600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736

Metro | *Meeting minutes*

Meeting: Public Engagement Review Committee (posted)
Date/time: Monday, Feb. 25, 2013
Place: Room 370 A and B

Attendees

PERC members: Jennifer Sexton, Candice Kelly, Tara Sulzen, Eleanore Hunter, Barbara Smolak, Luis Nava, Sue Marshall, Greg Greenway, Stephen Roberts, Casey Barnard, Corinne Bloomfield, Juan Carlos Ocaña-Chíu, Mike Pullen

Metro: Patty Unfred, Karen Withrow, Heather Coston, Valerie Cuevas

Absent: Julia Meier, Juanita Walton

Welcome

Patty Unfred welcomed the committee and thanked everyone for their participation in this critical part of Metro's public engagement work. Metro is grateful to the committee for working with Metro to listen to the public and work toward greater accountability.

Introductions

Everyone took a few moments to introduce themselves, their background and interest in public engagement. Members introducing themselves to the committee for the first time were Casey Barnard, Corinne Bloomfield, Juan Carlos Ocaña-Chíu and Mike Pullen.

Update from peer group meeting

Metro's most recent peer group gathering of public involvement professionals was held earlier this month on Feb. 6. The peer group is one of several new initiatives of Metro's public engagement review plan of which PERC is central. The peer group is focused on sharing best practices and resources.

Greg Greenway, who along with other PERC members, attended the Feb. 6 peer group meeting shared a summary of the activity. It was an energetic group of about 45 people, first meeting as a large group and then breaking into 4 small groups for topic focused discussion. Some highlights from the small group discussions include:

- Developing common resources group: explore existing tools and resources like IAP2 and Metro's Opt In panel; facilitate conversation with an email list for the peer group.

- Diversity, equity and access group: share and work toward new ways that focus on building capacity and building long-term relationships instead of working with communities on a per project basis.

- Learning and collaboration group: optional electronic platforms to share information like blogs, e-libraries, contact lists and event calendars.

- Evaluation tools and techniques group: look more into the why of evaluation to inform the how to evaluate.

Committee charge and ground rules

Karen Withrow facilitated the committee's discussion of the draft bylaws. After a brief overview of Section I through VI, the floor was open for comments. Sue Marshall began the discussion with the comment that in Section I, it would be beneficial to institutionalize a regularly scheduled direct report to Metro Council. Patty Unfred suggested that this could happen around the timing of the annual public engagement report.

Sue Marshall asked for clarification in the text in Section II about recruitment. Patty Unfred responded that the annual recruitment section can be reworded to comment on a mid-year recruitment as necessary if the committee were to fall below the required 9 members.

Greg Greenway, Stephen Roberts, Casey Barnard, Sue Marshall and Tara Sulzen each commented on Section IV, bullet 4 about providing input on and review of the annual public engagement report. There was concern expressed that this might be the only time a public engagement plan was reviewed instead of having the opportunity to review and comment on individual projects throughout the year. Although the annual public engagement report is a time for the committee to review for types of resources, level of effort, use of best practices and measurement from a higher level approach, the wording here could be amended to leave the door open to comment on specific project plans if need, time and interest align.

Jennifer Sexton also commented on the significant effort involved in the member expectation related to the community summit. Karen Withrow commented that part of the community summit process would be to set goals and identify areas of emphasis for the coming year. Patty Unfred gave the rationale behind the timing of the community summit to coincide with Metro's annual budget process so that outcomes from the community summit could inform the resourcing process.

Eleanore Hunter led the discussion on Section IV, bullet 8 regarding the committee representing the community as a whole. Mike Pullen, Sue Marshall and Karen Withrow offered clarifying remarks that yes, although it is not entirely possible to speak for communities you don't know, the charge can be reworded to illuminate that committee members represent themselves and their appropriate groups but always with consideration to and balance with the interests of the greater community as a whole.

Section VII on decision making was an important section for the group to discuss and understand how recommendations and the agreement process will work for this committee. Sue Marshall opened the discussion by expressing a bit of suspect for the consensus model since it can require long conversations and can sometimes stifle dissenting opinions. In view of the potential flaws of the consensus model, voting should not be expressly excluded as an option. Juan Carlos Ocaña-Chíu seconded these comments on the trade-offs of the consensus model and called for clarity on how differing opinions would be communicated in a consensus model. Karen Withrow clarified that the

vision would be for a majority and minority opinions to be drawn up when a consensus could not be reached. Candice Kelly, Stephen Roberts, Eleanore Hunter and Barbara Smolak echoed the view that as a diverse group, this committee is unlikely to reach consensus all the time and that a majority and minority opinion structure expresses the group's diversity and shows that real conversation is happening. Tara Sulzen asked for examples of when a voting situation for this group might arise. Patty Unfred responded that although the committee's function is advisory only, there may be voting need when preparing comments to present to Metro Council. The committee expressed approval to move forward with a consensus model, allowing for majority and minority opinion expressions without excluding the option to hold a vote when necessary.

