", and "community", enabling him/her to understand where my position fits into the overall range of options.

While I acknowledge that there are many other approaches available in the examination of policy issues, these three (expert,
greatest good, and community) represent the prominent approaches currently in use. Since this thesis is being offered as an applied ethic, I have limited my discussion to the approaches which are actually impacting policy making. These are the approaches I will encounter in my own policy proposal (Chapter 5). In the next section, I will explain and illustrate how each of the three models (described in Chapter I) actually work out in practice.

**Government by Experts, the Efficiency Model.**

The idea of a government managed by experts has evolved over the last fifty years. In its current Americanized form, expertism is understood by some as necessary, resulting from our technological advances which require a high degree of specialization. Yankelovich traces the historical development of technology and rule by experts to a phenomenon which he calls the "Culture of Technical Control" (Yankelovich, 5-8). Yankelovich argues that extremely successful advances in science and industry have prompted leaders in other disciplines, the economy and government agencies in particular, to adopt the methods of expert-driven technology. Yankelovich further describes some of the assumptions of the culture which allows itself to be controlled by expertise and technology. They are:

1. Policy decisions depend essentially on a high degree of specialized knowledge and skills;
2. Only experts can possess this knowledge;
3. American people lack the relevant knowledge, are
concerned largely with their own pocketbook interests, and are likely to be apathetic to issues not directly related to these interests;
4. America's elected officials know what the views of the electorate are and, by and large, represent them well;
5. Experts who are knowledgeable can share some of their information with the voters.

(Yankelovich, 9)

Given these assumptions, policy formulation is performed best when decision making follows expert thinking, as opposed to relying on views of the general public, which are seen as emotional, even irrational whims.

An example of this mentality might serve to make this point clear. In an interview with Professor Howard Margolis from the University of Chicago School for Public Policy offered to demonstrate how the expert is better equipped to make decisions than the ordinary individual. Dr. Margolis was in Las Vegas to examine why citizens of Nevada are so opposed to a nuclear repository being built at Yucca Mountain. He argued that citizens always rely on experts in their everyday lives, and his hunch was that Nevadans were acting irrationally in mistrusting the expert opinion which claims that Yucca Mountain is safe. He said that the experts were being given a "bum rap" by a citizenry who based their opposition in some unfounded fears.

Given that expert knowledge is acceptable in all other areas of our lives, and since there was no evidence that Yucca Mountain is unsafe as a storage site, Margolis concluded that citizens are making a big mistake in opposing the facility. He describes the potential danger which lies in the delaying of approval of the site as the loss
of millions of taxpayer dollars. Dr. Margolis suggested that the local politicians take charge of informing the people as to the merits of the site so that the "foolishness" of the public will be quieted.

The advantages of using experts in formulating public policy appear obvious. As Margolis' example clearly indicates, the experts have the training and skill necessary to make decisions which an uninformed public cannot possibly possess. Much like the passengers of the Platonic ship described in Chapter I, we ought to leave the "navigating" to those who are best prepared to do so. Anything less would be foolhardy.

SMTB Experts

I will now apply these concepts to a hypothetical example in the SMTB for a model of how "expert" policy formulation might proceed. Consider, first of all, an issue discussed above, i.e. zoning. Sara, a member of the board, is faced with deciding the fate of a ten acre parcel which a developer wants changed from rural zoning to commercial zoning for high-density housing. In order for the developer to have the zoning changed, it must be approved by the board. The request must also be published in the agenda of the board prior to the public meeting.

During the meeting, representatives for the developer are allowed to make their case for their proposed changes. Any objections to the change will also be addressed during this meeting. The pros and cons are presented to the board members as they would be in a court of law. The board members claim no loyalty to either side, but, rather, appeal to their expert knowledge of real
estate and zoning policy as bases for their competence as public decision makers. The board members see themselves as taking the arguments of both positions into consideration, and they proceed by using their expertise in interpreting the strengths of each side in order to determine who has the strongest case.

The representatives for the developer are attorneys, skilled in real-estate law, while the opposition by the public is usually a small contingent of residents who live in close proximity to the proposed development. The board allows the attorneys to make their case first. The lawyers usually quote statutes and employ the precedents of similar cases which allowed similar zoning changes. The members of the public, being unsophisticated, are usually inept at making legal rebuttals of these claims, appealing instead to a presumed sense of fairness and compassion among the board members.

Sara now has the job of determining a policy which effectively determines which side will triumph. Sara's job consists of using her considerable knowledge of real-estate, with regard to zoning issues in order to make the appropriate decision. She must not be swayed by trivial personal concerns for fear that the public will perceive a bias in her decision. As such, Sara ignores the emotional appeal of the residents who had little in the way of legal support in their claim. Yet, she considers carefully the well crafted case presented by the developers. She decides to grant the change, based on her expert opinion. Her decision is pure, free from the influence of value-laden reasoning (which might cloud the facts). Sara
steadfastly adheres to her duty of making a professional, impartial decision.

When confronted by complaints from the residents, Sara quickly reminds them that they do not have the necessary qualifications which would enable them to understand the terms of her decision and that they should trust in her abilities. Further, she chastises them for attempting to corrupt the system by allowing their feelings to affect the outcome of the decision. It is not up to the citizens to decide the fate of the community; their job, if unsatisfied with the decision, is to vote differently in the next election. Sara also reminds the residents that their only other recourse is to show that one of the members of the board has been corrupted in their decision, possibly accepting a bribe from the developer. Barring this, the residents should leave the decisions to those qualified to make them, or otherwise risk making incorrect decisions and upsetting the balance of society itself.

Therefore, those policy makers employing the expert model see the problems within the SMTB as either stemming from board members who are not qualified to be leaders (as the members in my previous example) which results in faulty decisions, or from citizens who meddle in areas in which they are believed to be incompetent. The experts would argue that when problems arise, the system is not flawed, but rather outside forces have been allowed to corrupt the system. They would thus recommend that we eliminate the perversions within the system, not the system itself.
Government by Market, the Utilitarian Model

Viewing the discussion of government as "market decisions" is traceable to the classic theories of Utilitarianism. Some of the major architects of this theory would include Jeremy Bentham, Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill. More currently, economists such as Albert Carr and Milton Friedman, as well as groups such as the Libertarian Party, laissez-faire conservatives and those supporting "Reaganomics" fall under this general classification.

Utilitarians developed their theories in reaction to harsh, often discriminatory traditional British laws of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. They sought to equalize an otherwise unfair society which gave undue consideration to the "preferred" class of citizens.

The first principle of the utilitarians describes the human being as rational, capable of knowing at all times what is best for him or herself. Thus, they claim, "what is best for people is the maximization of happiness" (Bentham 1970, 1-5). They understood this happiness to be the end of all action. As such, we are creatures whose nature it is to be guided by pleasure and pain. Accordingly, people are moved to action by their attraction to pleasure, and their repulsion from pain (Mill 1972, 8-11).

Further, this "greatest happiness principle" (Mill, 11) could be conceived as the criterion for moral judgement, i.e. acting so as to bring about the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Therefore, the greatest happiness principle requires that people pursue the more general welfare of anyone who might be affected by a particular individuals' decision. In order to achieve the
happiness of the majority, an impartial observer must be called upon to make policy-decisions. This impartial observer has the ability to make decisions for the majority because he or she can sympathize with the others' desires as if they were his or her own. The observer imagines himself or herself in the place of everyone involved in the decision, and then makes a decision by balancing the satisfaction to the individual pleasures to which he or she has sympathetically responded. It was the hope of the utilitarians that this method of decision-making could replace the unfair traditions and provide the potential for an egalitarian society.

One of the critical assumptions of the market utilitarians is that people, as unconnected individuals, are able to realize their individuality best in a free market economy. Pleasure, it was assumed, was attained for example, through the accumulation of property necessary for subsistence. In response to the need for people to acquire property, a utilitarian-based mechanism for fairly distributing resources was created. Adam Smith describes free market competition as the mechanism which will bring about the greatest good for the greatest number and serve as the catalyst by which competing individuals can equally seek to increase their happiness (Smith 1976, 67). For this reason, utilitarians view the marketplace as the primary venue for social interchange.

This requires the additional assumption that competition, when allowed to proceed unencumbered by government regulation, will balance the interests of competing individuals. Smith described this as regulation by an Invisible Hand (Smith, 184). In this way, the market would be the regulator of social interchange. Decisions are
then made, based on providing the greatest amount of good for the
greatest number of people, so as to protect the liberties of the
majority from being usurped by a more powerful minority.

An interview with professor Hans-Hermann Hoppe, an
economics professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas,
revealed a similar theme. He argues for the eventual elimination of
all governmental intervention in calling for a society guided by a
free market. Hoppe reduces all human interaction to the attainment
of one's own ends. He claims that the only equitable way in which
we can attain our individual goals is through the acquisition of
property and the production of goods. Property is properly attained
through, what Hoppe calls "the first use, first own proposition".
Further, Hoppe says that, since what is good for one person may not
be good for another, the market is the only place in which voluntary
exchanges can be made in order to satisfy both parties. Hoppe
concludes by stating that the government cannot increase the
satisfaction of individual goals; because it does not acquire property
correctly, and, therefore, cannot fairly distribute that property. In
other words, the government acquires property unjustly.

The utilitarian theories have become a dominant force in our
present market economy. Moreover, these theories have a
widespread influence in areas other than economics. As Amitai
Etzioni reports:

"This paradigm plays a key role in contemporary
political science (e.g., in the Public Choice school); in
psychology (e.g., in the balance theory); in sociology
(e.g., exchange theory);...in anthropology,...history...and
law. ...[This] paradigm plays a major role in our
public policy dialogues, intellectual life, and the social
and political philosophies that the public embraces.
(Etzioni 1988, 2)

A very different kind of example of the influence of the
utilitarian model can be seen in current considerations of cost-
benefit analysis in the area of policy making. Instituted by President
Ford, Executive Order 11821 requires all federal agencies to quantify
and publish the costs and benefits of anticipated new standards
(Tong 1986, 14). Within this model, a policy is deemed fit if it
fulfills a utilitarian analysis. Nicholas Brady suggests the following
formula in making utilitarian-based, cost-benefit decisions;

1. List all the alternatives.
2. List the criteria by which the alternatives will be assessed.
3. Rank the criteria in order of priority.
4. Assess each of the alternatives in terms of its ability to
satisfy the criteria listed in step 2.
5. Select the optimal alternative. (Brady 41)

Because of its wide-spread use in policy decisions (at all levels
of government), I will take the cost-benefit analysis model as a
paradigm of the "market approach" to public policy decision
making.

