

MINUTES OF THE METRO COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

Wednesday, September 20, 2006
Metro Council Chamber

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

Councilors Absent:

Council President Bragdon convened the Metro Council Work Session Meeting at 2:05 p.m.

Robin McArthur, Regional Planning Director, emphasized that this was in the context of a larger study with many moving parts. She presented the four myths of the Shape of the Region. *Myth #1. We were only studying "Great Communities" outside the urban growth boundary (UGB).* In reality, we were focused on projects throughout the region. *Myth #2. The current way of doing business was the best way to implement the 2040 growth plan.* People were still telling us we should either stop growth or keep the urban growth boundary (UGB) where it was forever. The truth was, we were going to have to try some new things. *Myth #3. We only intended to apply urban factors to the UGB decisions.* This was clearly not the case. We were also using ag factors and nature factors. *Myth #4. The purpose of the prototypes was to do concept planning for those areas and add them to the UGB.* Actually, they were studies to identify the most useful factors in deciding governance and land use issues.

1. THE AGRICULTURE ASSESSMENT

Summary of the approach to the assessment

Councilor Park remarked that the consultant, Jim Johnson, had been asked to study the areas surrounding the Portland metro region. We wanted to look not just at zoning but at stuff on the ground; he was literally looking at the types of dirt in various areas. Mr. Johnson had also looked at water and suitability, asking if the land could actually be used in the way it was zoned for.

Councilor Park talked about the need for a critical mass of ag lands to deliver the infrastructure required by the ag industry, such as ag extension. He reviewed land use patterns, non-farm uses, exception areas, buffers between ag lands and non-farm uses, types of crops, the co-existence of ag lands with their surrounding areas, and parcelization. Another issue was that of finding agricultural labor; farmers were starting to share their labor pools. They were also sharing specialized equipment, decreasing their costs while helping contractors to stay in business. He mentioned trends in agriculture, such as the growth in farmers' markets, direct marketing opportunities, and specialty and niche crops.

Factors used in the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) assessment and initial findings

Tim O'Brien, Associate Regional Planner, talked about the process with Mr. Johnson. The report should be out in a few weeks. One of the key parts was what we needed to do if we looked at rural reserves. He pointed out some of the land uses on the edges of the region. These would be related to the factors in the forthcoming report. Councilor Newman wondered what the product from the consultant would be. Mr. O'Brien said it would include a map, but more importantly, the accompanying report would talk about each area and how viable it would be for the commercial agricultural industry's uses. The areas would not be ranked, but the factors would be related to the

study results. Ms. McArthur said the report would describe the strengths of and threats to each area. It would be data for decision-making.

Councilor Park said it could be considered a refinement to the exclusive farm-use land (EFU) designation. Ms. McArthur agreed; it would be a Department of Agriculture Report, combined with other reports for Council and public consumption. Councilor Burkholder was aware that agriculture had changed over time; were we stuck to an outdated paradigm? For planning purposes, we needed the flexibility to accommodate future changes. Ms. McArthur said that Mr. Johnson was the pre-eminent expert and had confidence that he would address those factors.

Councilor Liberty observed that, in the case of exception land, there was a legal process to show that it couldn't be used for farming. But a lot of those properties were taxed at a lower rate. Were there lands in exception areas that were more valuable than other lands? Refinement here would be useful. He asked whether there was a danger zone that we could identify, beyond which we would lose a lot of markets. Also, if we were going to have rural reserves and farms, we needed to identify areas where we would impose a policy or buy rights. He observed that many of these areas also supported significant wildlife.

Councilor McLain stated that the agreed-upon vision was that we wanted excellence in all those areas—communities, ag land, and natural areas. The assessments should show how we could have them all, not to let one trump another. She wanted some prioritizing in the report. We needed more than a map, we needed Mr. Johnson's expert opinion on various scenarios and how land use affected ag land. Councilor Burkholder would like to see the information translated into a map with no zoning attached to it. We didn't want to let past uses influence future discussions. Councilor Park said we were not alone in this. The Board of Agriculture asked Mr. Johnson to do similar work around the state. Not all exception land was the same. Some was due to soil types, some to the existence of houses. The bottom line was, what did agriculture need to survive?

