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Christy Kallevig: Welcome to Vital Connections On Air, a podcast brought to you by University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality that explores the trends and topics important to communities and leaders throughout Minnesota. My name is Christy Kallevig. I'm an Extension educator with the Center for Community Vitality. And today I am joined by two of my colleagues, Beth Kallestad and Lisa Hinz, who are both within the Leadership and Civic Engagement area of the Center for Community Vitality. Welcome to the podcast ladies.

Beth Kallestad: Hi Christie. Thank you.

Lisa Hinz: Hi Christy. Thanks for having me.

Christy Kallevig: Yes, and so let's start by getting to know you each a little bit more. Beth, why don't you introduce yourself to our audience and share what you do within Extension.

Beth Kallestad: I work with people in primarily southern Minnesota on a variety of skill building teaching opportunities. I like to try to focus my work on participatory leadership skills when I can, and sometimes that is in a cohort group, sometimes individual workshops and now more recently in an online training and then in an in-person class that is doing great.

Christy Kallevig: And Lisa, you've been with the team a little bit longer than Beth and I have and have a great deal of experience in the area of civic engagement that we're going to be talking about today.

Lisa Hinz: Little bit longer. That's interesting because I'm thinking I've been here a lot longer. And really, I came to this work in Extension out of the experience of working in community-based organizations, in small nonprofits and organizations working at a community level. So combining that kind of education focus of Extension with the community development side of things really makes great sense to me. And really, the kind of the driving passion that I have in my work is about working with people like me, before I came to Extension, who are interested in building their communities. My work is prime. I work statewide. As it turns out, I like to say that my job is a road trip and I really love the road trips that I get to make in Minnesota. I'm located in the central part of the East Metro. But I end up getting on the road to go to a lot of places. So like Beth, I do the leadership and civic engagement work, I do individual workshops and actually quite a bit of my work is with cohorts where we'll work together over time and really going deep on some of the material around both leadership and civic engagement. I love that "and" because I think leadership and civic engagement go together really well.

Christy Kallevig: Well thank you so much for sharing a bit more about yourselves and Lisa, I'm going to start with you because I know that civic engagement is something that you are very

passionate about and excited about in your work. And what does civic engagement actually mean? What is a good description of it? What does it look like?

Beth Kallestad: Well, I think, you know, when I was hearing civic engagement for the first times in my work, I realized like in some ways it sounds like it's at a distance because it's a lot of syllables. It's a "\$25 phrase," which what one of the participants in the program I work with would say. What I think at root though is really "civic" is about sometimes we think city or, or local government or something, but civic is also about community...the places that we spend time. It can be our schools, it can be our neighborhoods, it's public life I think in a kind of a basic way. And then the engagement part is really how do we get involved, what do we care about and where do we want to put our attention? So that's, that's kind of a core piece about civic engagement that I would say. I'll pause there and give Beth an ample opportunity to speak to that as well.

Beth Kallestad: Yeah, thanks. I think for me it, it's really the collaboration piece and the shared decision making and dialogue that goes on is what makes civic engagement different from maybe just participation. We often hear of opportunities for public participation or community input and some of them are more robust than others and I guess I'm, I'm drawn to the more robust end of that spectrum.

Lisa Hinz: Yeah, I would, I would probably see it like Beth is alluding to, there's like this great range of everything from a light touch of just knowing about stuff to getting more involved or, or providing input at some level to running for public office. I would say that's a higher, much higher level of public civic engagement, but that's not really the only way to get involved. And that's a great gift too.

Christy Kallevig: What are some of the ways that people can be involved, or that they might be already involved, but [are] thinking, "Well, people say I should be more civically engaged." What are some examples of ways that folks are being engaged with their communities and that kind of fall into the description of civic engagement?

