

# **North/Northeast Neighborhoods** **Constituency Meeting**

## **Public Involvement Standards Taskforce**

June 5, 2003, Historic Kenton Firehouse

**Facilitator:** Betsy Radigan

**Note Taker:** Tom Griffin-Valade

**Report written by:** Betsy Radigan

**Host:** North Portland Neighborhood Services

**Attendance:** Betsy Radigan (Piedmont NA); Tom Griffin-Valade (NPNS); Christopher McPhee, (University Park NA); Deirdre Atkinson, (Vernon NA); Kent Hoddick, (Arbor Lodge NA); Jerrie Johnson, (Arbor Lodge NA); Pam Arden, (Kenton Neighborhood); George M. Bruender, (Concordia NA); John Jenkins, (HINooN); Gyrid Hyde-Towle, (East Columbia NA); Dick Towle, (East Columbia NA); Lisa Horne, (Peninsula CDC); Barbara Fisher, (Piedmont NA); Kenneth Hoffman, (Piedmont NA); Cathryn L.Crawford, (Univeristy Park NA); Paula Casner, (East Columbia NA); Robin Plance, (St. Johns NA); Pamela Plance, (St. Johns NA); Joe Annett, (staff BES and North PDX resident); Marie Johnson, (staff Planning)

## **Summary of brainstorm ideas**

North and Northeast Neighborhood Associations have never been stronger or more active than they are today. Yet their leaders feel quite isolated from their local government and unengaged by downtown city agencies in a way that is meaningful to their community and its needs. They expressed a general inability to negotiate the bureacracy and "connect" with the staff or resources to address issues of concern to their communities.

Being so unconnected - despite their interest and attempts to be connected - means the city's organized PI efforts seem woefully inadequate and rather ungeniue. Especially when a city-driven initiative does not match community expectations for its necessity, given other priority concerns held by the community; comes with a prescribed outcome; a prescribed and limited timeline for citizen comment; uses ineffective tools for eliciting "input" or "feedback"; or otherwise prevents citizens from organizing a collective response through their neighborhood associations.

## **The top three priorities for change all address this situation**

(no other suggestions even came close to the votes for these three changes):

**More city staff who are dedicated to helping the neighborhoods (and citizens) succeed with issues and opportunities.**

What is being requested are staff who are "internal advocates" and act as intermediaries between a city agency and citizens/citizen groups. Crime Prevention Specialists are a primary example of the type of "advocate" neighborhood leaders are seeking for every bureau, not just PPB. They help citizens/citizens groups access available services, interact effectively and appropriately with agency personnel, and gain a better understanding of an agency's policies, procedures and culture.

**More relationship building between city staff and neighborhood leaders that is developed, in part, by increased attendance by city staff at neighborhood meetings.**

Neighborhood leaders believe greater community-based interaction, with planners and land use staff in particular, would be of tremendous benefit for improving decision-making by the City especially for those issues perceived as having the greatest impact in our community at this time (higher density development, re-zoning, redevelopment projects).

**Reinstate a "Neighborhood Needs" type process.**

Neighborhood leaders want a regular, predictable, formal means of bringing forward their issues/ opportunities to the City of Portland. Currently there is no obvious means for neighborhood leaders to engage the City of Portland pro-actively on either issues or opportunities. If the City of Portland is not actively initiating a plan/project/process, they are absent from our community and, from the neighborhoods perspective, quite unknown and inaccessible.

With regards to changes in PI practices, five suggestions - nearly equally popular by vote - convey a very consistent message about neighborhood association leaders feeling disadvantaged in meeting their responsibility to their community and their organizations in responding to city proposals or initiatives that impact their neighborhoods.

**The top priority changes to Public Involvement Practices were:**

- 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Reduce the use of Open Houses in lieu of community meetings; and; Hold evening meetings in affected neighborhoods on major issues.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Provide neutral 3rd party "mentors" to coach new leaders through city process issues.
- 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Greater consistency (and longer) public comment periods; and, Provide stipends for Neighborhood Associations for outreach or meeting notification in their community.

## **All suggested Changes to Process (High to Low Priority)**

- ❑ More staff dedicated to helping neighborhoods succeed with issues and opportunities (9 dots)
- ❑ Staff to attend neighborhood meeting more often (to develop relationships in the community) (7 dots)
- ❑ Reinstate a "Neighborhood Needs" process (6 dots)
- ❑ Well defined plans with specific goals up-front (4 dots)
- ❑ Mutual respect (2 dots)
- ❑ Improve information access (2 dots)
- ❑ More door-to-door / face-to-face contact as part of outreach (2 dots)
- ❑ Get citizens involved in hiring process for planning staff (2 dots)
- ❑ Involve planning staff in project design (1 dot)
- ❑ All projects/plans deserve fair/open reviews (1 dot)
- ❑ Practical planners not dreamers (1 dot)
- ❑ Truly listen to voters and citizens (0 dot)