2. THE NATURAL FEATURES ASSESSMENT

Summary of the approach to the assessment

Councilor Hosticka identified areas broadly conceived outside of those that had already been mapped. There were two major questions: What did those areas contribute to the ecological and social health of the region? And what landscape features helped define a sense of place? We identified our neighborhoods by views of natural features. The committee and staff worked to identify such areas, map them, and provide graphic illustration showing the importance of the features, beyond a flat map.

Relationship to Greenspaces Policy Advisory Committee (GPAC) and initial findings

Mr. O'Brien and Jim Morgan, Regional Parks and Greenspaces, were the main GPAC liaisons. Mr. Morgan said GPAC had been charged with defining the financial, natural features, and more formal parts. The financial part was complete. The formal inventory of parks was almost complete. The natural features part was nearing completion. He compared the new approach to the more familiar flat map. The new concept used "rooms" or "views." This approach was more pictorial and conceptual, highlighting natural features and their interrelationships with each other and with the built environment. Feedback has shown that these types of tools can draw people in and spark new ways of looking at the features.

Councilor Newman commented that, in terms of great communities and the ag assessment, the goal was not to get down to the parcel level but to look at those large features, whether wildlife corridors or mountain ridges. He thought it was more evocative than a map. Councilor McLain liked that the new graphic gave a relationship that was missing from some other representations. It showed the connections and helped clarify people's values.

Mr. Morgan said these drafts were intended to ask Council if they felt this was a useful tool. Council mostly liked the concept. Councilor Burkholder said he would like to see information integrating the value of agricultural land. He wanted to make sure that the representations did not inherently imply some value that we did not intend. He would like the new tool to help explain why boundaries were placed where they were.

Councilor Park commented that, as a pilot, he would appreciate a more realistic depiction of elevations. He thought the drawings were a good start. Perhaps some movement could be integrated, to show perspective. Mr. Morgan said the challenge was not to get lost in the detail. They were working on those issues.

3. THE GREAT COMMUNITIES ELEMENT

Review of the approach

Councilor Newman said we had all agreed as part of the six elements, that we were going to ultimately end up in designated urban reserves. The Shape of the Region was about those areas we wanted to protect. The Great Communities element was to bring into focus some of the issues surrounding governance and land use and the delivery of services and what contributed and what detracted. A lot of judgment was involved in deciding what made great places. The consultants had come up with some criteria. The principal areas were not being studied for inclusion in the urban growth boundary, but to investigate how these principles would work on the ground, to help us determine what areas would be appropriate for future urban reserves. Council President Bragdon added that another tradeoff was how to get a handle on expansion area costs; the experience of the last 3-4 years showed that Greenfield development was enormously expensive—there had been hidden subsidies. As we traded off our aspirations for growth and preservation, we wanted to make those fiscal tradeoffs much more obvious. Councilor Liberty clarified that he did not wholeheartedly support urban reserves. Councilor Newman recognized that, emphasizing that he meant that we had agreed to talk about them as elements.

Recap of the work to date

Mr. O'Brien said the staff, the consultant team, and some officials from the study areas had met to look at the criteria and principles. They worked on the ones that made the most sense, the "drivers"; the others would ride along. The drivers were governance, fiscal, land use, and infrastructure issues. Councilor McLain said she had been hearing from people not involved in the discussion; they were concerned about the list and how it was being utilized. Even at county fairs, people asked her why we were doing the study. How would it be integrated with other studies that were so much different? She wanted a definition of all the criteria, before saying how they were to be applied. Mr. O'Brien talked about some of the characteristics and gave some definitions, for example, community design, they looked at walkability and the proximity of transit. He talked about the factors that were used to support the criteria.

Councilor Hosticka asked if community design and land use were being used interchangeably. He thought we were trying to create complete communities, not just tracts. Councilor Liberty asked about housing choice. Mr. O'Brien said that housing was included in the study, under community design and financing. There were also questions about access to natural areas as being important for a great community. He talked about governance as being tied to the provision of services. Was there a willingness for a jurisdiction to govern these areas? To be a complete community, some governance needed to be in place.

