

# The Imperial Republican

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## Meeting of Minds prioritizes 'dreams' for Imperial area

By JAN SCHULTZ  
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Housing, a walking/bike trail and a veteran's memorial were among the top "dreams" a group of citizens have for Imperial.

With the help of an outside facilitator, 23 Imperial residents gathered for the quarterly Meeting of the Minds March 29 to think about possibilities for their community.

Jana Jensen of Bingham, Neb., a community development director with the Nebraska Community Foundation, helped the representatives of various Imperial organizations "turn their dream switches on," and then prioritize a set of long-range improvements.

Initially, Jensen encouraged the group to list the best aspects of Imperial.

Some of the Imperial positives she gathered included being people-friendly, variety of churches, safe streets, youth returning home, a busy downtown, new library addition, good fire department, isolation (positive), strong volunteers, health care and a good school.

From that listing, she asked each person to list their "dreams."

After the list was up, each participant could cast three votes for their favorites on the list.

Housing, by far, rose to the top with 22 votes, followed by the walking/bike trail (12) and a veteran's memorial (10).

The suggestions for housing ran the gamut—from market rate rentals to spec homes to retirement housing.

Several mentioned that housing has been a concern here for years.

Rex Felker said it hasn't changed much in the years he has lived in the area. When he first moved here, he had to drive to and from McCook to his job in Imperial because he could not find housing.

It was also mentioned housing was the top priority at a similar meeting 10 years ago.

Jensen noted that Imperial is not alone in that issue.

"Housing is a concern in every community I am in," she said.

There are no magical answers, Jensen noted, but based on the voting and discussion, housing is where the community's efforts should be placed.

Russ Pankonin noted the Chamber of Commerce has recently established a housing committee to work on the issue.

He was asked to bring an update from the committee to the next Meeting of the Minds in May.

Regarding the walking/bike trail, several mentioned the need for an off-street area to walk and bike, mainly for safety reasons.

Jensen noted some success with a similar project in Rushville, Neb., which built a half million dollar trail that links its downtown to the ball parks in town.

She is going to send some of the grant information and other resources used in that project.

A veteran's memorial has long been a dream of the VFW and its auxiliary, according to P.J. Pajerski, who attended representing the VFW.



Jana Jensen, at left, a community development director with the Nebraska Community Foundation, helps those at the Meeting of the Minds list their "dreams" for Imperial. (Republican photo)

He said he would get in touch with the VFW Post in Palisade, which spearheaded the construction of a \$385,000 memorial on main street in recent years.

Jensen said she was surprised to hear nothing mentioned about education or the library in the "dream" list.

"That might indicate people are pleased with these services," she said.

Meeting of the Minds organized a year ago as

a gathering point for local organizations, in order to share information on upcoming events, and as a resource for groups needing assistance in their event's success.

Bringing Jensen to last week's meeting was suggested by members of the Imperial Community Foundation.

Lori Pankonin, a foundation member, noted the Imperial Community Foundation Fund has money available for projects, and it highly encourages planning for long-term goals such as was done last week.

Jensen also congratulated the community for organizing Meeting of the Minds, which was an effort of Imperial's Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP) committee.

"We encourage all of our communities to have this meeting of the minds concept," she said.

As a celebration of its first year, birthday cake was served at the meeting.

The next Meeting of the Minds is scheduled for Tuesday, May 31.

### Events on horizon

A segment during each Meeting of the Minds is a report on upcoming activities.

Here's a recap of some of the reports given last week:

Car Nutz—Hosting the Nebraska Rod and Custom Association's Tour Nebraska, which is coming through Imperial Sunday



The group of 23 people at Meeting of the Minds last week came up with this large list of "dreams," from which they can now start to formulate planning. (Republican photo)

morning, June 12. As many as 500 vintage cars on the tour will take their morning break here after leaving earlier that day from North Platte. Viewing of the cars will be available during the hour they are parked in Imperial.

Chase County Courthouse—Plans for an event celebrating the 100th year of the current courthouse are underway for later this year.

IVFD/Auxiliary—The Imperial Volunteer Fire Dept. and auxiliary will be working together for a local observance of the 10th anniversary of 9/11 this September.

Imperial Chamber—Their new website is up and accessible at: [imperialchamber.com](http://imperialchamber.com). The Chamber will also be co-hosting the annual Easter Egg Hunt April 16 with an April 23 snow date.

Chase County Tourism—The annual Celebration on the Square is set for Saturday, June 18, at the courthouse. A new entertainer from Omaha will play during the arts and crafts event.

Imperial Lions Club—The organization, one of Imperial's oldest, will be celebrating its 80th anniversary Saturday, Oct. 15, 2011.

Chase County Museum—The facility in Champion will open Memorial Day weekend with its ever-popular quilt show.

Champion Community Club—A "rededication" of Champion Lake, possibly this summer, when repairs are completed.