Lisa Hinz: Well, I would say some examples I would draw right from my work with people in communities and in their organizations would be, you know, being on a fair board; being in an elected position, in that sort of classic civic engagement. But I think we also see it when people get involved in school committees, where their young ones are, or if there's a neighborhood organization, they get involved. We just had our August "Unite the night," I think it's called or something like that where people come out. It might also look like the "Relay for Life" where people get involved in working on a public issue of sorts, you know, addressing a deadly illness and organize to take action at some level. Those are some quick examples that come to mind. I think some heavier duty examples come to mind that we haven't really seen in Minnesota yet, but there's some great work happening nationally and even internationally and some places around participatory budget work, where ordinary everyday people are getting involved in municipal budgeting or city budgets where they get a chance to help decide where some of the budget of a city goes. Which is pretty exciting, you know if you think about it. You think, "Oh, we typically just pay taxes," but in a participatory budget process, it's a lot more heavy duty. By heavy duty, I mean, the degree of input that you can have is much greater and we're seeing some great results

in other [states], like I said, we don't have anything like that happening in Minnesota that I'm aware of at this point, but that would be on that like level of a greater influence, public life process.

Beth, Do you have some examples that come to mind?

Beth Kallestad: Some examples that come to mind ... well, so before I came to work at Extension and I was actually in one of our civic engagement cohorts for water quality and Lisa was one of our facilitators. In the water world, in Minnesota, every large watershed area in the state is going through a process of watershed planning. And typically, that ends up being a sort of the people that do that as their job, whether it's the county or a soil and water district, the pollution control agency, etc. But there are opportunities for people who just care about those resources to be part of that. And so whether that's attending some planning sessions and giving input, reading materials, that sort of thing. It might also be another project that I'm working on; we're going to be encouraging folks who care about invasive species management to go and talk to the people at their counties, cities, whatever about issues that they're seeing come up and how can they be involved.

Beth Kallestad: Folks will hear later on some examples of how some friends of ours in the Woodbury area are doing that. And so there's a wide range of things. I think it can also be even things just like helping each other. I'm doing work that helps one another where there's a group [in which] I'm a volunteer... philanthropy groups that are kind of a range of things where you're really coming together to help solve things. There's an issue and you want to try to figure out a way to help move it forward, help improve things. I think any of that can be civic engagement.

Lisa Hinz: Beth, your comments remind me one of the great things that I think of about civic engagement is really not just what do I want or the people who are like me want, but the way in which we can bring in a broader range. I mean the quality of community is really not just about one demographic. It can be youth, it can be adults, it can be across an income range.

It can be across a racial or ethnic or religious range as well and I think that the best civic engagement when we're really dealing with broad public issues or even community-wide issues are really attentive to including a range of people, both inviting as well as stepping up. Because I think the invitation is like organizing, or something like that. It's making that invitation so that others are aware that they could have influence and are feeling like that's something that affects [them]. I want to get involved and I think when you mentioned invasive species, it's like we don't always think about that, but I certainly know from experience around Emerald Ash Borer, that some of the civic engagement people getting aware and getting involved has really made a difference to community life. I know in Sherburne County they've done some terrific organizing to get volunteers involved in helping identify and take care of trees that have emerald ash borer. So that's a different angle. And your comment about getting involved in a way that's broad just got me thinking about that.

So as you have both laid out different examples. The one thing that is clear is that civic engagement is not necessarily sitting in a stuffy boardroom in yet another committee meeting.

That there, there are ways to be engaged that you are boots on the ground doing work and kind of building change.

Lisa Hinz and Beth Kallestad: Absolutely. Yup. Yup. Definitely.

Christy Kallevig: And do you think that our communities are more immediate of folks who want to step up and become engaged or are more ready to welcome those folks than they maybe have been in the past?

Lisa Hinz: The words that come to mind are. It depends. I think we're seeing areas of civic life in the United States that are much more active. I was just reading an article about the great number of women in both Minnesota and in the country who were running for public office. I think that's unprecedented. And so there's places, not just here, but that would be one example, where we're seeing a lot more activity than we have maybe even a year or two ago. At the same time I also hear public organizations saying, wow, we don't have anybody show up to our meetings. Or you know, it's all quiet and then something blows up in the paper or something like that. So there's elements. I think it depends, that's the quick answer. And maybe Beth has something she'd like to add to that.