Council President Bragdon asked if fiscal responsibility was part of the equation. Mr. O'Brien felt it had been included. Councilor Burkholder said that these were test areas, so each one would be unique. He would like to see the necessary conditions illustrating areas that were having difficulties; what strategies would we have before using these areas? Council debated the definition of governance, the provision of services, and the process of annexation. Councilor McLain gave an example of two neighboring cities that were consolidating services. She would like to see the study identify similar potentials and make sure the prototypes provided data to help see these things. Mr. O'Brien fleshed out some of the concepts.

Councilor McLain asked how the prototypes and examples related to the toolbox. She did not see anything new. Mr. O'Brien said the goal was to test the tools to see which worked best in each situation. He spoke to the financial analysis, and whether a center would be possible. Councilor Burkholder said it was critical that we go beyond the discussion of relative cost. It needed to include off-system impacts and to promote the real costs of growing out. He would like to compare apples to apples, showing the costs of development per acre. Councilor Liberty agreed. He hoped to see some price tags and tradeoffs. Also, fiscal capacity might be possible in one area and not another. And what would the public contribution to complete communities be?

Description of Test Areas

Mr. O'Brien showed one of the test areas, in Clackamas County. The consultants would look at the buildable lands, see what possibilities and natural resources were there, and look at impacts, such as on Lake Oswego's center. Councilor Liberty asked whether the Tualatin River had been considered as a boundary, instead of I-205. Mr. O'Brien said a lot of these things had been debated. Brent Curtis of Washington County asked what areas should be nominated. He passed around a map (a copy is included in the meeting record). It was a planning exercise to help develop new tools and examine great community attributes. He talked about the process of choosing the test areas; some of the jurisdictions were interested, and some were not interested at all. He said that the Cornelius area was still asking for more industrial land. They were asked to look 40-50 years out. Forest Grove mostly saw their role as residential. Mr. Curtis talked about some of the conversations he had been having, there was a lot of disagreement within communities about what should happen to their areas.

Council President Bragdon said he thought we had been talking about an abstract study, but now he was afraid it was morphing into advocacy from city officials for certain zoning. Mr. Curtis said that the fiscal health of the city was not to be the driving force of these studies. He felt they were clear about the examination of the Great Communities.

Councilor McLain asked how an extreme example would be a useful prototype? Mr. Curtis responded that they had not asked for extremes; this was what the local governments had nominated. We didn't want to focus on areas that had already been studied. Greater Bethany was as much about governance and industrial land opportunities and the relationship to housing. If we

developed criteria that included the great community criteria, the important thing was applying them to real community planning. Councilor Liberty talked about how families and budgets worked; say two people in a household worked, and their job locations changed over time. People were not necessarily able to or willing to live and work in the same area. What was the definition of a complete community? Mr. Curtis thought that it was typical for each comprehensive plan, no matter the jurisdiction, for fiscal health to be a concern. The jobs/housing balance wasn't valid jurisdiction by jurisdiction; it was more of a subregional question. Council discussed tools to look at the fiscal health of small cities.

Ms. McArthur said there was an assumption that added land would lead to added fiscal health; this would be addressed in the study. Council President Bragdon said he didn't expect to solve this today but it would be looked at over time. Councilor McLain asked, what was the study doing anyway? Was it simply geography or the number of miles from a center? She wanted to look at the assumptions. Mr. O'Brien said that the factors were related to the geography. Ms. McArthur said they were trying to look at geography and use the prototypes to test the criteria. Councilor McLain did not see the Cornelius/Forest Grove candidate serving this information. Council President Bragdon wanted to make sure this information didn't turn into one jurisdiction's UGB application. Mr. Curtis and Ms. McArthur assured that they were being clear about this with the jurisdictions.

Tim introduced Chuck Beasley of Multnomah County. Mr. Beasley said the map was not an area but a concept. Each of the counties had agreed to pick a study area. The process was regionalized. In Multnomah County, there was adjacency to Sauvie Island, Gresham, and Forest Park. They felt Forest Park offered the most complicating factors. Additionally, the context for Multnomah County was that they didn't have a vision for this area. The vision was to keep it rural. They wanted to keep the vision of how the urban area might be the vehicle for discussion. He felt this area was really an abstract exercise. He described the topography of the area. He said they needed a connection to the city. He went over the area, the topography, and their vision for the exercise. They had used the Metro design types. He talked about the theoretical plan for the area.

