

## MINUTES OF THE METRO COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

Tuesday, January 10, 2006  
Metro Council Chamber

Councilors Present: David Bragdon (Council President), Carl Hosticka, Robert Liberty, Rex Burkholder, Brian Newman

Councilors Absent: Rod Park (excused), Susan McLain (excused)

Council President Bragdon convened the Metro Council Work Session Meeting at 2:06 p.m.

### **1. DISCUSSION OF AGENDA FOR COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING, JANUARY 12, 2006/ADMINISTRATIVE/CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AND CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS**

Council President Bragdon reviewed the January 12, 2006 Metro Council agenda. Chief Operating Officer (COO) Michael Jordan will be having informal meetings with regional stakeholders to discuss the New Look and other issues facing Metro in 2006.

### **2. NATURE IN NEIGHBORHOODS MONITORING PROGRAM AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES**

Stacey Triplett, Nature in Neighborhoods (NIN), has been busy implementing Council directives on this program. She introduced one half of the new job-share position – Gail Shalom, who has already made contact with the Home Builders Association (HBA). The HBA has identified a steering committee, and Ms. Shalom said they seemed to appreciate having help from Metro as well as an information conduit to Metro. Councilor Burkholder asked the team to keep Council informed about the success of the project. Ms. Triplett said that their first task was to set goals and objectives for the subcommittee's work. She first discussed the nature-friendly practices program. Councilor Newman wanted the team to inform Council of their needs for support and connections. They are committed to working on the Street of New Beginnings to make sure the most sustainable practices are incorporated.

Councilor Newman was very excited about the potential for a design competition as a source of ideas for nature-friendly development practices. He discussed some of the criteria and the development of this project, as well as the need for partners with the expertise to make it happen. He was optimistic that it could be pulled off. Ms. Triplett mentioned that the American Institute of Architects (AIA) will celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year; there may be potential for partnering with this group. She made reference to the stormwater awards that were given out in 1996 and 1997; perhaps this idea could be revived. She observed that we had a strong interest in implementing nature-friendly practices at the Rock Creek/Providence site, and Council discussed some of the issues surrounding this effort.

Councilor Liberty was concerned that we not get so focused on the details of nature-friendly development practices that we forget about the bigger picture of where these projects are taking place. Councilor Burkholder wanted to keep in mind that Metro has limited resources; we will not be able to provide help for every project that comes along. He asked staff to consider creative ways to duplicate our advice to reach a wider audience without a lot of staff time. Councilor Newman said this brought up a good point about the use of Ms. Shalom's time and how it would best be distributed. Councilor Hosticka asked if there were any other revenues being brought in

from other stakeholders? Were the builders going to get “free design” from us? Ms. Triplett did not think that would be the case. She talked next about the monitoring program. They will be using the Regional Environmental Information Network (REIN); this tool attracts people to put in their own data, avoid duplication, and access bigger data sets. It is a way to coordinate information about the various efforts that are taking place throughout the region. She would like to put together a working group involving citizen input, to ask about how to best put out the message and share the results of the program.

Councilor Burkholder observed that getting other groups to use REIN would be crucial. If Metro were to be the only one to use it, it would not be very useful. He asked if staff were aware of any other groups that could be approached, other similar projects that had been tried. Lori Hennings, Parks Department, knew of a few similar projects. This is a concept that has become fairly popular lately. Councilor Burkholder asked if these were mostly academic exercises or whether they actually led to measurable progress. Ms. Hennings described some of the values of the program. Ms. Triplett predicted a timeline of about three years in order to fully populate the database to make it useful.

Councilor Liberty asked what monitoring efforts would be made in the Damascus expansion area. Ms. Hennings provided information about the processes that were being used to monitor nature-friendly building practices there. She was in communication with many others in this region, including officials from the City of Damascus and the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCDD), to coordinate and analyze information as it was received. Councilor Liberty then asked about the connection between this and changes in policy and behavior, such as increasing volunteer actions. Ms. Hennings imparted her knowledge of existing sources of information about these activities.

Councilor Newman asked for an update on the grant program. Ms. Triplett said they had three pre-applications so far. They thought they would probably receive more before the deadline on Thursday. She has had feedback from community groups that they liked the pre-application opportunity. The top applications will be presented to Council on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Councilor Newman asked that Council be presented with geographic information about the applicants at that meeting.

**3. BREAK**

**4. METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM POLICY UPDATE**

Councilor Burkholder introduced Ted Leybold, Regional Transportation Planning, to report on the status of the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP); he said this was an ongoing effort that was in continual refinement. Mr. Leybold discussed the report included in the agenda packet. He was seeking Council feedback on the relevant issues. In response to Councilor Liberty’s question about the “target maximum,” Mr. Leybold said they were capping the non-flexible kinds of money, to get applications for Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) - eligible projects from the region. The target maximums relate to the sub-area. The goal was to make sure that there was a mix of projects implemented. CMAQ dollars cannot be spent on roads. Councilor Liberty also did not understand the match advantage. Mr. Leybold said that the purpose of this was to encourage, by providing a financial incentive, targeting the 2040 land use areas.

Mr. Leybold talked about the project eligibility and screening criteria. Councilor Liberty talked about some previous projects and asked if there were any system-wide projects that would be eligible, or was there other funding for such things? Mr. Leybold said this was one of the policy questions that Council would need to consider, but that it certainly would be an option. He discussed the refinement issues. Councilor Burkholder said the bids were 30-40% higher than had been anticipated. Councilor Burkholder said that a big question was whether to start new projects with the money or to complete other projects that were experiencing cost overruns.

