

African-American community Constituency meeting

Citywide Public Involvement Standards Taskforce

Thursday, June 12, 2003, King Facility, Community Court room

Attendance: Cece Noel, Southeast Uplift; Cynthia Strickland; JoAnn Bowman, African American Chamber of Commerce of Oregon

Facilitator: JoAnn Bowman

Note Taker: Greg Lewis

Host: African-American Chamber of Commerce of Oregon

Summary of brainstorm ideas

Comments are organized into categories of themes that mirror the workgroup topics the Public Involvement Taskforce will be working on.

Process note: Listings are not in order of priority.

Process design and implementation:

- ❑ Not enough public notice for meetings.
- ❑ Need well trained/qualified public involvement staff to act as the representative for public involvement communication at meetings. The project technical experts (planners and engineers) tend to be more defensive and less willing to consider compromises.
- ❑ Ingredients for a successful public involvement meeting: all relevant information is given to the public, ensure an open and inclusive meeting, feedback from city is given.
- ❑ City needs to have well trained, neutral, non-biased public involvement staff for all PI processes. If person is defensive, has an unyielding agenda, or is trying to sell a project, the process will fail. The public needs to feel influential and trusting of city staff.
- ❑ Citizens should be notified in a more timely manner, need more advance notice to provide ample time to organize their ability to participate.
- ❑ Planning for public involvement must begin at day one of the project.
- ❑ Costs for public involvement need to be factored in at the start so that it doesn't get cut later.

Diverse and accessible public involvement strategies:

- ❑ City advertisements for council meetings are in very limited venues such as the Daily Journal of Commerce. Meetings need to be advertised in local publications that are read by communities of color.
- ❑ Need to do broader outreach. Want more input from public rather than the usual public involvement activists.

- ❑ Neighborhood associations need help on how to organize alternatives to meetings to get new people involved; e.g. potlucks, socials, informal meetings, block parties, etc.

Accountability & transparency of process:

- ❑ Needs to have a financial incentive or penalty for bureaus to do public involvement correctly. Could include extra funds for PI training.
- ❑ Even if there is public involvement, there is no real influence in decision-making. It's **too late** when plans are already made.
- ❑ Council allows ample time for pro-project input, but little time for those opposed. Media leaves before hearing any public outcries.
- ❑ Need feedback from bureaus about public involvement comments to let people know they've been heard.
- ❑ Must be an evaluation form at the end of the public involvement meeting and allow an opportunity for feedback.
- ❑ Let public know that they're going to have influence on decision-making. Public would rather have a trial/error process than be presented a final plan.

Education and skills training for staff and public:

- ❑ Public involvement staff do not know how to market or ask the five Ws? (who, what, when, where, why) to answer why you (public) should care.

Communication and access to information:

- ❑ ONI gives out too much unfiltered information. If on ONI's list, recipient is bombarded with untimely information.
- ❑ Better education about how to get on City mailing lists and list-serves.
- ❑ Mailings often look like junk mail. Put together a new format.
- ❑ Use web for large issues, to provide project overview.
- ❑ Do mailings for thank you notes and feedback.

Comments about ONI:

- ❑ Those who know what ONI is, use it. Those who don't, do not use ONI. Public education needed, hold info fairs on what ONI is and how to use it.
- ❑ City contacts ONI to begin public involvement, which then notifies the NAs. The NA info doesn't always reach the public within their boundaries. Activities such as block parties or street fairs would help NA's get recognized.
- ❑ Having public involvement staff reporting to ONI would be a good policy decision. Having a public involvement staff in ONI frees staff from having too much bias. ONI should develop the process to make it fair and effective.
- ❑ ONI is not representative of the community. ONI supports the Neighborhood Associations. The NAs should utilize ONI as a source for public involvement information. Bureaus should be another information source.
- ❑ Neighborhood Associations ask for more funding in order to obtain more staff for public outreach. Giving them more money won't make it easier with the current NA leadership. Old guard NA leaders hold to old guard NA needs.

Other comments:

- ❑ In order to have some strength the changes need to be in code.
- ❑ Public Involvement Taskforce challenge: Needs to express what is good for public process rather than personal goals of task force members?