

# Metro | *Meeting minutes*

Meeting: Public Engagement Review Committee (posted)  
Date/time: Tuesday, Jan. 17, 5:30 p.m.  
Place: Room 401

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## **Attendees**

PERC members: Jennifer Sexton, Candice Kelly, Tara Sulzen, Juanita Walton, Eleanore Hunter, Barbara Smolak, Luis Nava, Sue Marshall, Greg Greenway, Stephen Roberts

Metro: Shirley Craddick, Carlotta Collette, Patty Unfred, Jim Middaugh, Karen Withrow, Heather Coston, Valerie Cuevas,

Absent: Casey Barnard, Corinne Bloomfield, Julia Meier, Juan Carlos Ocaña-Chú, Mike Pullen

## **Welcome**

Opening remarks by Metro Councilor Carlotta Collette. Councilor Collette acknowledged the need for community input to create good governance and expressed gratitude for the members of the newly chartered Public Engagement Review Committee.

Metro Councilor Shirley Craddick echoed thanks to the committee.

## **Introductions**

Committee members introduced themselves and shared previous experience and special areas of interest in community engagement. Areas of interest included how issues are framed when communicating with the public, the desire to inspire people to participate, concern for unincorporated areas and underserved communities, youth involvement, educating the public on opportunities and rights to be involved, and evaluation strategies.

## **Background about the PERC**

Jim Middaugh described the larger context of the public review process at Metro. PERC is one piece of a multi-track public involvement plan that has evolved from the former committee Metro Committee for Citizen Involvement (MCCI) and direction from an audit toward broader and more sustained engagement. The combined experience and skills represented by this committee will help support a shift to more effective engagement by Metro.

Other approaches to Metro's public involvement plan include:

- A peer group gathering of public involvement professionals to discuss best practices, share challenges and brainstorm solutions. The first peer group meeting was held in August 2012 with over 60 participants. The next peer group meeting is scheduled for February 6, 2013.
- A community summit tentatively scheduled for September 2013.
- An annual report on Metro's public involvement.

- Opt In annual survey to gauge the community's opinion on how Metro is doing in regards to public involvement.
- Various project specific action plans.

### **Metro's vision for the committee**

Patty Unfred talked about value Metro sees the committee having on future public engagement activities through review and input. She also suggested the possibility of small work group activity on Metro's public involvement policy update. Patty shared a calendar with the timing of each of the Public Engagement Review pieces for discussion and feedback.

- Peer group meetings, one each in spring and fall, which gathers public involvement professionals to share problems and resources. The PERC is invited but not required to attend.
- Opt In annual survey is tentatively scheduled for April. Opt In has over 18,000 people registered. The survey is a very useful piece of the overall public involvement strategy.
- The annual report will be informed by the Opt In annual survey and can be aided by the guidance and review of the PERC.
- The community summit, scheduled for September, will provide a different way to interact with Metro outside of the typical per project basis. The community summit's goal includes sustained engagement in a holistic fashion. The PERC can be strategic in publicity and facilitation of the summit.

Committee members discussed Metro's vision for the committee. Tara Sulzen asked about Metro's current evaluation strategies. Patty Unfred commented that the PERC is not designed for evaluation on a per project basis but is looking to identify higher level plans and practices to measure to ensure that the correct things are being focused on. It was shared that in the August 2012 peer group meeting, the most common challenges were evaluation, equity, engaging diverse audiences and sharing best practices. The peer group will potentially engage Portland State University and University of Oregon student groups as resources to tackle these challenges. The PERC is welcome to bring issues to the peer group.

Other items that would be beneficial to have the PERC involved include an update required this year on Metro's Public Involvement Policy for Transportation Planning, which is a federal obligation for Metro to complete, as well as the internal guide Community Engagement Best Practices and the Public Involvement Planning Guide. It is possible that these guides could be combined and updated into one robust principle document. The PERC could have a review role, lend an area of expertise and hold Metro accountable to the guidelines in those documents.

