

City Staff Constituency Meeting Notes

Public Involvement Standards Task Force

June 4, 2003 – Pettygrove Room, City Hall

Attendance: 34 people; Laurel Butman, OMF; Brent Canode, Comm. Leonard's Office; Jim Gladson, BES; David Nemo, PDC; Tricia Knoll, Water; Mary Volm, OMF/BOP/Trans; Douglas Hardy, BDS/LUR; Julie Rawls, PDC; Tim Hall, Water; Marshall Runkel, Comm. Sten's Office; Bob Cynkar, BES; Susan Kelly, BWW; Joleen Jensen-Classen, ONI/BES; Amalia Alarcon-Gaddie, ONI; Marsha Palmer, Police; Jean Senechal, PDOT; Thomas Lannom, ONI; Joan Saroka, BES; Bryan Aptekar, Parks & Rec; Bill Hoffman, PDOT; Cristina Germain, Comm. Francesconi's Office; Gay Greger, Parks & Rec; Diana Hinton, BES; Mary Rose Navarro, Parks & Rec.; Marjorie Brown, ESA Program; Lynn Knox, BHCD; David Lane, ONI; Eric King, ONI; Barbara Hart, BOP & River Ren.; Susan Hartnett, BOP; Lauren Norris, ONI; B!X; Brian Hoop, ONI.

Summary of brainstorm ideas

Process note: Listings are not in order of priority.

Barriers to Performing Successful Public Process

1. Not Enough Time

- a. To plan
- b. To do a process
- c. To build/maintain relationships with groups and stakeholders which should be routine
- d. External Requirements: legislated timelines for some processes are too short
- e. Short timelines are assigned by Council
- f. Land use code prescribes short timelines

2. Not Enough Resources

- a. Lack of resources to best use changing technologies
- b. Ongoing need to use old methods (mailings, etc.)
- c. Combination of 2a + 2b increases burden on staff
- d. Public perception that funding for public process is unlimited
- e. Don't internal share resources enough
- f. Some bureaus do not have a public involvement coordinator

3. Not Enough People Showing Up

- a. Lack of participation from a broader, more diverse base
 - b. Lack of participation from neighbors as opposed to activists
 - c. Diminishes diversity of opinions
 - d. Lack of relationships with diverse communities we want to involve
- 4. Lack of Coordination**
- a. Lack of recognition of the importance of internal coordination
 - b. Lack of dedicated staff who facilitate coordination
 - c. Council recognizes the need for coordination but doesn't always remember or acknowledge the time and resources needed for doing so
 - d. There are many overlapping projects, but lack of coordination to allow bureaus to answer questions about nearby projects or collaborate on process
- 5. Prescribed Procedures can be a Barrier to Getting People Involved, Especially Underrepresented Groups and Diverse Communities**
- a. Lack of time to build relationships in these communities
 - b. A formula of X number of hearings + CAC analysis = NO diverse involvement
 - c. Not adapting our processes to fit models appropriate for diverse constituencies.
- 6. Crowded Information Space**
- a. Overwhelming agenda of City projects, hard to get attention.
- 7. Lack of Acceptance of Anything New (NIMBY)**
- 8. Lack of Internal Clarity**
- a. As to when public involvement is needed and what level is needed
 - b. Confusion between public information and public involvement
- 9. Lack of Public Clarity Coupled with Increasing Demand for Involvement**
- a. Confusion between public information and public involvement
 - b. Expectation that public should be involved in "everything"
 - c. Lack of understanding, acknowledgement and/or acceptance of public role in process
 - d. "Lightning Rod Syndrome" – PI staff seen as "the City" and available for all complaints
 - e. Lack of awareness for dealing with complex issues
- 10. Expectation that Quality Public Involvement = Total Agreement & No Controversy**
- a. Aggravated by media attention to controversy as opposed to thoughtful representation of issues, process, projects
- 11. Communication to a Broader Audience**

- a. Can stop the process by either bringing in newcomers who “never heard about this” or challenging those who see themselves as representative leaders in the community
- b. Hard to get the right contact information
- c. Challenges approach: traditional outreach vs. new methods

12. Influence of NAs and Other “Gatekeeper” Leadership Groups

- a. Influence of preconceptions or strong opinions before the dialogue begins can dampen or stop the process
- b. Lack of acceptance of new methods (e.g., door-to-door, sampling, surveys, etc.)
- c. But also not building and maintaining relationships with key community leaders we should be working with

13. Lack of Regional Professional Standards, possibly through Center for Public Participation

14. Fundamental Distrust from Public and from Some Constituencies

- a. Coupled with distrust and lack of respect for public employees

15. The Different Approaches of and Roles Neighborhood Coalitions Believe They Play (e.g., organizing vs. representative) is Confusing and Takes Additional Time and Resources

- a. Need clarity and consistency to be able to work effectively with these groups
- b. Varying staff skill levels in neighborhood coalitions.