Beth Kallestad: You know, I think what I've seen it and I don't know if it's just that there are more things to join and be part of now than there were in the past or not, or if it's the leadership structure. I was reading something the other day that we're shifting to a more collaborative leadership style, just sort of in general here and as opposed to just having the one leader that's in charge and allowing that. So one thing that I've noticed just in my own personal experiences in the community that I live in has, I think, to do with the process and how the engagement is set up. I saw, and this was several years ago, a comprehensive planning process that drew quite a few people and normally people [who] wouldn't show up. I've also seen mandatory community participation meetings having to do with storm water where they were held at four in the afternoon at city hall and no one came. So that has to do with invitation and making things convenient and how people are invited and who's inviting and all this sort of thing. So, I think that sometimes, maybe we say, well we tried this and it didn't work and, nobody came, but I don't know that we pay enough attention to why nobody came.

Lisa Hinz: Great point, Beth. It reminds me that one of the things I am seeing among the people and the groups that are having success drawing a broader public in a variety of methods. So instead of having the one night meeting at 4:00 or at 7:00 or something like that, I hear about people who are doing some online surveying to get input on some of the processes that they're working on. And in addition to the online meeting when they put stuff in the news paper or online, a lot of groups are using Facebook these days to kind of put the word out. It's not just about a meeting but to also say, and we've got this website and we'd like your input, or something like that. So using social media in a variety of ways as well. And then having that "traditional" (I'm doing air quotes, you probably can't hear them) traditional meeting where it's like the folks who want to come and be face-to-face.

I do think that the quality of the face-to-face experience you mentioned process, Beth, and I think we have had an experience of like, "Come in" and there's a person in the front who tells, tells,

tells, and then there's five minutes of "What do you think?" Or it's meant as a large group thing. And I think we have a lot greater variety of options and practices that are being used. At least when I think of best practices where those processes are much more small group and come up with some ideas and then share them back with a large group. Or whether it's world cafe or small table conversation or something like that. So that those face-to-face gatherings really allow for both the sort of input at a small group level, but also dialogue, which I think is fundamental to having really good civic engagement. Because I can know what I think, but when I talked to Beth and I hear how she thinks I might change my thinking, or I might think differently because I've had an experience, a back and forth with someone who's different than myself.

Beth Kallestad: I guess I would add to that we live in a very instantaneous age right now and one of the key pieces of good engagement is trust and relationships. And that doesn't happen instantaneously. So sometimes, it's like, well, we did this, nothing happened. Nothing happened, or we didn't get the result we wanted. And I think we're again, too quick to be like, "Well, all right, let's work on this." And maybe not expected to happen instantaneously.

Lisa Hinz: Oh, brilliant, Beth.

Christy Kallevig: I want to dig into this idea of process a bit more. Is there a best practice for what type of process to follow or a model that folks should think about using when they are working towards an engagement effort in their community?

Beth Kallestad: Well, to go back to what Lisa said before, you know, it depends. So looking at the outcome that you want, and then kind of thinking back to what's going to help us achieve that outcome. So one thing I'll often say to groups is, "Okay, so I'll take the skin from another coworker of ours, but you know, don't let the janitor decide the outcome of your meeting." If you don't set your room up right ahead of time...a little thing, but if the chairs are set up in rows and you want people to have conversations, you need to move those chairs and get them in circles or something, you know, so you need to be paying attention and setting things up. And so, Lisa was mentioning a few processes earlier, but it really does depend on what you want.

Beth Kallestad: I think the biggest thing is being clear on what is expected. So if the intention is we're sharing information, then that's great. Then those rows of chairs is just fine. And that's what's happening. If you're really doing more of a discussion and process and that sort of thing, then you need to look at something different, and not being tied to, like, this has to be a Roberts Rules of Order meeting. I just learned about a "Roberta's Rules" the other day. I didn't want to dig into that.

Christy Kallevig: Lisa, I know that our center has developed a model for civic engagement and I wonder if you could kind of walk through the steps that are involved in that model.