Councilor Newman wondered how big a problem the increased cost of materials was. Which projects was it affecting? Mr. Leybold did not have hard data but did have some anecdotal information. He agreed it was important to not provide an incentive for over-bidding. Councilor Liberty said this might be an issue that would need to be faced on an on-going basis. Councilor Burkholder said there was a lot of competition to get bids on projects – contractors have so much work currently they can pick and choose their projects.

Councilor Hosticka asked about measuring the allocation of the dollars to the projects, across the region geographically. Mr. Jordan stated that Metro funded, through MTIP, projects in all stages of development. Budgets for projects at all stages included large contingency funds, precisely to cover things like changes in costs. Mr. Leybold agreed and added that they would be trying to include an incentive not to inflate costs. This could take the form of setting some money aside for additional projects if there was any money left over and didn't have to be eaten up in cost overruns.

Mr. Leybold then talked about the issue of operations; i.e., how to provide incentives to better manage the existing transportation system. We have a model in the Regional Travel Options (RTO) program. A recent subcommittee has been created out of the Transportation Policy Alternatives Committee (TPAC). There is a national focus on supporting and "fixing" existing projects before expanding into new projects. Councilor Liberty asked if we were talking about designing a system so that more efficiency was included from the outset, or whether there would be a focus on, for example, the bus system. Mr. Leybold said that transit was an integral part. He gave an example of using the bus tracking system to possibly influence traffic signal timing. He thought projects were being approached more strategically and less opportunistically.

Councilor Burkholder asked if this would replace the Intelligent Transportation Society (ITS) category. Mr. Leybold said there really was no ITS category. The focus was less on squeezing in more capacity and more towards better management. Councilor Burkholder was very interested in the strategic plan. This needed to be more than just a technical plan. It was a policy question of where the focus should be.

Mr. Leybold then discussed refinement of economic development measures. Twenty points out of the 40 total in the 2040 land use criteria looked at economic development objectives. He had had feedback in the past that economic development had not been enough of a focus. This time, it was very explicit that economic development was the main focus. The recent cost of congestion report created a lot of awareness around this issue.

Councilor Liberty wondered whether we had a good definition of economic development. None was immediately forthcoming. Such analyses could be interpreted in various ways. Councilor Newman thought this was a very difficult area. Councilor Hosticka thought maybe it was a mistake to focus so much on precise definitions. Maybe it would be better for a group who trusted each other to pick the projects. Council wanted to ensure that economic development was actually

happening. Council President Bragdon emphasized the need to see that the development was compatible with other Metro goals, to make sure it happened in the right neighborhoods. Councilor Liberty asked if it would be possible to have some third-party validation of the results. Councilor Burkholder asked if we were talking about eliminating economic development as a criterion. A better definition of economic development may not be the way to go. Mr. Leybold asked Council to keep the recommendations of the project delivery subcommittee in mind when making policy changes. The use of recycled materials is a strong priority, although it has never had any specific recommendations attached to it.

Another issue identified by TPAC was whether limits should be set on how much each applicant could receive. The CMAQ eligibility limit was instituted in the last go-round. Some people want to revisit it. The final recommendation may or may not contain it. Lastly, there was a discussion about how we would use the money to prepare for whatever regional package might get put together or what legislative strategy we might have. Councilor Newman asked about where the process would go from here. Mr. Leybold said the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) would discuss it. He would be bringing back a draft report.

## **5. COUNCIL BRIEFINGS/COMMUNICATIONS**

COO Jordan handed Council a memo proposing peer review of economic and demographic forecasts (a copy is included in the meeting record). This would be a Council of Economic Advisors (CEA) that would analyze the economic forecasts upon which we base our models. He would want people who would help us lend credibility and to provide some air cover on the forecasting. We base big decisions at least partially on the forecasts. Long-range forecast are invariably inaccurate, but we have to have something to work from.

Councilor Newman asked for clarification that this would be more of a technical group, not making policy. Mr. Jordan concurred. Councilors wanted more focus in the proposal on the fact that the group would be technical and not governmental. Councilor Hosticka asked if we could piggyback onto similar groups that were provided at the state level. Mr. Jordan agreed that was a good idea. Councilor Liberty wanted to make sure we got a nice mix of opinions, that we looked at forecasts for southwest Washington, and to have a more accurate idea of what this group might cost. Mr. Jordan will provide this in a revised proposal.

Councilor Liberty asked for some data on whether such groups had greater accuracy than our own forecasters. He thought peer review and validation to help the Data Resource Center (DRC) would be helpful. Councilor Hosticka asked about the timing of the forecasts. Mr. Jordan said that by the end of 2007, we would need another growth report. Lydia Neill, Planning, said there was other information available to help with forecasting. Mr. Jordan appreciated Council comments.

There being no further business to come before the Metro Council, Council President Bragdon adjourned the meeting at 4:32 p.m.

Prepared by,



Dove Hotz  
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**ATTACHMENTS TO THE PUBLIC RECORD FOR THE MEETING OF  
JANUARY 10, 2006**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Doc Date</b>	<b>Document Description</b>	<b>Doc. Number</b>
1	Agenda	1/10/2006	Metro Council Agenda for January 12, 2006	011006c-01
5	Communications	1/10/2006	TO: Metro Council FROM: Michael Jordan RE: Peer Review of Economic/ Demographic Forecasts	011006c-02