SMTB Marketeers

Let us again digress to the SMTB image and anticipate how
Abraham, a utilitarian member of the board, would make a decision,
based on this cost-benefit formula. Facing the same zoning issue
(pp. 56ff.), suppose that the board declines to align immediately
with either position. However, based on utilitarian considerations,
suppose further that the board appeals to the greatest happiness principle in deciding the case. Abraham assumes the role of keeper of the balance between the competing interests.

Abraham listens to the arguments of both sides. Instead of appealing to the knowledge of an issue as the "experts" would, Abraham seeks to bring about an increase in the overall good of the community. Seeing himself as an impartial observer, he listens to the legal arguments of the developer, and at the same time, he acknowledges the legitimacy of the residents as having equal claims, regardless of their lack of sophistication. The residents appeal to their feelings and to their expectation of being treated with fairness has equal station in Abraham's deliberations regarding the proposed zoning changes. Using Brady's aforementioned criteria, Abraham first lists the alternatives in question. They include the position of the residents and the position of the developers.

Secondly, Abraham lists the criteria by which the alternatives will be assessed. These might include the economic fallout of the decision, the safety of the public and the satisfaction of the individuals. All variables are given some kind of quantification.

Third, Abraham ranks the criteria in order of priority, in terms of which will bring about the greatest good. Based on his role as a representative of the county, the overall economic considerations of the county as a whole, over and above the considerations of either the developers or the immediate residents, are paramount for Abraham.

In his fourth step, Abraham assesses the alternatives in terms of the criteria detailed in step 2. He discovers that the plan of the
developers has greater economic value than the concerns of the residents. He determines that the quest for satisfaction by the parties in dispute are equally valid. He also decides that the position of the residents would maintain the safety of the county as a whole, while the proposal of the developers could potentially decrease the safety of the county, thereby decreasing the pleasure of a greater amount of citizens than would receive pleasure. The proposed development site has a strategic wash passing through it. Re-routing the wash would be expected to incur costs to others in the area. It would be expected to decrease the value of their land. It would likely destroy a natural habitat. But primarily, it might greatly increase the potential for dangerous flooding.

Finally, Abraham decides that the environmental concerns, if left unaddressed, could bring about great pain to many people. For this reason, he rejects the proposal of the developers. Confident that he made an equitable decision, Abraham suggests that the developers rethink their plan and submit a new proposal which would address the safety concerns.

In sum, the utilitarian model can be described as one that is widespread in our culture, is ideally regulated by a free market in which rational individuals attempt to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number, and where goodness is defined in terms of the attainment of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. These utilitarian policy makers see the problems surrounding the SMTB as stemming from individuals who would use their power or influence to gain an unfair advantage in making policy decisions. The utilitarians, like the experts would argue that their system is not flawed, but rather
people have been allowed to corrupt the system. The role of the
citizen is to allow issues to be decided, based upon the increasing of
the general happiness of those involved in dispute.

Government through Cooperation;
The Community Model.

More recently, in reaction to alleged deficiencies within both
the market and the expert analyses, a new model is being developed.
Beginning with people such as Richard McKeon, and Jurgen
Habermas, as well as more recently by Robert Bellah, Robert
McCollough, Amitai Etzioni, Christopher Berry, Daniel Yankelovich
Alasdair MacIntyre, and Amy Gutmann, a new model is emerging.
These people are modifying the expert and market models to focus
more attention on the community aspects of society. They seek,
among other things, to encourage public policy decisions which
balance the good of the individual with goods we hold in common,
the common good.

The community model functions under yet another set of
assumptions. The model presupposes:

1. that people are equals and, as such, have the
   right to their own beliefs;
2. that humans do not have access to a complete
   and final truth concerning human nature;
3. that we are limited in our abilities to perceive
   and understand the world in its totality;
4. that truths are not given a priori, (rather they
   emerge from interchange and discussion between
   individuals);
5. that action resulting from mutual agreements is
   the only authentic method for advancing society
   and addressing issues;
6. that since individual perspectives are limited, it is necessary for as many people as practically possible to participate in the resolution of problems in order to add richness to discussions, and effectiveness to decisions;
7. that an exercised consent of the governed is the only legitimate way for freedom to be maintained. (Yankelovich, 1991).

These assumptions refer to many of the commonly-held ideals of democracy which citizens intuitively understand. Reinstating democracy by consent of the governed through participatory citizenship is among the chief objectives of the thinkers cited above. They recognize the need for what William Greider calls "authentic representation" (Greider, 14). What Greider seems to mean is that people do not expect to have a personal say in every discussion; but, rather, in the formulation of policies, politicians ought to be responsive to the concerns of the citizens, as opposed to making only expert or market based decisions. There is a listening/response function to democratic processes.

Further, Daniel Yankelovich argues that in order to realize the most basic tenets of democracy, such as self-determination and accountability of the governors to the governed, the public must be allowed to access and engage the political process in more than a perfunctory manner or by a mere patronizing gesture on the part of politicians (Yankelovich, 44).

SMTB as Community

The first consideration of those promoting the community model, applied at the local level is that, as members of a society which agrees to be governed by active consent, the Sunrise Manor
residents have an obligation to inform the board as to their position, wishes, and data bearing on any given issue. Secondly, the board should provide a forum by which individuals, as well as representatives of groups, can come together and discuss the merits of particular issues. Recognizing that every resident has a voice in the issue, as actively consenting to decisions, the board seeks to add richness to the discussion by encouraging the residents to become involved. They could initiate this dialogue by making public announcements concerning the times and contents of the meetings, announcing to the public that there is a place for their input.

In this way, the board members do not simply rely on their expertise in decision making. Indeed, they recognize the limits of their individual views. The board members listen to all the arguments and attempt to glean wisdom from a multiplicity of perspectives, taking into consideration the values which the citizens bring to the discussion, as well as the facts. Then the board members can make their decisions based on what truths have emerged from the discussion, letting the agreements of those involved guide and inform their decisions, promoting the progression of a society in which all voices contribute to the overall good of society. As Richard Benjamin argues, it is possible and desirable to make the necessary compromises in order to promote action which will resolve real problems and promote the self-correcting nature of democracy (Benjamin 1990, 47-50).

Our final digression into the SMTB application of this model will detail the basis by which Tom, the community-minded member of the board, would reach decisions. In light of our familiar zoning
issue (pp.56ff and 62ff.), the board appeals for a discussion of the issue by the residents and the developers. To review, the developers wish to have a parcel of land re-zoned. The residents are adamantly opposed to this proposal. Tom faces the following questions. How can an agreement be reached when there appears to be an irreconcilable controversy? If both sides have a legitimate position, by what standard can this situation be ameliorated?

Suppose that initially, neither side is willing to budge. Suppose further that it appears as if they have reached a stalemate. Tom suggests the following, in order to satisfy the competing interests in answering the preceding questions. He reminds both parties that there is more at stake than their individual interests. He suggests that they suspend their own positions (temporarily) in an attempt to determine if a compromise is possible. Tom does not want to let the situation remain a stalemate, as this only serves to widen the gap between people, making the resolution of the problem nearly impossible, while also interrupting the advancement of the SMTB mandate. Recognizing the incompleteness of any particular perspective, each person acknowledges that neither party is totally right in their position. It is then possible to move beyond the apparent stalemate and move on to discussing other alternatives. It is also incumbent upon each member to negotiate in good faith.

The residents realize that the developers have a right to make a profit. The developers sympathize with the residents concerns of overcrowding. They each "feel the tug" of the others position. After much debate, someone suggests that the developers build homes on larger lots, for a larger price, in order to satisfy both the concerns
of the residents and the bottom line of the developers. The developers agree that they could make the same overall profit selling fewer, more expensive homes. They even agree to landscape the perimeter of the development, including a riding trail for the equestrians in the area. The residents, while not getting their way completely, consider this an acceptable proposal. Both sides agree and the board votes to recommend the zoning variance, including the proposed changes.

While not all issues can be ameliorated by such a neat compromise, negotiating in good faith, by allowing the public voice to have as much weight as others', will nonetheless bring about legitimate, democratically-based decisions which will allow society to progress. Even if positions under discussion are, in fact, incommensurable, progress can still be realized. The alternative to this kind of constructive communication, as McKeon says; "...is to build a society based on fear, guided by guesses,...conformity...and coercion" (McKeon, 102).

The advocates of the community model see the problems within the SMTB as resulting from a defective political system. They call for a change in the institution of politics itself, requiring the creation of a forum which would foster the active input of the citizens. Problems arise when those in control attempt to bar citizens from entering the decision-making process. The appropriate role of citizens is to be active in policy making at all political levels, adding their various perspectives in hopes of adding breadth and depth to discussions of issues.
To review, I have revealed how the combination of special interests and powerful politicians serve to lock the general public out of any meaningful political involvement. As such, people feel impotent because they are no longer represented fairly. I have detailed three contemporary interpretations bearing on citizen participation, and I applied those interpretations to a hypothetical situation at the local level.

Having described the contemporary views, I will assess those views in the next chapter. I will flush out the underlying assumptions of the three models, using my democratic ethic as a foil from which to judge how effective they are in maintaining and advancing the principles of democracy I have delineated above (pp. 65ff.).
Amitai Etzioni reduces all approaches of policy making to either the "Neo-Classic" paradigm (which incorporates the utilitarian/individual views) and the Socio-Conservative paradigm (which incorporates the idea that people are morally deficient, and often irrational and incapable of making important decisions) or the "I/WE" paradigm (in which Etzioni attempts to combine the good qualities of the two former models). These three paradigms correspond to the government by expert, market and community models which are operative within the SMTB. See Amitai Etzioni, *The Moral Dimension*, pp. 176-189.