Lisa Hinz: Sure. I think I'll do it briefly. It's also on our website and I'm guessing you can connect to that as well. What I would say really came out of experience and practice and we look at literature. I'd like to say that, that good theory is built on best practice. Right? Our model from the Center for Community Vitality has five parts. Basically it starts with a public issue, but people need to come together. So we start with the prepare stage of bringing people who are in

community and potentially conveners, organizers. Then from preparing, we go into inquiring and really when you're working on public issue, we're trying to both clarify the issue. Sometimes there's a presenting issue and what we want to do is go a little deeper. Other times it might be like the water quality example that Beth mentioned--or she mentioned water planning.

Lisa Hinz: What we might need to do is inquire or learn about the issue more, right? Then we get to analyzing. So we've gone from prepare to inquire, to analyze, where we're really diving deep into what kind of options are there and really coming out of that with a "what do we want to, what are the possibilities?" So we've analyzed, we've learned, we've inquired, we've analyzed, and then we get to the synthesize place where we really get to the, "Okay, there are multiple options or maybe there are different perspectives." How do we prioritize or perhaps create third and fourth options that really incorporate a broader variety of perspectives so that we can make what we in the center, we coined the phrase making resource-FULL (with F-U-L-L), big resourceful decisions because public issues are meant to be inclusive, not exclusive, and then we moved from that to synthesize, that sort of making a decision about what direction to go to acting together so that the issue gets addressed. So it's that prepare in choir, analyze, synthesize, and act together to address the issue and make change.

Christy Kallevig: As you lay out those different steps, is there a step that seems to be more challenging for folks or, or that you kind of have to really think about in order to move beyond that to get to the next place in your process?

Beth Kallestad: I think in my own experience and when I was in our cohort the question that seems to come up with groups is: "How do we get people in the room and how do we, you know, just that initial getting-it-started." There's points along the way where, where there's always some complications or challenges but that initial piece, and I think the more I think about that, it's that's where a lot of the time and attention needs to go and really not worrying so much about like, "Well, we have this meeting set in two weeks...like we have to do this." Which I mean sometimes you do have to, based on what's happening. But really paying a lot of attention to that invitation process and stage. We did a webinar a while back on this with information from the community book by Peter Block that was really helpful. And, and I think just focusing on that part, it seems to be where people get hung up. They think an email or a notice in the paper is going to do it. And that's not enough.

Lisa Hinz: To that point, Beth, I recently did a series of interviews with people working in the water world and successful kind of community engagement strategies. And one person I talked with said in their office, they were turning people out for input process and [I] won't go into detail there, but he said one of the things they did was a paper invitation, and they did the email for the folks who had email, because they knew not everybody had email. And then they called the people who knew each other and they said, "I know this person and this person." And four people in the staff called about 50 people individually, you know, where they had a relationship and talked to them about the event and said the closing line.

And here's what really struck me. We said at the end of our call, after we talked with them and found out their interests and stuff, we said, "Well, can we count on you? Can we come there?" And I think there's a quality of an invitation that happens in that that says, "I know I've

told you some things and it sounds like you're interested. Can we count on you to be part of it?" You know, it was just a one night invitation meeting kind of deal. So things are going to vary with different [ways] of organizing things, but I think that practice of actually asking, listening for that response, they actually had 90 people turn out. So they had organized a small group kind of conversation where people are that to hear from each other and people walked away saying, "I really liked this small group conversation because it got to hear what other peoples' thoughts, not just what I thought." It's the usual thing. So when we go back to that process thing and that element of like, "So how do we make invitations that make a difference?" I think there's that quality creating that dialogue right on the front end that says: "We need you. Could we help make something you want happen?"

Christy Kallevig: As folks are kind of moving through this and they do the invitation wealth they get folks in the room to have the conversation and you gather their input. Can you talk a little bit about that synthesize step in the model because I think that might be something that folks don't often think about as being part of civic engagement.

Lisa Hinz: That was the step when you asked what place people get stuck. That's the one I fought hard because it says we got to choose. We've got to come up with something that's identified with a number of options and then you get to the point where it might not be easy to either make a choice or come up with an option that fits as many concerns as there are, right? Because we the day of technical solutions--that easy just apply here and the Band-Aid will stick and you'll heal. I think those days are still around, but they're not as much a part of our public life. We have much more complex, interconnected, no-one- in-charge kind of issues. And that requires that we come up with new kinds of things that are really...that's why I think the synthesize part can be really challenging.

