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Message From the CEO—Deborah Nankivell

The following is the third in a series of reflections about the Community Values crafted by **Mike Wilhelm** (McCormick Barstow). Each value challenges us to act as both stewards and civic entrepreneurs. Commitment to outcomes is where intention meets sacrifice and endurance. As the fruit from seeds planted over a decade ago is beginning to ripen, hats off to the stewards that have persevered.

Commitment to Outcomes

“We are willing to take responsibility for tasks and achieving specified outcomes. We are committed to stay involved until the tasks are completed.”

There is an old saying that is sadly often true, “Talk is cheap”. While talking is an invaluable preamble to acting, it is not an end in itself. The exchange of ideas is vital in moving a community forward; however the real steward takes the ideas and make them into something real and tangible. Get your vision and then strive to make it a reality. The goal is never to talk an issue to death, but rather talk things through to a point where the goals are both appropriate and clear. We are looking for real concrete measurable outcomes.

The goal is always to reach outcomes that move things forward in a positive direction. Outcomes should be both practical and also challenging. They should stretch us without causing us to become unraveled. Our best learning always occurs just outside our comfort zone. The outcomes sought ought to be clearly defined without hidden agendas. We do not want to lay out one public vision while pursuing a very different private vision. Hypocrisy is poison that pollutes the very life blood of a community.

Commitment to outcomes requires perseverance and diligence. When the going gets tough the tough get going and sunny day-ers drop off. Too often it is at this point that many in the group seem to disappear. They enjoy the conversation about problems and have opinions about anything and everything, but when it comes to rolling up one’s sleeves and doing the hard work they are no where to be found. Don’t engage in the debate unless you are interested in sticking around to do the hard work of solving the problems.

Creating a great vision can be fun. The real work occurs in the trenches where great visions become reality. It is here in the trenches that the heroes of the community step forward. Anyone who enjoys sausage should not watch it being made. This can be very true of pursuing outcomes. We all enjoy the sausage but who is committed to going in and doing the hard and at times disagreeable work of getting it made?

If you have a commitment to outcomes you are willing to allow the results you achieve to be analyzed and assessed in terms of the outcomes that were sought. Too often groups try to take credit for positive outcomes that are naturally occurring and having nothing to do with their efforts. Stewards give credit where credit is due and do not take it where none is due; they do not build resumes on fortuitous circumstances.

Simply serving on a committee is not doing. It is what happens between meetings where the most important stuff almost always occurs. Stewards are those people on the committee whose raise their hands to do work that the committee identifies and then is truly accountable for getting it done. They keep at it until the outcome has been achieved. They do not declare victory early, trying to cover the less than stellar results with clever semantics.

When striving for the outcomes we should never lose sight of the process. The process by which you strive to achieve the outcomes either builds a framework to make pursuing the next goal easier or leaves lots of wounded people, and you have to find a whole set of new troops because of the poor experience. These Values of the Fresno Region are as much about the process by which we problem solve as the problem solving itself. So we need to put a priority on outcomes without sacrificing the process by which the outcome is achieved.