Interview with Dr. Howard Margolis from the University of Chicago School for Public Policy; conducted at the Institute for Ethics and Policy Studies, UNLV, January 17, 1993.

Interview with professor Hans-Hermann Hoppe from the Economics Department at UNLV; conducted at The Institute for Ethics and Policy Studies UNLV on November 30, 1992.
CHAPTER IV

Assessment of Alternative Interpretations

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that both the expert and market models are based upon principles which undermine participatory democracy and, therefore, contribute to the problem of civic impotence. I will begin this analysis by first detailing the appropriate role of the expert, and then I will show how, when the expert's role is extended beyond advice and consultation to the area of determining public policy, it exceeds the limits of its usefulness. Next, I will assess the market model in a parallel manner. I will also relate how each fails within the context of the previous hypothetical SMTB scenarios. Finally, I will set forth the case for why the community model is more successful in addressing issues from an authentically democratic position.

The Proper Role for the Experts

I will begin my assessment of the expert model by first defining who is the expert. Once the proper role and activities of the expert have been parsed, then it will be possible to evaluate those activities over against the representative democratic principles previously detailed in Chapter I. (See pages 31-36.)

Within the context of the SMTB, I have discovered two distinct forms of the expert that can have a proper role. During my initial
investigation of the SMTB and the county commission, I found that the commissioners often rely on outside help in order to make informed decisions. The commissioners call on people (often referred to as policy analysts) who have specialized knowledge in technical areas. Without the input from this kind of expert, the decisions of the commissioners might be based on erroneous assumptions and/or incomplete information, resulting in poor quality decisions. Thus, these experts perform a necessary and proper role in the decision-making process.

An example will help to illustrate this point. Suppose that there is a proposal before the board (prior to its being passed on to the commission) regarding the appropriation of funds for a new park. Given the overwhelming schedule which obligates much of the commissioners' time and energy, it is often impossible for them to research all the details surrounding issues involved in funding for a new park. Moreover, the commissioners might lack the background in the specific knowledge necessary for making an informed decision without help. In order to make an informed decision, the commissioners might call on an expert in real estate for advice. Without this expert, the commissioners could be "flying blind" regarding their decision to fund a new park.

Further, suppose that the commissioners are concerned about the actual site of the proposed park. Questions such as "Is this park going to be located in a flood plain?" or "Is this park going to be built on a former garbage dump?" or "Will this park affect property values?" might arise. How could the commissioners address these questions if they know little or nothing about the issues in question?
Without considering the information provided by the real-estate expert, the commissioners might make a decision which could have potentially disastrous effects on the community. Note, then, that the expert is a professional possessing particular skills upon which policy makers can draw, in order to make informed and efficient decisions.

The second type of expert my investigation of the SMTB revealed was that of the "liaison". The liaison acts as a go-between for the residents and the commissioners. These would include the board members of the SMTB. In their role as the "eyes and ears" of the commissioners, the board members are supposed to listen to, and decipher the interests and concerns of the area residents, as similarly described by Madison in *The Federalist Papers* (specifically #10). Their expertise consists in their ability to gather, assess, interpret, and prioritize input from the public. Then, in their role as messenger, the board members are supposed to communicate those interests and concerns to the commissioners. This describes a second necessary and proper role of the expert.

As elected servants of the area residents, the commissioners depend upon the board members for information regarding residents' interests and concerns so that they can make decisions which are indeed representative of those concerns and interests. In this way, the principles of active consent of the governed are promoted, and the process of representative democracy functions effectively.

To illustrate the proper role of the SMTB board member, let us return to the example of the decision surrounding the funding for a
new park in the Sunrise Manor Township by the County Commission. Suppose that, during initial discussions, the commissioners are advised by the Department of Parks and Recreation that this new park ought to have a baseball field. In making an informed decision, the commissioners must take into consideration the advice of the experts (the people from the Department of Parks and Recreation). Since the commissioners are servants of the area residents, they must also take into account the interests of the residents as well. In this case, the residents have been asking for a new park for several years. However, they want the park to have a swimming pool instead of a baseball field. The residents argue that many of the area's schools already have baseball fields which are not used in the summer when it is too hot to play outdoors. The residents argue further that there is no public swimming pool in the area, which could be utilized during the summer when most children are not in school.

In an effort to make an authentically democratic decision based on the community model, the commissioners now must weigh the relevancy of the expert knowledge over against the stated concerns and views of the area residents. The commissioners might now debate why the experts recommended including a baseball field, or whether the construction of a swimming pool is affordable, or if the county can afford the necessary lifeguards and liability insurance necessary in maintaining a public pool. The input from the residents is compared to the recommendations of the experts in deciding which facility will be incorporated into the new park. The commissioners must balance the advice of the experts with the
advice of the area residents. If, in evaluating the advice of the experts, the commissioners find that a swimming pool is not feasible, they would then be obligated to explain to the residents why this is the case. In this way, the residents could come to know that the commissioners did take into consideration their wish for a swimming pool. In this case, the commissioners have found that the swimming pool could be substituted in place of the baseball field.

It is now apparent that the SMTB board members play a crucial role in such a decision-making process by the county commissioners. Without board members' expert input regarding the concerns of the Sunrise area residents, the commissioners cannot make a decision which is in accord with the principle of active consent. Had the commissioners listened only to the technical experts, their decision would have been counter-productive democratically. It would have circumvented the very people whom the commissioners and the proposed park are supposed to be serving. If there is a lack of public input, decisions are formed on the basis of incomplete information at best, and a scuttling of the public's role in representative government, at worst.

Assessment of Model I: Government by Expert

Yet, as I detailed in Chapter 1, the SMTB members often fail as experts in their role as "eyes and ears" of the commissioners. They were also shown to have also adopted the "government by expert" model in which they assume that they themselves have an expertise beyond their role as facilitators, and that the role of the public
should necessarily be limited. To illustrate how the board members' activities undermine participatory democracy, I will return once again to the issue surrounding funding for a new park. In this case, Sara (the board member who works from the "government by expert" model) must advise the commissioners as to the residents' desire for a swimming pool. However, since Sara assumes that she already knows what is in the best interest of the residents, she disregards or avoids the input from the area residents. Going along with the advice of the experts from the Department of Parks and Recreation, Sara informs the commissioners that the baseball field is the appropriate selection for the new park.

One might ask: Why does Sara disregard the input of the residents? Perhaps Sara considers herself a "people" expert. By this I mean to say that she believes that she does not need to consult the public in order to understand their views surrounding the new proposed park; because she assumes that she already knows what the public wants. Why would she make this assumption? An insight into this question might be brought to light by re-examining the experience I had in attempting to make a presentation to the SMTB. Prior to my addressing the board, I heard several telling comments from the board chairperson. While he was reviewing my proposal, he said to the board member sitting next to him that I was simply wasting their "important" time, because I could not possibly understand "the big picture". When I asked him after the meeting why he was convinced that what I was going to say was unimportant before I even got the chance to say it, he responded that he had been in politics for over twenty years and that my suggestion had
been tried before to no avail. He was convinced that I could not possibly have anything new to add to his stock of knowledge regarding the interests and concerns of the public. Consequently, this commissioner claimed to be an expert regarding the "real" concerns and needs of the area residents.

One might counter-argue that since previously I had been offended by the remarks of the board members, I was trying to evoke an apology from them or that I had an "ax to grind". If they had been more polite, maybe then I would have been more amenable to their decisions. If this were the case, my activities would be counter-productive to the board meetings. One might further counter-argue that I had been "out of the information loop" regarding the work which the board members have already done regarding the issue in question. Maybe they had already addressed this issue and I was unaware of what they had done. In this case I would be wasting their time. However, these rival explanations of my behavior are false. The issue in question here is not merely whether or not the board members were simply impolite, or that the citizens were actually ignorant of the work the board members had already undertaken. Rather, the issue in question is that they have not allowed the views of the residents to be voiced.

Sara might be characterized in a similar manner. She disregards the concerns of the public, because she thinks they are unable to comprehend the complexity of the decision at hand; and, therefore, they cannot possibly make a contribution to that decision. Sara might conclude that the residents think that they want a pool, but her past experience has taught her that the public
often makes impulsive rather than rational decisions. As an "expert" regarding the views of the residents, Sara concludes that the residents have nothing new or important to add to the discussion of the issue since basing decisions on impulses or emotions is dangerous.

Sara has stereotyped the public as incapable of making decisions because they lack technical expertise about what their needs are. This is where she fails in her role as liaison. As I have argued, it is up to the members of the County Commission to weigh the concerns of the residents along with the advice of the experts. It is up to the SMTB board members to report accurately the input of the citizens in the township to the commissioners. Thus, when the SMTB board members do not report the opinions of the residents, they usurp the legitimate role of the public from providing input to the commissioners in making decisions for the public. By assuming that they possess an expertise in an inappropriate manner (as "people" experts instead of "liaisons"), the board members give the commissioners incomplete, if not false information which undermines their making decisions which incorporate the relevant concerns of the public. Accordingly, these local policy makers become effectively insulated from voters within a decision-making milieu increasingly dominated by technical expertise and improper advice.

Yankelovich argues that a similar usurpation of the public's legitimate role by experts takes place at the national level. He says that there is a "gap" between the public and experts, which has led to an imbalanced relationship between the public and policy
makers. The specific danger of a skewing of this balance, according to Yankelovich, is that the foundations of democracy itself are threatened. If the experts who have gone beyond their proper role attain penultimate control in making policy decisions, then the ideals of self-governance are put in jeopardy. As Yankelovich states; "The chief symptom of imbalance is the nation's inability to arrive at consensus on how to cope with the nation's most urgent problems" (Yankelovich, 8). Yankelovich claims also that the broader danger of political expertise is that the country has become unable to reach agreement on the serious problems which beset society. The imbalance between the public and the experts "saps the national will" to confront issues, and problems go unresolved.