Lisa Hinz: I do think sometimes we, like Beth said, we lived in this kind of move quickly, instantaneous bullet point kind of world. And so the reality of trying to like get to a point where people come to some agreement, some consensus or some degree of, "Yeah, that's good enough." I think that's, you know, I don't go for great anymore and sometimes it happens, but I think requires some effort both by the folks organizing. If that's the case, you know, if you've a public input process that an organization, a city, or public organization response rate or if it's a community organization. I think part of the process skills of working toward consensus or general agreement are really important and it means having really good listening skills, really good questioning skills and the capacity to really hear things that sometimes are hard to hear. Before you get to the point where you go, "Yeah, I think it's good enough."

Beth Kallestad: That's a very valid point that getting to like, "All right, well now what do we do and how do we choose?" And it is challenging; sometimes we want to throw everything in because they're all good ideas. Some of them are from within our cohorts and workshops. We have some decision making processes that we go through with folks to try to help them figure that out and again, taking the time to do that. And I think to the getting as you're doing this process back in the preparing, inquiring kind of stages of making sure you cast the broadest net that you can cast. And so the stakeholder analysis and who's not here and how do we have as many voices, it some ways can complicate things in that there's a lot of different information and

viewpoints coming. But it also, when you get to the end, if people are seeing that they were heard and that their needs and wants are being considered. That's helpful.

Lisa Hinz: You actually did a really nice job of reminding me to go back to something you said earlier around trust and relationships. I think when some civic engagement processes can be months and a long, long time; others are shorter, they're quicker. If it's like a, a process of like, "Let's organize a night out or a relay for life." Those are shorter, quicker, more discrete kinds of activities. I think where trust and relationships really get tested in this synthesize stage or that the decision-making stage where when we can come up with processes that say "A, we're going to accommodate, right?" We may not each get all we want, but we might, as somebody I used to work with called "satisficing." Satisfied, but it's sort of the difference between giving up a little bit, sacrificing some, but getting some, right?

Lisa Hinz: It's a compromise of sorts. And, I think I'm really humbled just to even say that because I think there are public issues that are so darn challenging, so complex or where there are such differences of perspective that it really takes trust and commitment. Relationships that say, "I do recognize that we're in this together and I think you are in this with me" and "How do we keep working towards something that works for both or all of us?" That's why I think that that decision making that synthesize stages is difficult. And now if we haven't turned everyone off of everything.

Beth Kallestad: No, it's not easy. It's not easy.

Lisa Hinz: I'll just finish by saying, you know, make the comment that it can be made easier by being mindful and respectful of different perspectives. When you have come into the room or online or wherever this happens in the ways that it happens. I think when you look at people and sort of keep sort an open mind and a willingness to learn from others and kind of accept that someone thinks differently than you. I'm not saying I got it all figured out either, but I have learned a few things about what it takes to kind of hang in there so that you get to a better place, a better result.

Christy Kallevig: I want to ask you, we know that our communities look different than they used to and so as, as we create civic engagement efforts, go through the process, how do we do it in a way that is respectful and inclusive of the other cultures that exist within the larger community?

Lisa Hinz: Well, my first thought is that we've always, our communities have always been changing. Years ago we had different waves of immigration. I think we've always had different kinds of diversity in our communities, whether it be around faith traditions or just even recognizing the different ages will create different circumstances for people. And yes, there are kinds of diversity around culture and race right now that I think are really at the forefront, as we should be, right? We're trying to figure out how we work together and where we don't. How do we do that respectfully? Well, I think I go back to listening and willingness. If you want to work with people, that attitude, that mindset is going to take you further than if you just want my way or the highway. I think, you know, that sort of, "I want what I want and not what we might create together."

