

MINUTES OF THE METRO COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

Tuesday, April 17, 2007
Metro Council Chamber

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

Councilors Absent:

Council President Bragdon convened the Metro Council Work Session Meeting at 2:01 p.m.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE/CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER COMMUNICATIONS

Jeff Blosser, Oregon Convention Center (OCC), reported on the status of the headquarters hotel and progress with the development team. A lot of due diligence was taking place. Information would be available by late summer. Councilor Newman asked about community outreach. Dan Cooper, Metro Attorney, said they were crafting messages for the community so they understood the alternatives. Councilor Liberty asked for an update on Plans B C. Mr. Blosser described the work being done. Councilor Liberty said he expected a study of three options—do nothing, go forward with the hotel, and find non-hotel ways to address the OCC funding gap, as well as looking at other ways to develop the area that did not involve the OCC. Councilor Harrington asked whether the Council had formalized that approach, to ensure that the appropriate resources were available. Council President Bragdon thought Council had done so and talked about the authorization that had been given to examine the alternatives. Councilor Liberty requested performance information on other similar projects in other areas. Mr. Blosser was confident this information would be included. Reed Wagner, Policy Coordinator, mentioned a fifth option; now that the market has improved, what would a privately owned hotel look like?

2. NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM TARGET AREA REFINEMENTS

Jim Desmond, Regional Parks and Greenspaces Director, began with some less-complicated target areas, testing whether the process worked well for Council. The goal was for Council to adopt the refinement plan, setting forth acquisition goals as well as authorizing staff to move forward on specific parcels.

He started with the Clear Creek target area. The objective last time, which was not met, was to have a conservation easement both up and downstream of the core area. Council may want to think about that as a refinement goal, to aggressively pursue a conservation easement. Each target area should be viewed in the context of region-wide acquisitions. By the end of summer, it would be helpful for staff to have policy direction on whether a target area was close enough to completion. Councilor Burkholder mentioned the Measure 37 claims and how that would affect the acquisitions. Mr. Desmond said this factor was very much on their minds. If there were high quality natural resources in an area, any adjacent Measure 37 claim would be reported to Council. Councilor Liberty observed that date of ownership of the parcels would be helpful to have. Mr. Desmond stated that he had not heard anything controversial about the Clear Creek area. Councilor Park asked about connectivity as a factor in policy decisions. Mr. Desmond said that would be provided on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Desmond moved on to the Forest Park site. Pinch points were a significant issue; narrow spaces were subject to invasive plants and degraded wildlife passage. The local community felt closing that gap was very important, to extend the Wildwood Trail. There was greater interest (compared to 1995) on where tributaries entered the Willamette River. Councilor Hosticka asked if there was a limit on how far we were willing to go in Forest Park. Mr. Desmond said staff was thinking fairly small on Forest Park. The

emphasis was on providing connections, rather than buying up big chunks. He referred to the popular Balch Creek area. It was difficult to tell how threatened it was. Easements could be considered; there were a lot of homes in the area. It would be fairly fragmented, due to the ownership. We had good success in Forest Park last time; there was no single huge problem that needed to be fixed there. Councilor Burkholder asked about the usefulness of conservation easements. Mr. Desmond said there had been previous, very aggressive efforts to get these, with only minimal results.

Mr. Desmond then discussed Tryon Creek. This was an area that generated a lot of political excitement last time. Stakeholders were eager to protect tributaries. (Full disclosure: Mr. Desmond lives in this area.) There was also a potential connection to the Willamette. Headwaters protection was recognized as important. Council President Bragdon asked about matching. Mr. Desmond said there had been a lot of other investment out there. Councilor Hosticka asked about control and protection of the headwaters. Jim Morgan, Regional Parks and Greenspaces, talked about the protections in place for water quality. Councilor Hosticka emphasized the importance of connectivity.

Mr. Desmond moved on to Fanno Creek. There was a tremendous amount of construction happening there. A lot of the area was already in public ownership. During the last round, in the public refinement meetings, people said they loved the trail, but that water quality and natural areas were equally important. A similar message was being heard today. We knew where the gaps in trail ownership were and wanted to finish those up.

He then talked about Springwater. It was simultaneously the simplest and the most complex. We needed to close a gap. The railroad would have to amend his easement to allow the trail, so by definition it would be extraordinary circumstances and brought to Council.