The public-expert gap also comes about as a result of the fact that many of our political and financial leaders are recruited from areas whose interests and knowledge are specialized. In addition, many of them have been educated at elite universities which tend to "indoctrinate" them with a feeling of superiority to the general public (Yankelovich, 91-93). This elitist attitude gives rise to the assumption on the part of the expert that, on the one hand, they have much to add to the public; while on the other hand, the public has little to offer, further widening the gap.

In a report prepared for the Kettering Foundation, Richard C. Harwood describes the attitudes many policy makers have in regard to the role of the public in politics. He argues that, as a result of the policy makers' elitist mentality, they have developed a decision-making process which tends to minimize the role of the public. Harwood's research revealed that: 1) policy makers believe that
public input is important, but they fail to seek out or develop public input; 2) The input which policy makers want varies according to issues, but in practice, the public's role is limited to supporting decisions made by policy makers; 3) Policy makers publicly say that they want public input, but privately they express a fear that the public does not trust the political system; and 4) Policy makers say that the media plays a crucial role in educating the public, but, since the media's coverage tends to be biased, it undermines public confidence in the ability of the policy makers to make decisions for the public. Specifically, Harwood's report showed that:

As decision makers, policy makers believe they must act as managers of public concerns...; as arbiters, they act when competing interests on an issue must be resolved; and as advocates of policy, they take the lead because of personal values, regardless of public (or other stakeholders') desires. As educators, they perceive themselves as teachers, giving citizens the information they need to understand and support policy actions. And, as conveners of public meetings, they do not feel that they have the resources or tools to move beyond their current practices for obtaining public input" (Harwood, 6-7).

This dysfunctional role of the policy maker has become the source of endless misunderstandings between the public and experts, effectively paralyzing communication. Each group misunderstands the other's point of view, deadlock ensues, and the sense of civic impotence is further reinforced. Since communication is an essential component in authentic democracy, the public-expert gap becomes a "weak link" in our democratic system.¹
Thomas McCollough argues that if politics is reduced to policy making, public policy setting "takes on the semblance of a rational governmental mind" (McCollough, 4). He argues that a "shift" has occurred from deliberative democratic decision making (which is based in action by the civil community), to managerial democratic elitism (in which the values of the people are devalued to mere opinion and emotion.) McCollough states that:

"Democratic elitism reserves policy making for the government both because of the presumption that rational decision making requires a scientific policy analysis and because in this view participatory democracy involves conflicting and 'irrational' values" (McCollough 7-8).

Thus, the policy makers view public input as emotional (hence irrational) and therefore detrimental to the decision-making process. McCollough concurs with the views of Harwood and Yankelovich in that, the broader danger of politics by expert is that the citizens become removed from the decision making process, becoming impotent and alienated.

The seriousness of this problem is not limited to local politics or national politics. It also plays a role in our country's international relations as well. In his book, The Arrogance of Power, J. William Fulbright traces the historical development of international policy. He argues that we are doomed to failure if we attempt to usurp the values of other people with our own values. The idea that we know what is best for other countries, regardless of their own concerns, says Fulbright, is more of a commitment to "American pride", than to the preservation of global freedom. Fulbright argues that the effects of determining foreign policy,
without considering the values of the people in question, differ from the intention of helping those people (Fulbright 1966, 22-27).

In support of this claim, Fulbright (writing in 1966, before the full effects of the Vietnam war unfolded) offers the example of how the Vietnamese people resented American intervention. He describes how the people of South Vietnam demonstrated against American involvement by burning American military vehicles and attacking American soldiers. Fulbright asks why the Vietnamese people would be so ungrateful for our "help". He describes their resentment as stemming from their fear that the traditional Vietnamese society would not survive "the American cultural and economic impact". The effect of helping the Vietnamese people by forcing democracy upon them was that their country was destroyed. Fulbright concludes that the danger of imposing decisions upon any people, without first considering what they want, produces the opposite of what was initially a good intention, and, as such, is doomed to fail. In this case, the cure was worse than the disease (Fulbright, 11-19).

Thus, the policy makers' presumptions regarding their own epistemology (that the assessment of empirical facts, which only they can perform, can lead them to the truth; while the assessment of emotional "values" leads to confusion and/or controversy) stands in direct opposition with the principles of representative democracy. In the next section I will explain how the expert model fails.
The Expert in the SMTB

The expert model fails to live up to the principles of representative democracy which I detailed in Chapter I. In this section I will show how these principles of democracy are relevant to the critique of the "government by expert" model. I will do so by explaining how the principles of the expert model stand over against the principles I have delineated for participatory democracy. I will again contextualize my analysis around the problems within the SMTB.

Returning to Sara's decision regarding the zoning issue (see pages 56-58), the reader will recall that she based her decision to re-zone a ten acre parcel of land from rural estates to commercial zoning for high-density housing upon her expert knowledge of real-estate.

The first error Sara made was that she ignored the appeal of the "unsophisticated residents", because she assumed that she was capable of making that decision for them. Yet, in a democratic decision-making process, it is assumed that there is an essential role for the public in that process, i.e. the role of providing perspectives in the discussion of issues. This is the principle which states that human knowledge is limited and, thus, no one person can attain to the absolute truth regarding an issue in question. Sara violates this principle by ignoring the concerns of the residents. Moreover, she also violates this principle by giving undue weight to the expert legal argument presented by the developers. The residents feel unable to communicate with Sara, because she will not let them engage in the
discussion of issues. This adds fuel to the residents' feelings of alienation and results in civic impotence.

Secondly, Sara was critical of the residents' complaints and reminded them that they did not have the necessary qualifications to add meaningful input to the discussion. However, in view of the principle which states that individual perspectives are limited, it is essential that residents participate in discussions. Perspectives add richness to those discussions. This provides board members with a more complete picture of the complex variables involved in their decisions and deliberations. If the board members can communicate these views to the commissioners, they will be able to make more effective decisions. In this way, the commissioners can make their decisions based upon a meaningful dialogue with the actual sentiments of the residents. Sara goes against this principle by effectively eliminating the input of the overwhelming majority of the people affected, preventing them from having their perspectives considered in the decision-making process. The likely danger is that the commissioners would then make a decision which does not take into account the views of the residents. When the residents think that elected officials are not sensitive to their concerns, they often assume that the decision-makers have their own agenda. This creates a mistrust of politicians on the part of the public, further entrenching the feelings of alienation and impotence.

Moreover, it is not necessary for the public to understand the technical aspects of issues in question. That job resides with the commissioners themselves when they weigh the considerations of the residents over against the information provided by the experts.
The role of the public is to inform the board members of their interests and views and, most importantly perhaps, their values. Sara does not seem to understand that the public is not delegated the role of interpretation of technical information. Nor does she understand that her role is not to censor the expression of the interests and concerns of the public. Rather, the board members are to communicate the views of the public to the commissioners. Although Sara considers herself capable of understanding the views of the residents, she fails in her role as liaison, and contrary to her claims and her self-image, she also contributes to the undermining of participatory democracy.

Third, Sara claims that the only legitimate role for the citizens resides in their ability to vote. She reminds the residents that if they do not like her decision, their only recourse is to vote for someone else in the next election. If the fundamental goal of democratic decision-making is to involve people in the affairs of self-governance, Sara's actions undermine that goal by claiming that the public's only legitimate role in governance is that of voting. When the residents feel that Sara does not have to be responsive or sensitive to their views, they are likely to become alienated from the political process and they, once again, will experience a sense of impotence.

It becomes apparent that, by framing her decision as being based solely on her expert knowledge regarding the opinions of the residents, Sara may (inadvertently or intentionally) be violating the right of area residents to have a voice in making decisions which directly affect their lives. By assuming that she has a priori
knowledge concerning the views, interests, and opinions of the
general public, Sara has breached the democratic principle which
claims that an exercised consent of the governed is the only
legitimate way to maintain participatory democracy.

In conclusion, the "government by expert" model has been
shown to fail in addressing issues from an authentically democratic
stance, because it wrongly limits the role of the public in the
decision-making process. This has been shown to be counter to the
ideals of self-governance and active consent of the governed.
Therefore, those who would adopt the "government by expert"
model only succeed in complicating the search for solutions to
today's problems. As such, this model fails to promote the ideals of
representative democracy and is, therefore, unacceptable.

Assessment of Model II:
Government by Market

The "government by market model" also does not meet the
requirements of the principles of representative democracy
delineated above (See pages 65-66). This model also fails, in a
manner parallel to the expert model, by usurping the legitimate role
of public participation. I will begin my assessment of the market
model by describing the widely-used market instrument of cost-
benefit analysis. Once a legitimate role for cost-benefit analysis is
established, I will contrast it to the illegitimate role as stated in
Chapter I. Within the context of the SMTB and county government, I
have identified two areas in which cost-benefit analysis has been
commonly used.
I discovered one usage of cost-benefit analysis in the area of procurement of goods and services. In deciding which items to buy, or which buildings and roads to construct, commissioners routinely employed a cost-benefit analysis to determine the most efficient alternative. Without the instrument of cost-benefit analysis, decisions regarding purchases and bids might not be made in an efficient manner. The county might not, for example, get the best road for the least amount of money, thereby wasting public funds.

Let us again return to the example of the proposed park (pp. 73ff.). In deciding upon the site, the commissioners were faced with two alternate areas which were suitable for the construction of a park. One location was near the population center of the area which the park was to serve. As such, the property value was relatively high since it was a desirable location for the development of more homes. The second location was at the perimeter of the area and was being offered at less than half the cost of the first location. Unfortunately, there was a dedicated wash running through the second location. Since flood water flow could not be diverted around the location, it would be necessary to construct a pipeline beneath the property to make the site useable.

At this point, the commissioners called for a cost-benefit analysis comparison between the two locations in question. They needed to determine whether or not it would be wise to spend more money on the first location (which needed no major improvements, and was also centrally located and thus better able to serve the residents), or on the second location (which was potentially less expensive). The results of the study revealed that the second
location would require a great deal of improvement in order to be suitable for a park. Although those improvements would not increase the overall cost of the location to a greater value than the first location, the savings were not substantial. Based on the evaluation of both locations, the commissioners decided that the first location would give them "more for their money" even though it was slightly more expensive. Their reasoning was that the more expensive piece would better serve the residents because of its central location. Without using the cost-benefit analysis, the commissioners' might have picked the second location. In the long run, this would have cost the taxpayers more money and provided them with a park which was inconveniently located; effectively reducing its value to the community even further. Hence, this use of cost-benefit analysis proved to be a boon for effective policy making.