16. Balance use of new technologies and traditional strategies

- a. Slow to develop web-based technologies
- b. Still need to utilize door-to-door, mail, etc. for those w/o access to email

Key Elements of Successful Public Process

1. Good Relationship Building

- a. Developing trust
- b. Face to face contact where possible
- c. Going out to the community and neighborhood associations– to their meetings and events – when you are not on the agenda (e.g., before you need to involve them in your process)
 - i. *CAVEAT: for planned meetings, check with leaders first*
 - ii. *And supporting them on their issues sometimes*

2. **Clarity of Purpose**
 - a. Type of process: information only; advisory; or involvement in decision making
 - b. Identification of appropriate audience
 - c. Clear timeline and the schedule
 - d. Unambiguous understanding of how decisions will be made and by whom
3. **Flexibility**
 - a. Support and ability to respond to the community
 - b. Support and ability to change schedules or approaches
 - c. Support and ability to respond to new, fresh information
 - d. Support when you recognize you need more time
4. **Involving Stakeholders in Planning the Public Process**
5. **Supportive Management & Elected Officials Coupled with their Clear Understanding of the Process and Process Needs**
6. **Good Communications Tools**
 - a. Newsletter
 - b. Website
 - c. Survey
 - d. Framing the public question or decision to be made in the context of the broader “City of Portland” and citywide picture
7. **Realistic Time:**
 - a. To outline strategies and meet the goals
 - b. To scope the project (what it is *and* what it isn’t)
 - c. To include collaboration with other professionals and PI staff
 - d. To reflect on the input received
8. **Creative Analysis of Who the Project Partners Should Be**
 - a. Stakeholder analysis to identify key participants
 - b. Example: for a project in East Portland where NA wasn’t getting involved, turned focus to elementary schools as a primary partner – resulted in NA getting involved as well, but not as primary partner for the process
 - c. Utilize appropriate locales where people gather and have resources to help mobilize people, like schools and churches
9. **“Success breeds success!” vs. “If you’ve burned them once, you’re dead.”**
10. **Recognition of the Inevitability of Conflict**
 - a. Creating a safe place to express opinions and disagree

- b. Clarity about how and where decisions will get made and where they can appeal to
- 11. Providing Good, High Quality Information to the Community to Allow a High Quality Response**
- 12. Adequate Resources to Embrace New Participants Throughout the Process**
- a. To bring latecomers along
 - b. To provide continuous education about the process and project
- 13. When Both Staff and Public Don't Feel from the Outset that the Project's a "Done Deal"**
- a. Lacking that, giving staff permission and support to be clear that *it is* a done deal (e.g., needs support of or the message needs to come from Commissioner-in-Charge)
- 14. Accessibility**
- a. Making staff available to listen to opposition or meet with additional stakeholders through extra meetings, phone time, etc.
 - b. Including key decisions makers (e.g., Project Manager, Bureau Director, Commissioner) in meetings and providing access to decision makers
- 15. High Levels of Expectation and Support from Bureau Managers and Council for Public Involvement and Process**
- a. Access to decision makers/managers at open houses and outreach events.
- 16. Clear, Understandable Process from Beginning to End with Seamless Integration of Public Involvement into the problem Solving/Decision Making Process**
- a. High quality information so that public can make informed decision
 - b. Fair opportunities for public to provide input throughout
 - c. Best if collaboration begun with stakeholders at beginning of process
- 17. Good Internal Communications Citywide**
- a. So bureaus know what others are working on
 - b. So City staff can act as community ambassadors
 - c. City employee contact info on city web site so public can reach them
- 18. Neighborhood Needs Process**
- a. Example of a successful process that provided a place for the public to tell the City what they want and need
- 19. Acknowledging the Critical Role of Time and Financial Resources in a Good Public Process**
- a. The key to overcoming barriers, getting through "bogged down" periods, and addressing problem solving needs
 - b. Enough time upfront to develop scope of work plan, how much PI needed
 - c. Need flexibility to reevaluate PI process if needed

20. Quality Baked Goods

21. Gestures of Goodwill and Including Fun in the Process

22. Closing the Loop

- a. When we tell participants something they “don’t want to hear,” following up
- b. Getting back to CACs and other participants about what decision was made and how
- c. Acknowledging the contributions of participants to the process and what was done with their input

23. Frame issue/question in context of broader "Citywide" picture or plans

Questions & Notes about “Standards” Charge

Questions/Responses:

1. Why standards as opposed to guidelines?
2. Prescriptive or voluntary? Discretion allowed by professional staff?
3. David Lane noted that, semantics aside, we are looking for “a consistent operating method and expectations.”

Notes:

1. One size fits all won’t work
2. Not about semantics, but definitions. Some agencies to have standards and take standards very seriously. Don’t set up standards that cannot be met consistently.

Suggestions for Consistent Expectations & Approaches/Criteria

INTERNAL

1. Reinforce citizen involvement principles
2. Maintain bureau flexibility
3. Maintain consistent message about:
 - a. Process
 - b. Timeline
 - c. Times for decision making
 - d. Times where public has input
4. Clear definition of what “standards” apply to (e.g., large capital or new policy initiatives, note that Planning doesn’t do capital projects)
 - a. Focus on broad, large projects
 - b. Focus on projects that impact a broad public (note: may not meet high public expectations)
 - c. Capital projects are type of project most common between all large bureaus
5. What about enforcement?
6. Define the triggers for applying guidelines or standards
7. When do we have an obligation to notify the public? How early?

8. Provide a “framework” for staff to internally know how to organize their bureaus PI strategy rather than a prescriptive checklist
9. Concern expressed if standards can stop a project if public does not like it
10. Consider "Problem Solving" approach:
 - a. Articulate what are problems and then identify changes or solutions to each problem
11. Road map of legislative, administrative, and community organizing a good start to address what types of projects and decisions the City makes

PUBLIC

1. Role clarification for NAs/Coalitions and consistent definitions
2. Understanding that public process in one of informed consent
3. NAs recognizing that the City is a partner and constantly reinforcing that to new members
4. Reinforce that we are building a relationship and that there are expectations of the relationship
5. Establish clear expectations about the relationships and role of public and government
6. Require term limits within Nas
7. Role of ONI should be about building partnerships, not as enforcer
8. Provide training to public and neighborhood association leadership so they know how to work with the city with informed input