Lisa Hinz: So I think sort of approaching engagement or community involvement with kind of a best intentions and a sense of, "I think we need each other," particularly in communities that are very small. I think we have to look at how we bring together the folks who really are living here, making their lives, making a living, at the end of the day. I think that's what most of us, we want a good life for ourselves and our families and the people who we care about. And so if we look at others in that same way, or at least in a variation of that, I think we can see an opportunity at least. Beth, do you have things you would add?

Beth Kallestad: I would say to think about if there's a way to find some trusted members of whatever community or group you're trying to involve and scope things out a little bit. Even things like as basic as a location might be really off putting to some people for, for a variety of reasons. Maybe there's fear or bad experiences or whatever. And so like, okay, how do we find the most neutral location possible so that people feel that they can come. Do we have interpreters? Do we need them? How does that change the dynamic of what's going on? And so just really, again, with the process and paying attention ahead. The majority of the work I think happens before you even get people in the room.

Lisa Hinz: You build those relationships. I think one thing we haven't really talked about that I realized I should have mentioned ages ago, it's not just getting people to the room. If you're the organizer, then you want to be part of it; but say you're not part of the group that's organizing, and you want to be part of it. Part of it is like going to where people are, and it doesn't have a coffee house, or community or civic group or soccer field. That you might go and just hang out, ask people what they know, talk to people about, "Hey, I'm doing [this]. Or there's something going on." Being in the places where the folks were either [the ones] you want to be [with] or where folks are that ought to be included, or at least be aware. So building those relationships.

Beth Kallestad: So what would you say are the benefits of civic engagement? Either to the individuals or to the community?

Lisa Hinz: Yeah. Oh, they're endless. There are some really good things. I'm jumping in a little bit because I think one of the things you can do when you have a good involvement is you can quickly identify things, difficulties, challenges, opportunities [to] understand a situation or problem or issue much more completely than if you're just trying to do it with a group of public officials or with a group of people who are staff people, [or] public staff. Not that those folks don't know their work is just that it's hard to be as complete as when you engage a broader range of folks. So those are a couple of things that come to mind right away.

Beth Kallestad: Yeah. I think the buy-in and willingness of people to actually do whatever it is you're creating. So, you know, you're doing all this work to create some action that's going to happen. If people feel like they were part of the process and, and that they had voice in it, then they're probably a lot more willing to actually do whatever it is that is on the list.

Lisa Hinz: So Beth, I think you're spot on in that when you get folks involved in solving the problems that they care about, they're much more likely to help take action on them as well, which I think is pretty powerful. I would add is as we're sort of talking it through, it's like when you get people involved in a process that helps them see that they can use their power in broader

ways than sort of the place that they live--the home or their apartment or whatever the case may be. That it can really enhance future problem solving. Right? Because people get involved and they say, "Yeah, we can" and then down the road they might get more involved. I think about people who were involved in school issues or in a faith community where it's like, "Oh yeah, we can do that." And that's true in community as well. That's, that's kind of fun. I think too, their regulations and requirements for public involvement in some, some county-civic-city-state kind of stuff. And I think part of what you do is you get it right the first time. You're kind of drawing people in so that you don't have to go, "Oh, we didn't realize." And sometimes that can still happen, but I do think there's a quality of building better, more substantive decisions and outcomes by having people involved from the get go or from at some point that really says [they're] actually willing to adjust based on what input we get. If you just have people come and be part of a process, but you kind of ignore what they do. You say, "Yeah, we want input or engagement," but what you really want is just to put the number of bodies on a paper that's probably not going to cut it.

People get cynical and such and that's just not really good. But if what people share with you actually is reflected in the results in the decisions that get made, I think you find that people are more willing to get involved down the road as well.

Christy Kallevig: Well, and I would suspect that by having kind of a process that you follow that it also lends itself to being more transparent. And if people can see that there's something that is being followed and that there's a clear path to where it's going, it's going to make people want to be more involved in and just have more trust in you as a leader and as the organization you're working.

Lisa Hinz: It doesn't always go that easily. But I think there is truth in that. It's kind of messy. I think that's why we came up with the model in the first place. How do we sort this out into some ways that sort of make it a little more understandable and easier to kinda, "Oh yeah, that's what we're doing." The roadmap helps. Definitely. The map is not the territory, right? Because I've taken some roads lately that definitely were under construction that didn't show up on my map.