Lastly, the Gresham to Fairview Trail. This was kind of where Fanno Creek was 10 years ago. Our acquisitions would need to focus on the northern section, from I-84 north to Marine Drive. There was very little in public ownership. Stakeholders were the cities and advocacy groups, they loved the trail, they also wanted natural area and water quality protection. A policy question would be whether, as part of this target area, we wanted to go further than a trail corridor and do some natural area protection.

Heather Kent, Regional Parks and Greenspaces, commented that staff needed to know if there was something Council did not want the public to consider. Citizens and stakeholders would be asked to rank their priorities in some fashion. This would also help Council in their own prioritizations. Council confirmed that, when in doubt, staff should stay close to the bond measure language. They felt staff presentations and direction were fairly well on track.

3. BREAK

4. COUNCIL PROJECT – NATURE IN NEIGHBORHOODS CAPITAL GRANT PROGRAM

Councilor Liberty provided some background on this part of the 2006 bond measure. The intent was to follow on the heels of the Nature in Neighborhoods (NiN) program, to provide people in heavily developed areas with access to nature, to help build a movement to find new partners in addition to government, and to provide an opportunity for innovation in investing in nature. The end of the project would come with the first review and the first round of grants. Topics of today's discussion were the role of the Council and the Grant Review Committee (GRC), differentiating capital grants from other facets of the program, and ensuring capacity of partners to compete for the funds.

Mr. Desmond said Janelle Geddes and Stacey Triplett, Nature in Neighborhoods, were working on a procedure manual to help potential grant applicants. It would be advisable to bring together a community-based focus group. What made this different was that it was for capital projects only. Councilor Liberty noted that local governments might not want to participate if they were responsible for maintenance. Secondly, we needed to figure out how to make the acquisition component compatible with the willing-seller fast track. Mr. Desmond added that sometimes acquisitions faced more urgency than capital projects. He did not want that to limit the opportunities. Staff was comfortable with a rolling process, so as to be responsive to the community. Councilor Burkholder said it would be a learning process for everybody. Councilor Liberty envisioned evaluation as ongoing. Councilor Burkholder thought an evaluation after the first year would be great. Call the first round a pilot, then come back to Council and share the learnings. There were head nods around the table.

Councilor Harrington asked how the last exercise had informed the staff. Ms. Geddes said she had heard some clear nos, as well as some lukewarms, that had helped them prioritize. Mr. Desmond said he heard that only extraordinary projects would be supported. He talked about the notes that had come out of the last time and the fact that pure habitat protection had been a higher priority than structural development. Also, the message was clear that it not duplicate other programs, and that it include geographic and income equity.

Councilor Liberty said the old built parts of the region included more than Portland. The old design for urban areas did not include any nature. Councilor Harrington asked where the geographic equity was spelled out. Mr. Desmond said he had taken it as somewhat of an unwritten guideline. Ms. Geddes said, if we got some great projects that were more urban-centric, we would know to go out and solicit other areas. Councilor Newman asked how we knew where gaps were? Ms. Geddes said the NiN research could help identify targets. Councilor Burkholder said it was amazing what could be done in a small area, offering the peepers (frogs) at the Da Vinci School rain gardens (SE 28th & Burnside) as an example.

Council President Bragdon asked about the procedure and the timetable for including Council direction. Mr. Desmond said the manual would be brought forward, based on the thumbs up and down from last time. Ms. Geddes said they had a 50% manual that could be ready by the summer, with an eye to launching the program live in the fall. Council President Bragdon said it would be helpful if staff would remind Council of their direction. Councilor Liberty flagged the assumption that things we were mandating or proposing as green design, people did not see as having natural benefit. There would need to be a discussion about how this would benefit the neighborhoods.

Council President Bragdon wanted to give direction and move forward, not revisit the same issues over again. Staff should check in with their understanding, run it by Council for confirmation, and move ahead. Councilor Harrington wanted the manual to include criteria that would avoid problems such as installing culverts that were known in advance to be faulty. Mr. Desmond agreed; the whole idea was to put some seed money down, challenge the community to get matching funds, and to take it to the next level. Councilor Harrington was also concerned that it went to the question about making sure that our partners had the capacity to compete. Mr. Desmond described it as a challenge grant. A time frame may not be appropriate. Ms. Geddes stated that the existing program had large matches—both cash and in-kind—coming in the door.