Another form of cost-benefit analysis I discovered in my study was employed by the SMTB board members in which they attempted to determine which alternative courses of action to choose from between individuals interests. The SMTB board members often employed the cost-benefit analysis in deciding which interests ought to prevail among the interests of various residents. The board members assumed that the best way to serve the public was to choose the alternatives which were most cost-effective overall.

Returning to the illustration of the new park, the board members attempted to establish the one voice which accurately represented the interests of the residents by employing cost-benefit analysis. Many of the residents wanted a swimming pool to be built.
Still others (including those who owned their own pools) were opposed to spending money on a facility that they were not likely to utilize. In lieu of any kind of consensus on what should be built, the board members called for a cost-benefit analysis to be done. The results of the analysis showed that the swimming pool would be substantially more expensive to construct and maintain. Further, the analysis revealed that fewer people could potentially use the pool because of its limited size and short season of use. The board members assumed that the most cost-effective decision would bring about the greatest good for the residents even though many of those residents were not in favor of the decision. Therefore, the board members reported to the commissioners that the residents would be best served by choosing in favor of the baseball field.

Having previously established that the commissioners require the input from the public in order to make decisions which take into account the interests of the various residents, it may now be shown that the board members, by using the cost-benefit analysis, have failed to report accurately those interests to the commissioners. The board members' role is to use their abilities in sorting through the variety of public comments; deciphering the relevant from the irrelevant, and the legitimate complaints from the chronic complainers. Once the board members have done this, they can give a fairly accurate picture of the heartbeat of the residents' concerns to the commissioners. This might mean that they should report to the commissioners that the residents are split on their views regarding the construction of a pool. In attempting to use the cost-benefit analysis as a barometer of the residents interests, the
board members fail to reflect accurately those interests to the commissioners.

In defending their methodology, the board members argued that the strength of the cost-benefit analysis is found in its ability to fairly assess goods with respect to the equal standing of all individuals. These "goods" are comprised of the many interests (e.g. swimming pool vs. baseball field) of the public. The promise of this instrument is that, in deciding between competing interests, it can determine fairly the greatest overall good of a given policy by comparing alternative suggestions with their accompanying costs. Through the objective comparison of alternatives, cost-benefit analysis can select equitably the alternative which has the best balance between costs and benefits; bringing about an increase in the happiness of society as a whole.

A natural question at this point would be, "Why do those who use this analysis determine that the greatest good is found in its cost-benefit ratio?" Returning to the cost-benefit analysis criteria (see page 62ff.), we find one essential step in this analysis is to list the criteria by which the alternative interests will be assessed. Here it is assumed that the person doing the analysis has access to the standard by which this analysis can bring about the greatest good. In the words of Rosemary Tong, "...they [cost-benefit analysts] have decided in advance [emphasis mine] that human experience ought to be structured and evaluated in terms of pleasure and pain..." (Tong, 16).

Thus, cost-benefit analysis assumes that increasing the economic value is essential to bringing about the greatest good.
Why? Pleasure, as defined by utilitarians, is found in the accumulation of property necessary for existence. According to Bentham, if a utilitarian analysis is going to be credible, the measure of pleasure and pain must be quantifiable (Bentham, 40-55). Since the accumulation of property can be expressed in the quantitative terms of money and material wealth, these measures serve as a benchmark in determining the greatest good.

Why should cost-benefit analysis be used in determining the greatest good? Bentham argued that, since humans have a natural propensity to choose what is in their own best interests, people cannot be depended upon always to choose what is in the greatest interest of all. He reasoned that a more reliable criterion must be used if the greatest good is to be achieved (Bentham 24). Cost-benefit analysis, as one such objective, quantitative approach to a utilitarian analysis, provides this necessary reliability.

Environmental, social, political, and economic impact study cases provide current examples of issues which are routinely subjected to a cost-benefit analysis.

In the initial phase of cost-benefit analysis in which the analyst selects the criteria by which to rank alternatives, one might ask, how does the cost-benefit analyst determine which alternative is most cost-effective? According to utilitarian theory, each individual has access to the total range of other individuals' goods and interests, and, as a result, any individual can know what would be best for all. He or she can accomplish this, because it is human nature for people to be able to sympathize with the feelings of other individuals and come to a decision as to what the greatest good
would be. As an impartial observer, the person performing the analysis has the ability to view the behavior of people, and on the basis of his or her own sympathy with this behavior, he or she can decide which alternatives bring about the best cost-benefit ratio.

In *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls details the process of a utilitarian or market-based policy analysis. He says that, according to Adam Smith, a "rightly ordered society" is one in which an impartial observer can, by being able to "sympathize" with the pleasure and pain of all people, decide what would bring about the greatest good. Rawls adds that, in David Hume's accounting of sympathetic decision-making, we "reproduce" pleasures which we have recognized as valuable to others. The impartial observer's decisions are informed through comparing the aspirations of all members of society, and then approving of a policy to the extent to which "they satisfy the one system of desire that he constructs, as he views everyone's desires as if they were his own" (Rawls 1971, 184-190).

So it appears that the cost-benefit analysis model of decision-making has the capacity to aid in making equitable choices between alternative and competing interests. Yet in many situations, this sense of sympathy fails to accurately determine the interests of other individuals. Why? In the book *The Myth of Scientific Public Policy*, Robert Formaini argues that the central fault with the cost-benefit model, when applied to public policy decisions, is that cost, contrary to the beliefs of the utilitarians, cannot be accurately quantified. Indeed he argues that no cost can ever be established
outside the mind of the individual; because no other alternatives are ever pursued. As Formaini states:

"cost evaporates the moment a choice occurs. Beyond this, because of the pervasive uncertainty that permeates all human affairs, these 'forgone opportunities' cannot be objectively evaluated by the individual when choices are made. If this view is accepted, then no outside observer can ever know the 'cost' of any action, neither estimated *ex ante* nor observed *ex post*. All aggregation of money prices performed in the typical cost-benefit study becomes, on this view, irrelevant." (Formaini 1990, 58-59).

Thus, the heart of my criticism of the market model addresses its proponents' faith in the infallibility of cost-benefit analysts' ability accurately to quantify the behavior of others, and, on the basis of this quantification, to judge accurately what constitutes the greatest good. Sociologist Dr. Ira D. Hoos offers an example of the fallibility of cost-benefit analysts. Cost-benefit analysts, says Hoos, typically (and often deliberately) ignore social costs in making policy decisions. Without taking these costs into consideration, says Hoos, we cannot hope to make efficient quantitative decisions (Hoos 1985, 25).

In determining the criteria by which alternatives will be assessed, one might ask whether or not any individual can accurately know all about what is in the best interest of others by merely observing their behaviors? Is it possible for one epistemology to encompass the totality of all human interests? My answer is "No." Having already established that an individual is limited in his or her perspective on life, it is unreasonable to assume
that someone could know what is in the best interest of all. Therefore, the objective, impartial spectator, cannot be certain that she or he is in complete sympathy with what others desire, because he or she does not have access to the complete range of values of the entire society.\(^3\)

Amitai Etzioni echoes and amplifies this complaint. He says that since the impartial observer, in the formulation of his or her opinion of what would satisfy the majority, merely "observes" the behavior of others, without regard to what informs their "choices", this determination has severe "empirical difficulties" (Etzioni, 30). He argues that the mere observation of people will not inform the observer as to why that person engaged in such behavior. Without access to the critical motivating factors involved in one's behavior, it is difficult for the observer to interpret the situation accurately. Since the actual motivating factors are often non-quantifiable (such as loyalty, honesty, trust, or deception), and unobservable, a misrepresented sense of sympathy might occur and jeopardize the decision of the observer in regard to what is best for society.

Moreover, Rawls argues further that the idea of a perfectly impartial spectator is unrealistic because this implies that the person must become a "perfect altruist" (Rawls, 185). Rawls argues that, for the altruist to fulfill his or her desire, there must exist someone else who has "independent desires". If only altruists existed, nothing would ever be accomplished; because everyone would already always be "doing what everyone else wants" and, further, there would be no conflicts necessitating a decision. Only when there are individuals, with distinct and sometimes conflicting
views, is it possible for the decision-makers to be perfect altruists.

Therefore, the cost-benefit analysis is faulty in determining the greatest good when it comes to matters which involve competing interests between individuals. Its value is limited to decisions which do not involve using sympathy as the basis for determining the greatest good. For example, when deciding which kind of car to purchase, a cost-benefit analysis might be the only way to decide which car is best for the money. However, when trying to decide issues which involve other individuals, cost-benefit analysis is unreliable as an instrument for democratic decision making. When policy makers employ the utilitarian methods as applied to public policy decisions, they overstep their boundaries and usurp the power of the people by failing to assess accurately the interests of the people, further entrenching civic impotence.

Marketeers in the SMTB

One might ask how the "market" model specifically fails to meet the requirements for representative democracy. In this section I will detail how the principles of the market model stand over against the democratic principles delineated earlier (pp. 62). I again will contextualize my analysis within the SMTB.

Returning to Abraham's decision regarding the zoning issue (see pages 62-64), the reader will recall that, in an attempt to bring about the greatest good for the greatest number of residents he based his decision to re-zone a ten acre parcel of land from rural estates to commercial zoning for high-density housing on his cost-benefit analysis. Abraham's criteria for assessing the two positions
is based upon improving the overall economic considerations of the area. He decides, in consideration of the potential costs of re-routing a wash which runs through the property in question, that the developer's plan might bring about an increase in the overall pain of the majority of residents.