Karen Withrow continued the dialogue on Section VII, focusing on the question of whether the committee would like to continue with Metro staff functioning as facilitator or if the group would like to appoint a leader among them to facilitate and speak for the group. Candice Kelly, Casey Barnard, Stephen Roberts and Juan Carlos Ocaña-Chíu spoke for the group in calling for continued meeting facilitation by Metro staff but suggesting the committee select members to speak on a shifting basis when presenting to Metro Council or other groups as necessary. Heather Coston further explained that future meeting agendas will be provided with plenty of lead time for the committee to comment on and add to proposed agenda items.

Eleanore Hunter and Jennifer Sexton asked about communication in-between formal meetings. Heather Coston confirmed that although formal meetings will only be held twice annually, regular communication, often electronic would be happening. Patty Unfred encouraged the committee to sign-up the Metro newsfeed and Opt In panel at www.oregonmetro.gov/connect.

Public communication was overviewed in Section VIII including that the committee will act as liaisons to their communities and that Metro should be notified of any media inquiries or requests for official statements. It was clarified that meetings open to the public are posted on Metro's online calendar and through *The Oregonian.* It was briefly discussed that those strategies could be more effective and the committee will need to brainstorm more effective outreach for the upcoming community summit.

There were no comments on Section IX about background. Metro will send out a revised bylaws draft based on these conversations of the committee for final review over email.

Casey Barnard asked for clarification on the reasoning for different term lengths assigned to members in the Metro Public Engagement Review Overview. Patty Unfred answered that it was Metro's desire to not have the entire committee's terms terminate at the same time so terms are initially staggered to balance categories of members. One-year members are encouraged to reapply this fall when the annual recruitment process takes place.

Review committee vision for the PERC

Heather Coston reviewed the vision for the PERC as gathered from the previous meeting in 3 key areas of desired outcomes, tasks – Metro vision and tasks – committee vision.

The desired outcomes handout was clarified to be the outcomes of PERC work as informing public engagement practices at Metro, identifying the highest priorities. A lively discussion ensued with

the committee gathering around the central ideas of strongly emphasizing the outcomes of listening, empowering, capacity building and learning. A definition for equity was not founded but the group described accountability as closing the loop with the public on the why and how public opinion will be used as well as the PERC's role in holding Metro accountable to public involvement best practices.

Sue Marshall commented on group acceptance of the committee vision guidelines saying that relationships were to be built not only with community advocates but also with other community members who may not be represented by traditionally advocates.

Heather Coston framed the discussion on tasks by commenting that this is the first-year work plan and will be revisited as we go forward and grow in this structure. Group discussion centered around the community summit. Eleanore Hunter cautioned the group to be realistic with a focus on building capacity. Luis Nava shared an example of starting with a smaller group of core connectors to make inroads into new communities. Juan Carlos Ocaña-Chíu suggested the idea of having two tracks at the summit for catering to different levels of knowledge about government involvement. One track would be for persons traditionally engaged and another track for persons with less experience so as to best serve each group. Patty Unfred, Jennifer Sexton and Casey Barnard spoke about the difficulty and high levels of effort required to get community members to attend the summit so the summit must make community members feel heard and see the summit as a valuable endeavor.

Metro public engagement guide

Patty Unfred introduced Metro's process to update the public engagement guide. The public engagement guide is a federal requirement, scheduled to be updated every 4 years, for the transportation planning division but it is Metro's desire to also have a consistent standard agency wide. The public engagement guide needs to be updated with current issues like diversity and equity and will pull from stellar examples of other agencies. Metro would like PERC to provide input on what may be missing from the public engagement guide.

Greg Greenway suggested an introduction that speaks to the value and importance of public involvement. Karen Withrow and Patty Unfred explained that the best practice was to write the guide to an audience of the public to show access points and build capacity but the guide will also act as a utility for Metro staff, identifying overarching standards. Tara Sulzen and Casey Barnard commented that a strategic plan to communicate the guide's content in a useful way to the public and ongoing training on the guide to Metro staff were just as important as the guide's content. Jennifer Sexton called attention the need to add measurement pieces, more information on how techniques are chosen and the lifecycle of the public involvement process. Patty Unfred responded that the techniques and lifecycle items are addressed in a separate, best practices document. The group commented that the best practices section should be moved to appear before the techniques section. Sue Marshall, Greg Greenway and Stephen Roberts suggested more information on public access to committee lists and structure, and Metro Council meetings and work sessions.

The committee is encouraged to send any other comments on the public engagement guide to Heather Coston. A draft will be ready in late summer and the final document will be adopted this year. Metro will circulate the draft electronically for committee feedback, primarily in the areas of

goals and desired outcomes. Greg Greenway, Jennifer Sexton and Casey Barnard showed interest in more in-depth review as the process moves forward.

Opt In public engagement survey

Patty Unfred concluded the meeting by previewing the Opt In survey on public involvement scheduled for April. Metro will be in touch with the committee about survey content electronically.

Meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

MEETING TOPIC FROM DATE