Citywide Public Involvement Standards Taskforce

Wednesday, April 23, 2003

5 PM – 7:00 PM
City Hall, 1221 SW 4th Ave., Lovejoy Room

MINUTES

Attendance: Bryan Aptekar, Linda Bauer, Raquel Bournhonesque, JoAnn Bowman, Laurel Butman, Brent Canode, Nancy Chapin, Phill Colombo, Emile Combe, Frank Dixon, Jim Gladson, Tim Hall, Bill Hoffman, Brian Hoop, Elizabeth Kennedy-Wong, Arlene Kimura, Lynn Knox, Sy Kornbrodt, Jeanne Lawson, Paul Leistner, Nathan Thuan Nguyen, Julie Odell, Jake Oken-Berg, Jerry Powell, Betsy Radigan, Scott Seibert, Mary Volm, Corinne Weber, Doug Zenn

Others present: Katy Brooks, Crysttal Atkins, Michelle Gregory, Barbara Hart, David Nemo, Scott Vala

Absent: Sande Allman, Willie Brown, Carlotta Collette, Krystyn Czarnecka, David Lane, Patti McCoy, Mallin Mohumed, Marsha Palmer.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes for 4-02-03 meeting approved with change that SW Community Plan Citizen Involvement document listed goals and objectives, not strategies. Note that Corinne Weber is a SWNI rep, not Maplewood Neighborhood Association rep.

Selection of Co-Chairs:
- ❑ Julie Odell, JoAnn Bowman, and Laurel Butman were proposed by Brian to be co-chairs. Accepted by group.

Creation of listserve discussion group:
- ❑ Julie Odell set up a listserve account at PSU. Group accepted adding all interested stakeholders to list who can then choose to drop out.

Use of Council adopted Public Involvement Principles as starting point:

Key highlights:
- ❑ Group reviewed and discussed use of Public Involvement Principles that were adopted in 1996 by City Council as a starting point for this group's work.
- ❑ Lots of interest voiced to use International Association for Public Participation definition of citizen involvement as a common definition. Focus on seeking highest level of citizen empowerment as a priority. Not public education.
- ❑ Some principles look more like action oriented objectives, less like goals.

Comments on specific principles:
- ❑ Don't make this an exercise in creating more overhead rules and requiring City bureaus to coordinate all their outreach activities.
- ❑ Lots of disagreement raised to suggestion that customer service should be a central issue. We are focused on citizen involvement in decision-making.
- ❑ Coordination of timely notification and early public involvement is important.
- ❑ Be careful with use of "Citizen," not all residents are legalized citizens.
- ❑ Need to differentiate between technical projects and planning projects.
- ❑ Create criteria for allocation of outreach resources appropriate to project size.
- ❑ Add principle to include public in design of public involvement processes.
- ❑ Neighborhood associations not appropriate for all decision-making processes.
- ❑ Involvement in budget decision-making processes should be in principles. Perhaps using Bureau Advisory Committees as vehicle for budget decisions.
- ❑ Develop stronger role for businesses to be involved.
- ❑ Neighborhood Associations not adequately funded to live up to expectations to provide broad outreach and diverse representation.
- ❑ SW Community Plan ordinance already covers many of these principles.
- ❑ Need a principle requiring evaluation of public involvement processes.

Summary report of interviews with Bureau Staff:

- ❑ Taskforce member Julie Odell summarized key themes found in interviews with 19 City staff actively responsible for bureau public involvement efforts:

  1. Wide range of understanding of what public involvement means.
  2. Differences in how we define a successful public involvement process.
  3. Program managers seem to have a pivotal role in resource allocation to public involvement processes.
  4. Lack of clarity on role of ONI in providing public involvement support.
  5. Professional training for staff in public involvement skills is minimal.

Discussion on what type of projects to focus on:

- ❑ Brian presented list of City decision-making processes to start conversation.
- ❑ Suggestions to focus on major capital projects, land use planning, and new policy initiatives.
- ❑ Recognize staff under pressure to accomplish lots with minimal resources and are held accountable to both supervisors and public participants. They need flexibility. Role of program manager is key to all these issues raised.
- ❑ Use of IAP2 definition should act as criteria for narrowing our scope of work.
- ❑ Not every project needs public involvement, focus on allocating resources appropriate to project size.
- ❑ Public involvement needs to start before projects are initiated. Citizens need to be engaged in identifying which projects need a PI process.
- ❑ Not everyone interested in all decision-making stages. Some want to be focused on technical issues, some on big picture.

- Suggestion of 4 levels of good public involvement:
    1. Knowledge of issue/event/project by everyone and anyone in or part of effected area/region – when trying to decide on whom to contact, error on the side of more people than fewer people knowing.
    2. Understanding by people and/or groups effected of importance or non-importance of issue/event/project.
    3. Ability of effected people and/or groups to make CONTACT WITH, and communicate ideas, concerns, and SUGGESTIONS TO person/group/bureau that can directly effect the issue/event/project.
    4. Assurance of high level of receptiveness by person/group/bureau that can directly effect the issue/event/project.
- Under each of these levels we need:
    1. A way or ways to achieve or improve the goal
    2. A way to evaluate our level of improvement and success.
- Develop citizen review of how we contract with public involvement contracts.
- Bureau notifications need to be in easy to understand English.
- Concern raised that early notification is often too early. People forget and then complain a year later when decision made that they weren't notified.
- Concern raised that we should not categorize. Citizens need to have public involvement access to all City decision-making processes.

Organizing constituency meetings

- Goal was for group to break up into groups to plan out constituency meetings. Focus was on types of questions to use, should there be a common set of questions or leave it flexible. Due to time the co-chairs will meet with Brian to work out details and Brian will shortly work with taskforce members on details via email.
- These meetings will be organized for last week of May through first two weeks of June. Brian will begin to work with taskforce members to delegate volunteer tasks with recruiting participants, facilitation, note taking, and observers.

Comments:
- Question ideas to consider:
    - How do you define public involvement in your community?
    - Use SEUL Healthy neighborhood survey questions.
    - What are barriers to your involvement in City decision-making efforts?
    - What kind of decision-making do you want to be involved with?
    - What would you like to know about in your neighborhood/City project?
    - Provide a style sheet (not sure what this meant?)
- Public involvement consultants want to be separated from business group meeting.
- Standardized focus group structure does not work for communities of color. Need flexibility.
- Jake wants to help organize youth group discussion.