But how does Abraham know what those costs are *ex ante*? As I have shown already, it is unlikely that his assessment of the costs is accurate. He could never predict the future costs accurately, because the circumstances on which he based his original costs always change. As such, by assuming that he could make such a decision, Abraham violates the democratic principle (delineated on pp 62 ff.) which states that as humans, we are limited in our ability to perceive and understand the world in its totality. He overextends the usefulness of cost-benefit analysis and in so doing fails accurately to report the views of the residents to the commissioners. Therefore, such use of cost-benefit analysis as a tool for decision-making within the SMTB is unreliable.

In view of the flaws in Abraham's decision-making process, it becomes apparent that the "government by market" model, by inaccurately determining the views of the public, or by omitting their motives, does not support the ideals of representative democracy. By relying on market-based decisions, the problem of civic impotence is further intensified. Rawls' observations accurately sum up the feelings of the SMTB residents when he asks; "Why should one sacrifice his or her good for the public good if those who gain are already better off?" (Rawls, 187). This question crystalizes the feeling of impotence many citizens have regarding
local politics and politicians. Within Sunrise Manor, this problem is very volatile, because many of the board members have vested interests within the area, and citizens become resentful that the politicians stand to gain more from their decisions than does the general public. This again leads to impotence on the part of the residents because they feel that the SMTB no longer serves them and/or that their concerns are unimportant to the board. While the issue of inappropriate utilization of cost-benefit analysis is separate from inappropriate use of political position for private gain, the realities of the SMTB actions demonstrate how cost-benefit analysis can become a tool of public inefficiency in the name of saving money.

**Why the Community Model Can Succeed**

As I have shown, participatory democracy can be put in jeopardy when public views are inaccurately represented. When this condition exists, attempts on the part of the public to add input to communication and discussion become paralyzed. Therefore, if a model is legitimately going to support representative democracy, it must allow for and encourage active civic participation, as a prerequisite for success. In the words of Jane Mansbridge:

"Whenever possible, participatory institutions should bring together citizens of opposing views in circumstances that reward mutual understanding and the accurate gathering of information. Deliberation among intellectuals, or even elected representatives is not enough" (Mansbridge 1991, 3-4).

The community model does promote these ideals.
Although the community model which I am advocating is relatively new in American politics, it has been discussed since the inception of democracy in ancient Greece. A natural ally of the community model can be found in the work of Aristotle, one of the "founding fathers" of Athenian Democracy. In the *Politics*, Aristotle calls for the creation of a society based on active citizen participation in the decision-making process (Politics 1990, 221). He argues that it is more proper for "the multitude to be sovereign than the few". Aristotle describes how citizens (the multitude) can rule better than the few by collectively pooling their virtue and wisdom. To illustrate this claim, Aristotle offers an analogy describing how, just as when the multitude comes together, they form a "single man with many feet and many hands" (Aristotle's version of the common phrase, "Two heads are better than one"); so to when citizens come together they become one personality regarding moral and intellectual faculties (Politics, 223).

Aristotle also provides support for the concept of perspectival knowledge as put forth in the community model. He argues that, in the same way in which the general public is a better judge of works of art than a single critic (because different men and women can judge different parts of a work), so too in the state, when a number of perspectives are brought to bear on a problem or issue, there is a "collective superiority" in their abilities to make decisions over a few men or women (Politics, 225).

Aristotle further refutes the criticism of the community model from the expert model which states that there is a danger in allowing the common citizen to become part of the decision-making
process. He argues that, contrary to the notion that public input would lead to acts of "injustice and mistakes" (because common people are prone to folly and are without political honor), public input increases the chances of coming to a well reasoned decision. Why? Aristotle explains that singly, the common person cannot make good judgements. However, as a group they do have sufficient discernment which allows them to make good decisions. In support of this claim, Aristotle offers an analogy in which he explains how when impure food is mixed with pure food, it makes the whole more nourishing. Likewise, when the general public mingles with the better class of citizens, the state is benefited by adding public input (Politics, 225).

Aristotle also refutes a further criticism of the community model. He shows how it appears that the best person to judge in areas requiring expert knowledge is the expert himself or herself. Just as it seems that the best person to judge the quality of a physicians work would be another physician, so too in matters of state, it is rightly a task of experts to make policy decisions. However, Aristotle argues that, just as someone who uses a house is better qualified to judge its value over the carpenter who built it, or just as a diner is better suited to judge a banquet than the cook, so to is the lay-person better able to judge matters of state, because he or she is subject to the law (Politics, 225). For these reasons, Aristotle supports the community model. He concludes that citizens, as a collective, become sovereign in greater matters than the experts, and, therefore, citizens ought to rule the state.
Although ancient Greek democracy (to which Aristotle was a major contributor) is a form of direct democracy (where every citizen is allowed to directly add input into discussions), our current political situation can be modified in order to accommodate our larger population. For this practical concern, Madison suggested that we ought to make American democracy a form of representative democracy. Thus, Madison called for a system of government whereby delegates would come together, as representatives of the people from their particular areas, and discuss and forge agreements based on the interests of the citizens at large. As such, this representative takes on the proper status of expert facilitator (delineated on pp. 77 ff.). According to Madison, this person would need to be an expert in filtering the interests of the people they represent.

Having previously described the legitimate function of the SMTB board members, as the "eyes and ears" of the commissioners, I will now show how, by adopting the community model, the board members can fulfill their proper function as expert facilitators, and meet the requirements of representative democracy. In order to show the effectiveness of the community model, I will return to the hypothetical debate surrounding the issue of funding for the new park (see pp. 73ff.)

Recalling that there was no consensus among the area residents regarding the selection of a swimming pool as opposed to a baseball field, the board members were faced with the problem of deciding what to tell the commissioners regarding the sentiments of the residents. One group of people complained that, since they
already owned swimming pools, they did not want public funds to be spent on a public pool. An opposing group of residents argued that an overabundance of baseball fields, unsuitable for use in the summertime, already existed. The opponents also argued that even if the swimming pool was not built, the baseball field was, in itself, a waste of taxpayer funds. Moreover, they argued that a public pool would benefit even those residents who had pools in their residences for several reasons. The opponents argued that; 1) property values would be increased; 2) that there would be special events in which all children could participate; 3) that there would be special times for adults and seniors to use the facility and; 4) that the pool would become a public meeting spot which could serve to strengthen the ties of everyone within the community. A third group voiced concerns that the pool would attract young children who would be very loud and/or deposit litter on their property.

After listening to the views of the various groups, the board members attempted to interpret those views in order to provide a report for the commissioners. The board members attempted to take into consideration the input from all parties present at the meeting. They decided that the first group was expressing legitimate concerns about using funds for facilities which, for that group, might be wasteful. The concerns of the second group were also considered legitimate and were included in the board members report accordingly. As for the third group, while the board members recognized the right of that group to express their opinion, the board members decided that they were merely complaining for the sake of complaining. The board decided that
the complaint about potential noise and litter was trivial. Further, the board felt that the potential for noise and litter would be far greater if the baseball field was built. Although the board members took these complaints into consideration, they omitted them from their report to the commissioners.

Upon receiving the report from the board members, the commissioners now faced the task of deciding which facility to build. In making their decision they took into account a number of factors. First, they called upon the experts who told them that the swimming pool was, in terms of feasibility and cost, appropriate for this park. Next, the commissioners compared the concerns of the people who were in favor of the pool with the people who were opposed to it. The commissioners decided that if they choose in favor of the pool, the desires of many residents could be fulfilled.

The commissioners prepared a report which was to be made available to the residents at the next board meeting. In the report, the commissioners detailed their reasons for choosing to build the pool. They felt that the claim of the opponents of the pool was weak in light of the fact that; 1) the opponents could themselves use the pool; 2) that the pool would increase their property values, and 3) that the pool would provide a meeting place for community events which anyone could attend. The commissioners also determined that building the baseball field would not benefit anyone, since few people used the existing baseball fields, particularly in the summer.

Upon hearing the commissioners' decision, and in reading the accompanying report, some of the people who were initially
opposed to the idea now thought it was, in fact, a good idea to build the pool. They had not considered the possibility that the pool might also benefit them. This form of participation resulted in truth emerging from the discussion in which multiple perspectives were brought to bear on a common issue. The discussion of the issue provided additional perspectives upon which the commissioners could base their decision, and from which residents could come to a greater understanding of the potential benefits of building the pool. The multiplicity of perspectives coming to bear on the issue in question also allowed some residents to "feel the tug" of the interests of fellow residents. Hence, rather than dealing as adversaries, bound forever to their own particular views, the residents were able to cooperate by adding input to the discussion, and the problem was amicably ameliorated.

Some other residents did not like the idea of building the swimming pool, but they were willing to accept the decision because it was reached in a fair manner. The residents were satisfied that the board members accurately represented their views to the commissioners. The residents were also satisfied that the decision was in keeping with the ideals of representative democracy. Realizing that the system responded to their input allowed the residents to accept the decision, even though it was not in their favor this time. They did not feel a sense of alienation or impotence. While a consensus was not reached, a common ground was established from which to make a fair decision.

The ideals of representative democracy have now been shown to have a greater chance of becoming realized if we institute the
community model. Unfortunately, members of the SMTB who are committed to another model may become barriers to initiating the community model. In the next chapter, I will offer a policy proposal which can begin to remove those barriers, and aid in restructuring a more representative democracy in Clark County.
CHAPTER NOTES/IV

1 Thomas McCollough and Jeffery Goldfarb echo this criticism. Both argue that at the national level, a problem arises when expert knowledge exceeds its legitimate boundaries. The consequence of this problem is that public support, necessary for the sustenance of public choices, erodes. This leads to the decline of communication between policy makers and the public. The result is that a deadlock regarding action on relevant problems occurs, further entrenching the feeling of impotence on the part of the public.

2 While there are many criticisms of utilitarian cost-benefit analysis, some are not relevant to the epistemological problem which I find to be most antithetical to representative democracy. For a more detailed critical analysis of cost-benefit analysis see: Alasdair MacIntyre, "Utilitarianism and Cost-Benefit Analysis: An Essay on the Relevance of Moral Philosophy to Bureaucratic Theory".