Christy Kallevig: So this is obviously a very big topic that we could have made [separate] podcasts to go into each little aspect of [it]. What are some really good resources for folks that maybe want to dig in a little bit more?

Lisa Hinz: Well, I think just from an overview standpoint, we've already mentioned the Civic Engagement website on the Extension website within the Center for Community Vitality. We also have some tip sheets in there as well for engaging the public. So that's sort of the quick and easy, handy, kind of print it out and have some ideas to work with. Beth, do you have thoughts that come to [mind]?

Beth Kallestad: Yes, was it the National Center for Deliberative Democracy website — NCDD [stands for] dialogue and deliberation. Thank you. They have a lot of good stuff there. I'll shout it out again for my, my favorite guy Peter Block and his book, *Community, the Structure of Belonging*, I think it's called. [It] has a lot of good pieces in it and we, as your Extension

educators, are here to help you. So feel free to call us, email us, etc. We're happy to just have a conversation about that.

Lisa Hinz: I should probably let us stop on that, but I got to mention the International Association of Public Participation, IAP2 has just really informed my work a lot over the years. I think they've done a terrific job of both the practice, but also framing up some of the ways of thinking about authentic engagement at various levels. They have a spectrum of public participation. That has just been really helpful I think to a lot of folks, not just me, but folks that I've trained who's like, "Oh yeah, okay, let me see what is it we're doing and what kind of tools are most useful at that level of engagement?" So I have to shout out the IAP2, on that one.

Beth Kallestad: And one more Minnesota resource, especially when trying to incorporate invite diverse communities. Nexus Community Partners are our friends in the metro area. They really have made equity of focus of their work and so they've got some great resources as well.

Christy Kallevig: So as we close out our time together, what is a piece of advice or encouragement that you might provide to somebody who's been listening to this podcast and kind of has an itch to do something but just doesn't? I don't feel quite ready to leap into it. What would you have to say to them?

Lisa Hinz: I'd say decide to get involved some way. Pick something and maybe it's going to a gathering or you see something in your community paper or online that says, "Hey, you know, that's a public thing, a public issue or something." Just a little bit of problem solving. Jump in. Just go. It doesn't mean you're committed for life. It just means you're going to start getting informed. And from there you'll see what's next. How about you Beth?

Beth Kallestad: Yeah, I would agree. I think you can go to board meetings pretty much at a nonprofit group. Board meetings are open or a community meeting or even just watch it on TV. Pretty much all of our city council and county commissioner meetings are broadcast on the internet or television. And so, let's just kind of look and see like what do I like about this? What are they doing here that resonates with me doing or not doing or whatnot? There are more opportunities to be involved in things than there are hours in the day, so just go out and find it. But find something that you like to start with, especially because you'll be more inclined to participate if you actually like what it is.

Lisa Hinz: My last comment would be remember that you matter. You may not feel like you're powerful or that you could add to the conversation. I would encourage you to just remind yourself that you are worth getting involved and bring people with you. You know, find a friend, ask, a neighbor or somebody from a community activity that you're involved in, "Hey, you want to do this or just come with me, you know, let's check it out." Because if you sort of build a community around things that you care about, you're already building that element of civic engagement, right with your own experience.

Christy Kallevig: Well, I am definitely glad that I asked two of my friends to come along on this podcast. Thank you for letting me have that fun little wrap up there, but thank you both so

much for taking some time out of your schedules and I look forward to having you back on the podcast in the future.

Lisa Hinz and **Beth Kallestad**: Thanks Christy. Thank you. Take care. Be well.

Christy Kallevig: Thank you to Lisa and Beth for joining me today to help us all better understand civic engagement. Make sure to visit our website, www.extension.umn.edu/community-development where you will find our podcast page and all of the great resources that Beth and Lisa shared. You will also find our model for civic engagement and other information about the Center for Community Vitality. Make sure to follow us on Facebook and Twitter to stay up to date on new research and resources for communities and those who lead them. I hope that you will join me again for another episode of vital connections on air.