Councilor Harrington asked if they would consider at least a flyer—if not the entire manual—in Spanish. Ms. Kent said producing a flyer in Spanish was one thing, having Metro staff that could respond to questions in Spanish was something else again.

Councilor Liberty said previous comments were along the lines of whether the project would accomplish its goal and how to tell. The information about public/private partnerships was blurry. In Tualatin, people asked about combinations of public and private benefits; that was a legal and policy question that especially applied to builders. Councilor Burkholder asked if we would have something in time for the open houses coming up in June. Staff said absolutely.

On the first worksheet question, Councilor Newman wondered whether the Council and GRC roles would be similar to under the earlier grant process. Councilor Liberty asked whether Council wanted to be involved at all. Councilor Newman assumed there would be Council liaisons. Councilor Park was the liaison to the primary NiN program. Staff had briefed Council directly. It had been a good balance of individual briefings and formal actions such as presenting the awards. Councilor Park thought that, during the first round, when we were groping through what it was, we had more interaction with staff. We needed to be clear on what was considered capital; it could vary by jurisdiction. Mr. Desmond said the jurisdictions needed to have a consistent history of how they capitalized assets.

Council President Bragdon said he heard that the original NiN grant program had functioned well and would be a good model to follow. The time-consuming work, such as reading the grants, was being done by staff, with Council approving the recommendations. Councilor Hosticka wanted Council representation on the Grant Review Committee. Council was supportive overall of the approach. Ms. Geddes said the GRC would play an important role in helping with the program. It would need to be a strong committee, because there would be a big learning process, and the GRC would need to help raise the questions. Councilor Burkholder's caveat was, after the pilot year, bring it back to the full Council. Everyone agreed with that. Councilor Liberty didn't want people lobbying him personally about individual grants. On the evaluation, we should plan for having a report to Council on the grants as a regular part of the work, not ad hoc.

On the second question, how the program differed from the rest of the measure, Mr. Desmond said, if they approved this as a Council project, that question did not need to be answered today. Councilor Newman thought this would be a big issue. People might see it as a pot of money to be used if they exhausted their local share. Mr. Desmond said Council was clear they did not want the funds used as backfill. The communications and enforcement of this philosophy would take some work.

The last question, regarding partners and their capacity, was discussed. Councilor Newman liked the workbook and the pre-application process. Mr. Desmond said regular, aggressive outreach would be required, especially to those that were under-natured but not well organized, such as Cornelius or Gladstone. Council could help as they were in their districts dealing with other bond matters. Councilor Harrington was trying to understand where there were gaps and where things overlapped. Councilor Liberty said there had been investment in capacity with the existing NiN program.

Councilor Liberty asked if there were other questions Council wanted to address. Michael Jordan, Chief Operating Officer, said it would be nice if Council had agreed on what criteria would be used to measure success. Mr. Desmond agreed to add performance measures as the fourth question.

5. EXECUTIVE SESSION HELD PURSUANT TO ORS 192.660(1)(d), FOR THE PURPOSE OF DELIBERATING WITH PERSONS DESIGNATED TO CONDUCT LABOR NEGOTIATIONS

Time Began: 4:08

Members present: Kevin Dull, Michael Jordan, Lisa Colling, Ruth Scott, Jeff Azul, Dan Cooper, Kerry Gilbreth, Craig Stroud, Dave Bower

Time Ended: 4:57 p.m.

6. COUNCIL BRIEFINGS/COMMUNICATIONS

Councilor Harrington presented information on the MPAC process (a copy is included in the meeting record). It was intended to be lightweight but clear. Councilor Newman questioned the term "lead liaison." Council President Bragdon thought the resolution referred to a "spokesperson." Councilor Hosticka felt it was important for the lead liaison to manage the Council response, not just report it.

Councilor Newman apologized for not being here next week and missing the budget discussion. He mentioned his budget amendments. Councilor Liberty said he would be gone for a week starting Wednesday but would be back in time for the budget vote. Rex would call in from Washington, D.C.

There being no further business to come before the Metro Council, Council President Bragdon adjourned the meeting at 5:09 p.m.

Prepared by,



Dove Hotz
Council Operations Assistant

ATTACHMENTS TO THE PUBLIC RECORD FOR THE MEETING OF
APRIL 17, 2007

Item	Topic	Doc. Date	Document Description	Doc. Number
6	Council Communications	4/11/07	To: Metro Council From: Kathryn Harrington Re: MPAC Agenda Worksheet User Guide	041707c-01