3 In the article "Building Citizen Democracy", the author describes how public life, according to the experts, is determined by laws that we discover. The author criticizes this view because in a citizen democracy, public life is grounded in citizens' values. Francis Moore Lappe', Institute for the Arts of Democracy. (1990).

CHAPTER V

Constructive Proposal

If the community model is more likely to adhere to and promote democratic principles, then how can the roles of commissioners, board members and citizens be adopted to the community model? What policy steps need to be taken to facilitate that adoption? It is on these questions that attention will be focused in this chapter.

In an address to the United Nations, Richard McKeon suggested the conditions which might allow for authentic democratic participation. He exclaimed that:

"A society which is based on agreement through communication must provide the conditions in which the truth will emerge from the oppositions of opinions in communication. If the frame of discussion and agreement predetermines what shall be accepted as truth, or gives undue weight to what one party to the discussion says, communication takes on the characteristics of a(n) [intolerant] unitary society, which is undemocratic" (McKeon, 97).

What form of organization can produce the necessary forum for the implementation of productive communication and include the concerns of the common people? What forum could prevent communication from becoming intolerant in McKeon's sense above?
In sum, beyond issues of personality, intention, or competence, what systemic changes are needed in order to structure a conversation which is tolerant, pluralistic and democratic? I will be developing in this chapter potential changes implied by the principles of participatory democracy.

An objection to the community model might be that, since there are thousands of residents within the SMTB, it is impossible to provide a forum in which all their voices could be aired. Responding to this apparent dilemma, I have developed a proposal which attempts to find a practical way by which to increase resident representation.

The Kettering Foundation reports that citizens are, contrary to popular opinion, active in local politics. Their report indicates that people often become involved with issues which directly affect them (Kettering, 1991). Given that many individuals are already active within organizations and groups, a mechanism might already be in place from which a forum for constructive communication can be developed. With this in mind, I propose to develop a public forum which can bring divergent groups together to discuss issues, in the hope of affording board members more accurate information concerning residents' interests. If a structure can be created so that the groups can work together on many issues (such as the park issue) the practical problem of incorporating all the residents' views may be resolved to a satisfactory degree. If this were the case, then the goal of reducing civic impotence can be moved forward demonstrably.
My proposal attempts to take a plurality of groups, all with different and sometimes conflicting, perspectives and to bring them together for discussion of common issues. I have attempted to unite some groups at the county level in an effort to create a forum for discussion of issues common to the citizens within the county townships. On February, 15, 1992, during a public meeting, I presented this proposal to the board.2

"SUNRISE MANOR PROPOSAL

AT ISSUE: Communication between the community and county officials needs to be improved. Many members of the community feel “left out” of the political decision making process. They express a genuine concern for the problems within the community but lack a vehicle to communicate their ideas effectively. Contrary to conventional wisdom, many people are not apathetic as evidenced by their activity in a variety of civic organizations. Rather, they feel frustrated because they do not know how to become politically involved within their community.

CURRENT POLICY: According to Mr. Alan Pulsipher (the liaison between the county commissioners and the town advisory boards), the town boards exist as a communications tool.3 The members of the board meet bimonthly and discuss wide ranging issues within their community. The findings of their meetings are then reported to the commissioners who take their recommendations into consideration. The town boards become the “eyes and ears” of the commissioners. Each of the five town board members is responsible for a defined area within the town and is the
representative for the people within that area, and the town as a whole.

**POLICY PROBLEM:** The problem with the current procedure is that individual members of the town boards have no effective method to "listen" to the voices of the community. There is no *active* role for the citizen. Although legal notices are posted on issues such as zoning problems, and there is also a time allotted at the end of every meeting for general public participation, too few people attend. Some might argue that it is up to the individual citizen to work within the system and get involved. Too often this type of participation takes place only as a reaction to a problem. While this is a valid form of participation, it should not be the only form.

This question, however, is not at issue here. The lack of public involvement is due in part to the residents' apathetic attitude towards politics, but it is also due to an ignorance by those with genuine concerns as to how the system is designed to function. The problem can now be restated: As a concerned citizen within Sunrise Manor, how can I make my voice heard? What avenues are available to me as a private individual to participate in the process? It is the problem of initiating a forum for productive communication which I wish to address.

**PROPOSAL:** Given that a system for public participation exists, the difficulty rests in increasing public participation if the town board is to represent the community accurately and fairly. If there is no discussion between the individual board members and the community, what are the board's recommendations based upon?
Do we simply trust that the board will choose to promote the same values as those within a diverse community of many thousands of people? Is democracy to be understood as government by “experts”? By actively involving people on a regular basis, the diversity of many perspectives and concerns can serve to enhance the richness of discussion and serve the entire community more effectively.

A great majority of the people within the community are active in organizations such as the PTA, church groups, homeowner associations, labor unions and many others. This proposal recommends tapping the existing resources within the community as one way of increasing citizen involvement and of facilitating communication between the citizens, board members and commissioners. This will also significantly increase the number of residents involved in the process.

I propose that the town boards initiate meetings with the citizens' groups, within their respective townships. Since most interest groups are concerned with common problems it would not be necessary to meet with all the members within a given group. A consensus could be taken within the group and then they could send a delegate to the town board meeting to inform the board members of their concerns. An ongoing dialogue could begin and communications could be increased dramatically, thus promoting and facilitating a more active citizenship in the townships. The board members would then be able to give a more accurate accounting of the concerns of those within their districts to the commissioners. While this proposal does not provide a way for
people who are not members of an organization to increase their participation, the hope is that in building a community of dedicated individuals, working on common problems, everyone will begin to see results and be encouraged to participate.

**FORMAT:** The delegates from the individual groups would attend the town board meetings regularly and provide any pertinent information which their group deems appropriate. This would be done through oral discussion and written proposals. The board members would then be able to discuss the various issues and make recommendations to both the citizens groups and the county commissioners. In turn, the delegates would report back to their group and the exchange of ideas and concerns would begin.

For example, a PTA group might have a problem with the location of a school zone. In failing to get any action after accessing the normal channels in their attempt to get a school zone enlarged, the issue could be brought to a town board meeting. The board might know the appropriate person to contact and, as the board members are more influential than individual residents, a resolution to the problem might be found. The individual access to a public forum would thus serve to improve conditions within the community while further serving to foster a sense of involvement by individuals. In turn people will be more apt to participate when they realize that their voices can be heard. Removing the barriers for participation may alleviate the feeling of political impotence about which many citizens complain.

**IMPLEMENTATION:** The first step would be to amend the existing agenda of the town board to include a designated time slot
for group discussion. By sanctioning this format as an actual and serious part of the agenda, the board could lend credibility to the legitimacy of the plan. In taking the initiative, the board could send a message to the community that its members are concerned and do encourage active involvement by individuals in the community. People will be more inclined to participate if they know the board is interested in listening. This proposal will neither cost the taxpayers nor the county government and money. One potential benefit might be that by increasing the involvement of the community, funds could be spent more prudently, resulting in a savings. Thus, efficiency also would be promoted. All that is required is participation by the citizens, which we are ready to do, and a decision by this board to amend the agenda. I am willing to contact the various groups within our community and inform them of the proposal. We could then have a meeting to discuss the proposal in order to determine the level of interest of the groups."

Proposal Results

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, two of the town board members were reviewing my proposal. One said to the other: "Is this guy crazy?"; "Who needs any more public participation?"; "If this passes, I quit!" The other person chuckled and nodded his head in acknowledgement. They intentionally aired their comments loud enough for me to hear, attempting to discourage or intimidate me before my presentation.

After I read my proposal, the chairman of the board opened the floor to discussion. The first board member to respond asked
me why I would want to encourage public participation. He stated that it should be obvious to me that the public does not care and that I am wasting my time. He pointed to the fact that during his eight-year tenure on this board, only a handful of citizens has come to the meetings. I replied that this was exactly my point, nobody in the community attends because either they do not know about the board or they are intimidated in dealing with people who regard them as inferior. When I asked him if this meant that it is hopeless to attempt to solve problems in society, he replied, "Of course it isn't hopeless. That is what we [the board members] are supposed to do. We look out for the public and we know what is best for them". I had discovered an arrogant expert!

The next board member to respond pointed to the fact that, of the sixty people in attendance at the meeting, not one had anything to say on the problem. He then concluded that, if I wanted to improve public participation, that I "do it myself" and if I bring people to the meetings, only then will they listen. He then moved to reject my proposal so that they could "get back to important business". The vote was immediate and unanimous in favor of rejecting my proposal.

Follow Up

Since this meeting I have attempted repeatedly to contact Commissioner Bingham, all to no avail. I have written him with the results of the meeting; and I have called on numerous occasions trying either to make an appointment to speak with him in person or talk to him over the phone. I have succeeded in neither. His
secretary says that he is busy with (again) "important matters" because this is an election year. The secretary, after much pleading, agreed to talk to the commissioner on my behalf about the results of my proposal. Two weeks later, in a telephone conversation, she informed me that she had talked to the commissioner and he suggested there was nothing he could do; but, if I was sincere, I ought to apply for a position on the board. Since then, I have sent in my resume. I am curiously awaiting the results.
CHAPTER NOTES/V

1 McKeon's apt description of the central importance of the "frame of discussion and agreement" in democratic policy making (since it can determine whether processes are democratic or not), applies directly to this thesis and to the issues of civic impotence that it raises. Moreover, McKeon's statements raise collateral questions which pertain specifically to the Clark County Commissioners, the SMTB, and the citizens of Sunrise Manor.

2 Public meeting of the SMTB held on March 12, 1992.

3 Telephone interview with Mr. Alan Pulsipher, county liaison, Feb. 8, 1992.

4 Telephone conversation with Commissioner Jay Bingham's secretary on April 28, 1992.

5 Telephone conversation with Commissioner Jay Bingham's secretary on May 15, 1992.
CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

I need now to gather the threads of my argument. I began this thesis by explaining how conventional wisdom informs policy makers that the public has become apathetic regarding civic participation. A decline in voter activity during recent national elections served as an example of the apparent apathetic attitudes prevalent today. Next, I described how this attitude of so-called apathy has developed. I showed how many people have lost hope in accessing the political process. This inability to participate actively in politics is taken as a sign, by those in power, that the general public is indeed apathetic regarding politics. Thus, policy makers assume that the public has lost its collective political concern regarding the shaping of public policy.