Councilor Burkholder thought it would be helpful to take the names off of the areas, so no one would have any biased associations. Eliminate the maps and just compare three areas around the UGB and talk about the characteristics in general. Ms. McArthur reiterated that we would not be comparing the areas to each other; she agreed to make them less easily recognizable. Councilor McLain wanted some tools to make better UGB decisions. We needed to help people understand the true costs of urbanization and the true costs of the great communities we were trying to create. Ranking and information would be different because the places were very different. She wanted more conversation before the final report, which would be a political football.

Councilor Newman said that we were going to have to trade off and weigh regions against each other and what we ultimately would urbanize. The whole point of this exercise was to discuss what we should consider, as policymakers, more than just EFU or not-EFU. He felt that this exercise would help in deciding which legislative tools we wanted to ask for. Michael Jordan, Chief Operating Officer, said that the idea of the three test cases was to develop the complementary and competing factors that would cause us to urbanize one area over another. Should the region decide that urban reserves were an appropriate path in the future, we would look at the whole region. All we were trying to do at this stage was to develop the factors to help Metro evaluate those areas. The areas on the map were test cases; the names didn't have to appear on the final report, which would be all about the factors.

Council President Bragdon said he understood but added that part of the purpose was to keep faith, not to trade off A, B and C as UGB expansion areas, but to trading off the values, such as costs and other developments. Councilor Park observed that a lot of this was based on fiscal capacity. Why couldn't we use the numbers that we already had? Was there an argument that these prototypes really didn't mean anything, and therefore there shouldn't be a problem? We didn't want to second-guess ourselves. Either these studies really meant something, and people should care about the prototypes, or they really didn't and we shouldn't worry about it. Just the fact of our picking a site to study would create speculation. Council President Bragdon said that our goal was to re-invigorate the concept of urban reserves. We needed some case studies. Councilor Park wondered why our existing studies and processes couldn't achieve the goals, without the case studies. Ms. McArthur said we didn't have the tools we needed. To make a future, better UGB decision, this data would be helpful. Council President Bragdon agreed that this would be a useful addition, to use data from existing studies. Councilor Hosticka thought it would be useful to examine the question of new governance structures, as a test case. Could we get information to tie governance into the geography?

4. FINAL PRODUCTS AND PUBLIC REVIEW

AgUrban Coordinating Committee's final products for use in developing the regional strategy

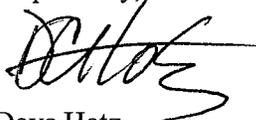
Mr. Jordan said the different study pieces would come together sometime in November. The more valuable pieces would be the criteria making ag a viable choice. Councilor Hosticka saw an imbalance in the discussion. He felt that agriculture and natural resources were being viewed as "negative sets," while urbanization was viewed as a "positive set." He wanted a set of tools that would look at agriculture and natural resources as positive things we were going to create. Mr. Jordan felt that the questions that would be coming out would be very important. Our main tool had been regulatory; we now had the chance to look at financial tools and incentives.

Description of Regional Workshops

Sherry Oeser, Regional Planning Manager, said the ag/urban coordinating committee made a commitment to take this research and get stakeholder input, so there was a two-pronged approach. The first symposium would be December 1. They planned to get stakeholder feedback in January. Council would receive updates along the way. Councilor Burkholder said we needed to talk about governance and what size of the district made sense. Should we expand the district boundary in order to actually make policies that we wanted? Did it make sense to stay the same size, or did we expand? He also wanted to address the language being used, that made expansion seem inevitable. It was not; for example, Vancouver B.C. had twice Portland's density.

There being no further business to come before the Metro Council, Council President Bragdon adjourned the meeting at 4:22 p.m.

Prepared by,



Dove Hotz
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**ATTACHMENTS TO THE PUBLIC RECORD FOR THE MEETING OF
SEPTEMBER 20, 2006**

Item	Topic	Doc Date	Document Description	Doc. Number
3	Great Communities	undated	To: Metro Council From: Brent Curtis Re: Metro "New Look" Ag-Urban Study—Great Communities (map)	092006c-01