## **All suggested Changes to Practices (High to Low Priority)**

- ❑ Reduce use of Open Houses in lieu of community meetings (8 dots)
- ❑ Evening meeting in affected neighborhoods on major issues (7 dots)
- ❑ Third party mentors to coach new leaders through process issues (6 dots)
- ❑ Consistent (and longer than 30 days?) response time for all publiccomment periods (5 dots)
- ❑ Stipends to Neighborhoods for outreach services (5 dots)
- ❑ A mix of people on CAC's representing a balance of pro/con positions (4 dots)
- ❑ Use all "tools" for successful meetings (childcare/translation/transportation options) (4 dots)
- ❑ Community approved list of mediators/consultants (3 dots)
- ❑ No more "Tell to Sell" approach to community meetings (3 dots)
- ❑ Too many government officials on CAC's (2 dots)
- ❑ Trained facilitators skilled at planning and land-use public meetings - not unskilled staff (2 dots)
- ❑ Don't substitute E-mail for U.S. mail (not everybody has a computer) (2 dots)
- ❑ Use PSA's or banner ads during TV newscast about up-coming civic issues (2 dots)
- ❑ Evening meetings in neighborhoods (too many meetings scheduled only downtown/daytime) (2 dots)
- ❑ Commit to involving non-English speakers by providing interpreters (1 dot)
- ❑ Childcare at meetings (1 dot)
- ❑ Transportation to meetings for Seniors/Disabled (1 dot)
- ❑ Staff follow-up in reponse to call-in/input (1 dot)
- ❑ Add land-use staff to North Portland Neighborhood Services Office (1 dot)

## **Minutes of the meeting**

### **Agenda:**

- Introductions
- Background on Taskforce
- Discussion (think, pair, share)
  - a.. Good Examples
  - b.. Bad Examples
  - c.. Ideas for Change
- Prioritize Ideas for Change
- Top ideas for action by us working together

## **RECORD OF DISCUSSION (SHARING)**

### **I. Examples of Poor Public Participation Shared by Attendees**

1. PIR Master Plan
  - a. Response time to PIR Master Plan too short given length of plan (180 pages); greater frustration is the fact that the plan was withheld for comment for 2 years and then suddenly released
  - b. PIR didn't pay attention to their own process: plan was released without informing their own CAC
  - c. Better notification needed, given how long the plan had been held
  - d. Process not clear; nor was the reason for either withholding or releasing the plan
2. Police Precincts
  - a. Closed after 5:00pm weekdays and all weekends
  - b. No public input "because" it was a budget decision
3. Making contact with city personnel outside of PI processes about issues & concerns
  - a. Staff attitudes not positive
  - b. Follow through inadequate (Don't keep promises)
4. Hayden Island - Bringing issues of concern to city to be addressed
  - a. Don't listen to NA's that are further from downtown services
  - b. No presence in neighborhood: don't seem to make it out to this area
  - c. No formal neighborhood needs process
5. Land-use
  - a. 10 calendar days notice on some land-use cases: inadequate time frame to respond

- b. Further, very often mailing list is not up-to-date & inaccurate: affected residents uninformed
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- 6. Commissioners
    - a. May have great ideas, but they still need a PI process to advance their ideas to implementation
    - b. They should not be exempt from PI requirements
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- 7. Voters need to be listen to as well as citizens (PI process)
    - a. South-North Light rail voters ignored
    - b. Convention Center voters ignored
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- 8. Listen to the citizens
    - a. Call people back when they initiate contact
    - b. Need support of officials beyond photo opportunities
    - c. City is patronizing and not listening to its citizens
    - d. Non-emergency Police number particularly condescending
    - e. Listen to the local citizens because they have a unique understanding of locale
    - f. Respectful to all / follow-up
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- 9. 40 Mile Loop
    - a. Pay attention to committees who are involved in a project -- take it seriously
    - b. Avoid "punch list" approach to meetings -- don't have a meeting if you know the outcome
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- 10. ICURAC Citizen Taskforce
    - a. Seek a balance on Citizen Advisory Committees
    - b. Too many city staff on committee or chosen by staff
    - c. If government officials are appointed to a committee, they must vote on action items
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- 11. Portland Blvd. Narrowing - Adding Bike Lanes
    - a. NA given an FYI call: lanes already in progress
    - b. NA not aware of an earlier plan for bike lanes - caught by surprise
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- 12. Lombard Main Street and Light-rail
    - a. Eliminate open houses because neutralize through atomization
    - b. Pre-determined punch list meeting (other examples: Albina Community Plan, Pier Park Bond)
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- 13. Customr Service Issues
    - a. Phones, voicemail and E-mail -- reply promptly to citizen contact; too much input ignored
    - b. Use appropriate number of staff

14. Proposed Methadone Clinic Siting
  - a. Lack of notice-- short time line to respond
  - b. Agencies w/in city not coordinating - police should have been involved earlier in process
15. PIR Amphitheater
  - a. City pushing an agency (PIR) not respectful of NA's
  - b. Looking for ways around legit issues of noise/traffic impacts; not how to address them
  - c. PI approach - tell us of any "fatal flaws" - discounted community concerns w/impacts

## **II. Examples of Good Public Participation Shared by Attendees**

1. Great Mentoring by Paul Dinberg (NE Crime Prevention Program)  
Why: encourages, realistic, trainer, knowledgeable -- empower or steps in judiciously
2. Light Rail Station Area Planning  
Why: structured process to refine a plan through effective citizen review that included inclusive outreach as well as trained and skilled facilitators  
\* called out Lore Wintergreen's work
3. eVolvment Pilot Project (Portsmouth Neighborhood)  
Why: innovative, grassroots-oriented, improved communications & neighborhood network
4. BHCD Anti-displacement survey and downspout disconnect  
Why: Door-to-Door survey - talked directly to people
5. NPNS  
Why: support for NA leaders, especially newcomers
6. I-5 Widening Project  
Why: listening sessions throughout planning process
7. PDOT Traffic Calming Project (Albina/Ainsworth Plan)  
Why: staff provided the structure to educate and empower citizen advisory committee to develop a traffic calming plan; take it out to affected residents; make a recommendation; move it into action to improve neighborhood traffic safety.