I then argued that civic apathy is an inappropriate characterization of the attitudes of the public. As I pointed out, research reveals that most people are not apathetic at all. What this research has shown, on the contrary, is that people care deeply about a variety of issues both at the local level, and nationally as well. What people report is a sense of impotence in accessing the political system. There is much difference in claiming that the
people simply no longer care and in claiming that they feel utterly incapable of affecting political processes.

Next I attempted to develop a response to the claim that policy makers have somehow misdiagnosed the attitudes of the general public. In order to perform a through analysis of this problem, I limited the scope of my thesis to a similar problem which developed around the SMTB.

In briefly describing the function of the SMTB within Clark County government, I found that the role of the board was to be the "eyes and ears" of the commissioners. I reported that my informal research had revealed that the present board members were failing to communicate effectively the interests and concerns of the area residents to the commissioners. I also showed how the agenda of the SMTB meetings was itself part of the problem because it was designed to limit and discourage the residents from taking an active role in providing their perspectives regarding relevant issues. The problem was shown to be serious, because at stake were the rights of the residents to have a voice in their own destiny.

In an effort to articulate various interpretations of the SMTB situation, I developed three metaphors which I considered for their relevance to the methodology of the SMTB board members. In describing the relationship between the residents and the board members, I borrowed from Plato's analogy of the helmsman. The first metaphor compared the residents to passengers on board a ship. Within this description, the role of the public is limited to following the recommendations of the policy makers in the same way that passengers follow the advice of navigators when
determining the direction in which to sail. The rationale for this model of a resident/board member association assumes that only a limited number of people have access to the kind of knowledge which is necessary in making important decisions. Thus, any interference by persons who lack special knowledge is viewed as counterproductive to the political process.

The second metaphor describes the relationship between the residents and the SMTB board members much differently. Within this model, the residents are compared to customers who can and do choose their own course of action. Each resident is assumed to have the capacity to determine what is best for herself or himself. The role of the board member was likened to that of a cruise ship director who attempts to provide the greatest possible pleasure for the greatest number of guests on board the ship.

The third metaphor combines aspects of the two previous models. In this description, the idea that people are not self-sufficient is maintained along with the idea that people are free to choose their own destinations. The passengers were characterized as colleagues in that, although they are free, they are not self-sufficient and, therefore, they must work together in order to reach their common destination. The role of the board member or navigator is to seek contributions from the passengers or residents by providing a forum in which individual voices can broaden the perspectives which come to bear on decisions regarding issues under discussion. Progress is made, not by appealing to special knowledge or to the greatest good, but rather by individuals actively participating and contributing to the discussion of problems.
Within the next section, I laid bare the normative assumptions which I bring to the analysis of civic impotence. I detailed my belief in Madisonian democracy which calls for active participation on the part of the governed within the framework of representative democracy. This democratic ethic recognizes basic differences among people and attempts to provide a framework in which their individual beliefs or values are an asset in making decisions and advancing society. The idea of forging agreements in order to facilitate action on problems is essential to this view as opposed to proceeding on the basis of power or coercion.

Following this section, I detailed how the current SMTB board members function from the expert model. They often believe that area residents are incapable of providing rational input into the discussion of issues, regardless of the fact that those issues are important to the residents. I detailed how the board members' attitudes developed from faulty assumptions regarding the area residents. The board members incorrectly assumed that the residents were apathetic when in fact residents did care but were uncertain as to how to access the system and were blocked as well.

Next, I developed the ways in which people are prevented from accessing the political system at the national level. In the initial section I cited much of the current work in which thinkers involved in the debate over civic apathy are engaged. Their research showed similar problems at the national level to those which I encountered locally.

In the next section, I developed the working principles of three common forms of government. Returning to government by expert,
I found that this model developed historically owing primarily to the rapid rise in scientific discoveries over the last fifty years. The vast amount of knowledge created during this time period necessitated that people specialize and become experts in narrow fields of study. As a result of successes in science and technology, many policy makers attempted to extend the expert method to the area of public policy making.

In contextualizing this model within the SMTB, I provide a scenario in which a fictitious board member assumes the role of expert policy maker. Sara, as we have seen, determined the outcome of an issue based on her ability to 'read' the real interests of the people. She decided that the residents lacked the ability to accurately evaluate the information concerning the issue in question. As a result, she disregarded the value of the residents' input.

In the next section, I discussed a second form of government referred to as the market or utilitarian model. This model was shown to have developed in reaction to eighteenth and early nineteenth century British laws which were often very harsh and discriminatory. Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill are commonly credited with developing the principles of this theory which attempts to create an equitable decision-making process. Thus was born the idea of seeking the greatest good for the greatest number of people. This greatest good was assumed to take a concrete form which could be best attained through free interchange within a competitive marketplace.
Putting this model within the context of the SMTB, I developed the example in which Abraham functioned from a utilitarian position. He appealed to the cost-benefit instrument of decision-making. Abraham followed a regulated procedure by which he determined the greatest good for the area residents regarding a zoning issue.

Following the second model, I described the government-by-community model. This model was shown to have recently (since about 1965-70) developed in reaction to alleged deficiencies with the previous two models in regard to their inability to maintain or support the principles of representative democracy. This model presupposes, in sympathy with the ideals of Madison and Jefferson, that: 1) people are equal in their ability to pursue opportunities; 2) that human knowledge is incomplete and perspectival; and 3) that authentically democratic decision-making must proceed by striving to achieve mutual agreements in order to provide a basis for acting on common problems, while maintaining the integrity of those involved in debate.

In contextualizing this model within the SMTB, I gave the example of Tom, the board member who tried to resolve an apparent controversy surrounding a zoning issue. Tom acted as an interlocutor, attempting to forge an agreement based on allowing all interests equally to come to bear on the discussion of the problem at hand. In this situation, Tom was able to work out a compromise solution which broke the stalemate and allowed progress in what otherwise might have been an unresolvable situation. Moreover, even if a compromise among the residents were unattainable,
through the richness provided by a multi-perspectival discussion, Tom would be better informed and equipped in reporting to the commissioners.

Chapter Four began to address how well each model promotes the democratic ethic as described in Chapter I. In my assessment of the government by expert model, I argued that the proper function of the SMTB board members was as the liaison between the commissioners and the area residents. The board members were to use their expertise in deciphering the needs and interests of the various residents who might attend bimonthly meetings. However, upon closer examination of the activities of the board members, I showed how they assume to have expert knowledge concerning the interests of the area residents. The board members believe that the residents simply do not have the ability to comprehend complicated issues upon which the residents have no expert knowledge. This position was shown to be contrary to the intent of the democratic ethic in which human understanding is incomplete and perspectival, and in which truth emerges from discussion. As such, the expert model violates this principle in assuming that the board members can know the interests of the area residents before these interests are voiced. By effectively eliminating the public from the decision-making process, those who would use the government by expert model fail to support the ideals of representative democracy.

In assessing the government by market model, I found similar results. In this section, I revealed how the utilitarian instrument of cost-benefit analysis can be used to determine procurement decisions. For example, when deciding between competing
construction companies during the bidding for a new road, the cost-benefit analysis was shown to help determine which company could produce the best road for the least amount of money. However, when this method of decision-making is extended to the area of policy making itself, it also fails to maintain the principles of representative democracy. In assuming that the greatest good is determined within the current cost of goods, the market model fails to recognize that goods of quality cannot be assumed to be the same; because in a democracy, no one good attains an a priori precedence over another. Therefore, the board members acting from the market model fail to take into account the interests and values of the residents and, as such, they do not promote the democratic ethic.

Finally, I argued that the community model does uphold the principles of representative democracy. By providing a forum in which the residents can voice their opinions, the board members promote the ideal of active consent. By listening to the views of various residents, the board members are able to form a portrait of those views which they can then communicate to the commissioners. In this way, the views of the residents are communicated to the decision-makers in an authentically representative manner.

Given the entrenchment of the problem surrounding civic participation, and in light of the fact that in theory, the SMTB is organized to make an authentic response to the interests of the area residents, in Chapter V, I put forth my policy proposal. I called for the SMTB board members to amend their agenda to include a larger
time period for public participation. This would reduce the effect of the SMTB acting solely as a zoning board. I conclude that since the board members are to be the eyes and ears of the commissioners, then they will need to begin listening to the views of the residents more actively and intentionally.

In an effort to make this proposal concrete and pragmatic, I devised a method of communication which might streamline the meetings by reducing the potential number of participants to a manageable level. Obviously, with thousands of area residents, the board members cannot accommodate all their individual views. However, as my research revealed, there are existing organizations within the community which do have access to the views of their members. Therefore, I suggested that the various groups send representatives from their organizations to the SMTB meetings in order to voice the concerns of their members. I hoped that a dialogue between the board members and the group representatives would take place and that this will in turn provide the board members with a clearer picture of the residents' views which they can then relate to the commissioners. If this occurs, I am confident that we will have begun addressing the problem of civic impotence and reforming the political process.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Obviously, this thesis provides a very preliminary recommendation by which the problem of civic impotence might be addressed. I have not, for example, detailed how the commissioners themselves might be made more accountable to the area residents.
Nor have I explained how civic impotence might be addressed at the national level. Yet, I believe I have provided a critical vantage point from which these other areas might be evaluated and addressed, and acted upon.

In light of this, I plan to continue working towards the development of a forum within the SMTB which will pool the resources from the various existing groups and organizations in the township. I am in the process of establishing a phone tree which will aid in alerting members of the various organizations about upcoming meetings or about issues which need immediate attention. I am also attempting to create a neighborhood newsletter which will also aid in informing area residents about issues which affect them.

I hope to use this research as a model for citizen participation which might be used in fighting civic impotence in other levels of politics. I plan to continue the work envisioned in this thesis; and I have already begun to develop avenues through which I might place my work before a wider audience for consideration, debate and action.
SOURCES CONSULTED


