

Community Involvement Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Wednesday, April 22, 2015

Time: 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Location: 1900 SW 4th Avenue, Portland, Conference Room 2500A

Committee Members present: Denise Barrett, Christina Blaser, Lois Cohen, Jessica Conner, Kenneth Doswell, Linda Nettekoven, Stanley Penkin, Howard Shapiro, Peter Stark

Absent/Excused: Paula Amato, Jason Barnstead-Long, Judy BlueHorse Skelton, Laura Stewart, Alison Stoll, Jovan Young

Staff: Eden Dabbs, Deborah Stein, Sara Wright

Visitors: Brian Hanson, Lucas Saraiva

Meeting Goals: Evaluate Comprehensive Plan public engagement process

Welcome, Introductions, Announcements

Howard Shapiro, Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed the committee. Minutes from February were approved.

CIC Discussion: Comprehensive Plan evaluation – what are the lessons learned?

Sara Wright, BPS staff, gave a brief overview of the evaluation requirement and ran through the Public Involvement Principles laid out in the Community Involvement Plan for the Comprehensive Plan Update. The committee agreed to go around the room and check in with each member's "lessons learned" from the community involvement process. Committee members' points are captured below, categorized by type. Italicized points were repeated or seconded by multiple members.

General

- *The scope and complexity of the project is so enormous that it's difficult to get a handle on, even for people who are knowledgeable.*
- *Confusion regarding all the different plans, didn't message how they relate to each other.*
- People who are just catching on to the CPU process have to do a lot of catching up, and they feel like it's all happening too fast. However, it's impossible to engage people until there's something relevant and concrete to engage with. It's hard to get people to care about policies.
- *Early involvement is critical. When people know about something early on and are able to provide feedback early, it becomes less frightening and upsetting. Specific information about local geographies (neighborhoods, specific properties) early on is essential to get people engaged.*
- However, people will always say there's not enough time.

- It's just really hard to say how much outreach is enough.
- Challenge with human mindset; it's very difficult to imagine 20 years ahead.
- *Need place-based AND topic-based outreach*
- Need to keep dialog opportunities. Staff gets pushback from a lot of people who don't understand that staff has to balance a wide variety of viewpoints. Need to keep conversations going so people can hear other people's perspectives.
- *It's always the same people who get involved. How do we get people who aren't paying attention, especially when there is so much to wrap your arms around.*
- Business owners are focused on different needs than individual residents or neighborhood associations. Businesses need certainty, and don't have time to wade into this stuff. Need more sensitivity about how even subtle zoning changes make drastic change for businesses; too much change, too quickly can be disastrous.
- The CPU process happened to cover a time period that included the worst recession AND the biggest boom in Portland in quite a while. Development is now happening much more quickly than it has in a long time. This exposed a lot of flaws in the existing system and created a lot of fear and anxiety about the future. Idea of "root shock" (a concept used to describe the social devastation caused by urban clearances of African American communities in the mid-1900s) is echoed in the experience of neighborhoods that are changing quickly. People are feeling that their identity is being threatened. Community loss, despair, feeling of being without a voice.
- *BPS staff effort has been enormous. We learned from each other; staff receptive and very sincere about trying to make the process better.*
- Lots of people think their testimony will be ignored, but it's clear that staff has been taking this testimony very seriously.
- Staff has done good graphic follow up work interpreting feedback from PEGs and community meetings, took complex info and made it understandable.

Committees/advisory groups

- *Policy Expert Groups (PEGs) earlier on were really good, members were diverse, built capacity, shared knowledge, array of info. Small size and format of presentations and discussions provided opportunity to hear other people's perspectives, which is valuable. PEGs should have been continued as topic interest groups to keep checking in with process and to respond to proposals that were developed and informed by their input*
- CPU work groups process was a big improvement on previous ones. Portland Plan process wasn't very transparent about the advisory groups (technical work groups that were staff-only) process, people felt like they were being left out. CPU PEG process was much more transparent, learning from previous mistakes, and were composed 50:50 of staff and community members.
- Committees can be very unwieldy and ineffective if too many people are involved, but you also need a wide variety of people, and that's a tough balance.
- Emulating ballot measure development process ("drafting" a wide variety of people to participate) for advisory groups would be more inclusive.
- Participation in CIC would feel more meaningful if members were assigned to represent specific groups or places.
- CIC should be relevant. People need to know it exists and is functional.

Timeline/Coordination

- Better communication and cooperation between staff, PSC and CIC. Sometimes it feels like staff is trying to meet a timeline, not giving the people involved enough time.
- When the testimony deadline was extended, there wasn't good explanation of how the PSC process (worksessions and staff reports) would continue as testimony was still coming in.
- Issues of both late-to-the-party anxiety AND public involvement fatigue. How do you accommodate both of those issues?
- Schedule more time at the end of processes, when the substance of the project becomes clear, as opposed to the beginning.

City Agency Coordination

- The CPU has been a huge burden on BPS, *not enough resources*.
- *Inter-bureau coordination is important to be effective, avoid redundancy*. City Council could help with that, need to get out of silos.
- Public Involvement network helped with inter-bureau coordination, but with PIAC changes, it's stalled out. Need to re-energize.

Demographics

- TriMet's Transit on Tap is a good example of a way to reach out to younger demographics. But we should make sure events are multigenerational so people can hear each other's voices.
- *Outreach to renters is challenging; there wasn't enough engagement with renters*.
- First outreach reached older folks.
- Never will catch everyone.
- The earlier we get people involved, speaking in a language they understand, the better the process will go.
- Too many people aren't getting enough info soon enough.
- Minorities, language barrier are always a concern.
- If you're not an expert, or don't self-identify as having a specific interest, need a way to engage.
- So many young people moving to PDX, need to capture their input and get them engaged.

Tools

- *Website hard to find, links buried. Should have had separate website for CPU*.
- *MapApp is a good interactive tool*.
- *It would be great if people could get info earlier in the process that feels more specific and personal. Go online, type in address and see what plans, etc are affecting a specific property*.
- Technology can reach more diverse group of people.
- *Good to have tools like helpline that allow people to engage with another human one-on-one*.
- Good to have hands-on activities like putting sticky notes on maps at community meetings.
- Use NextDoor.
- Social media is valuable.

- City has been developing infrastructure (Venture PDX, DCLs) for people to engage, and that's really good. We need to keep working on that.
- Pre Map App outreach was more personal.
- Effectiveness of MapApp training? Did it pay off?
- Mailings really got a response. When people are afraid, they get involved.
- Technical assistance to stakeholders was great effort.

CIC representation at PSC in (early July)

Jessi, Kenneth, Stan, Christina, and Lois (as a backup) volunteered to represent CIC at the PSC presentation.

Next steps

The CIC will meet next on June 24th, 8-10 AM.

Sara will follow up with CIC members (both present and absent) to get additional evaluation input, draft a memo, and circulate it to the CIC for review.