Karen Withrow led a discussion introducing Metro's current work related to Title VI compliance, particularly limited English proficiency (LEP) efforts. Since Metro's last federal review, an extensive work plan has been activated for LEP. The PERC could help with new perspectives as Metro strives to make compliance work meaningful and not just about checking boxes. Metro's data research center is working on language data for the region. Luis Nava shared that Beaverton school district contains the highest number of languages spoken at 78. Next steps would be for the data research center to produce mapping tools with more demographic information such as race, ethnicity and income.

Patty Unfred shared briefly about Metro's new equity strategy project, recently adopted by Metro Council. This multi-year project will work to identify community needs and set a baseline for a future action plan. The equity strategy project is applicable to Metro's jurisdiction, working heavily

with community organizations to establish the work plan and is closely coordinated with Metro's Title VI work.

### **Committee's vision for the PERC**

This flip chart discussion expressed the committee's expectation and ideas for how they would like to work with Metro and the issues of interest.

- Build relationships with community advocates.
- Understand what is important to communities.
- Educate the public on issues, levels of government, Metro's role, and access.
- The community summit should be primarily about listening about what the community cares about.
- Equity.
- Assemble community peer groups based on issues or geography to gather to discuss how to better serve their communities and engage in problem solving for issues of interest to the peer group. Peer group information should be shared with decision makers.
- Take advantage of local knowledge and perspectives.
- Help decision makers be comfortable with disagreement.
- Establish measurements and expectations for content for annual report at the beginning of the cycle.
- Seek insight.
- Show public how input was used or affected a decision; this is an evaluation metric.
- Build relationships and trust through ongoing outreach.
- Use annual summit to engage true community leaders, connectors and influencers to learn how to best engage public.
- Make it easy for people to be engaged and provide input.
- Identify and connect with existing community groups and networks.
- Value diversity on committees and diverse input.
- Go to community gathering places and events.
- Access other email lists and sources of contacts.
- Rotate meetings through each county to build up to a regional summit.
- Provide useful information.
- Help people understand complex issues.
- Solicit information to help inform decisions and ensure input is used.
- Accountability.
- Make connections between local and regional issues.
- Be clear about feedback, close the loop and follow-up on how feedback is used.
- Allow open-ended comments.
- Establish consistent cycle of feedback, decision, report back, ask for more input.
- Work with other agencies and groups to develop best practices.
- Process to communicate with the Metro Council.

The committee will further discuss these ideas in future meetings.

### **Committee charge and ground rules**

Karen Withrow facilitated a discussion the draft bylaws and suggested the committee spend more time on how the committee will operate at the next meeting. Members can review the bylaws and send any comments to Heather Coston via email. Metro will compile comments and send out a red line version for the next meeting.

Section I through Section IV covers basic information previously shared with the committee. These sections echo previous sentiments that the PERC is strategic to the agency's public involvement plan and each committee member is vital in representing their own communities in addition to

themselves. Section V states Metro's support to the committee. Section VI establishes ground rules, most of which were demonstrated tonight.

The committee will spend more time in the next meeting on Section VII and Section VIII. Highlights for these sections include committee member consideration for when to reflect the group's opinions as opposed to personal opinions, directing all media contacts to Metro, how the group will come to consensus, sub-groups and meeting facilitation. Metro can facilitate meetings for the committee but the committee may decide to select a member to facilitate instead.

Sue Marshall concluded this discussion on how the committee will operate by suggesting the committee discuss how to advise the Metro Council directly. Greg Greenway recommended an annual report to Metro Council.

**Next steps**

Heather Coston concluded the meeting by discussing next steps, including a meeting in late February. Metro will re-send the Doodle poll requesting availability for the meeting. Committee members can send potential agenda items to Heather Coston at [heather.coston@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:heather.coston@oregonmetro.gov). Metro will also send more background information and public involvement guides discussed at this meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.