



AD HOC OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

MEETING AGENDA

May 9, 2016

Snohomish Senior Center

5:00-7:00 pm.

Meeting Goals

- Work with City staff members to collaborate on recommendations. Work in “Getting to Yes.”

5:00 Welcome and Meeting Overview

Margaret Norton-Arnold, Committee Facilitator

5:05 Working Collaboratively on the Recommendations: Discussion

Margaret with Larry Bauman and All Committee Members

6:40 Next Steps in Committee Process

Margaret

6:45 Public Comment

7:00 Adjourn

Notice – there will be a special Pre-Meeting of the Committee to learn about a potential new magazine that would be created by the City and distributed widely. This will be held at 4:30 for those who are interested.



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OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Snohomish Senior Center
506 Fourth Street

April 18, 2016
5:00 p.m.

Members Present:

Carroll Brown
Tom Merrill
Gary Ferguson
Mary Dessein
Braden Sigua
Colleen Dunlap
Adrian Duran
Margaret Norton-Arnold, Facilitator

Staff Present:

Larry Bauman, City Manager
Debbie Emge, Economic Dev. Director
Jennifer Olson, Finance Director
Angela Evans, Office Assistant II

Citizens/Others Present:

Michael Rohrscheib, Councilmember
One citizen was present

Welcome and Meeting Overview

The third of five scheduled meetings of the Open Government Committee began at 5:00 p.m. Ms. Norton-Arnold thanked the Committee for their work on the draft recommendations over the last month. This meeting's goal is to obtain thoughts and edits on the recommendations so Ms. Norton-Arnold can have a more complete and clear draft for Mr. Bauman to review and discuss with the Committee at the May 9 meeting.

Report and Discussion: Focus Group and Interview Research

Mr. Bauman provided the key findings and strategic recommendations resulting from the focus group research project to the Committee. Drew Lieberman, the key consultant from Strategies 360, was available by phone to answer questions. Conducting public safety forums was discussed as a way to engage citizens, for example, about the heroin problem. Mr. Bauman informed the Committee walking patrols will now be scheduled every Friday and Saturday night, not just during the summer months like last year. Mr. Bauman is hoping to hold the heroin forum in May. Ms. Dunlap suggested using posters around town to advertise the forums, perhaps at the trail, supermarkets or even at Starbucks. Mr. Brown felt using the City's parks, Centennial Trail and the Historic District to relay information would be successful.

Committee Review of Draft Recommendations Document

Ms. Norton-Arnold, the Committee and City staff discussed the following draft recommendations and provided thoughts and suggested edits:

1. Establish Consistent Visions and Missions for All Advisory Groups:

Ms. Dunlap suggested part 2 state “each City Department, Committee or Commission will develop...” She felt work begins at a department level long before Council, Boards or Commissions see it. A huge amount of work is done by staff within a department. Working with the same vision makes it more cohesive.

Mr. Brown agreed but does not want to focus on the nitty-gritty details making the recommendation cumbersome. The general concept is clear and it will provide guidance to the City Council. The recommendation asks all departments, commissions, boards and the council to function under the same vision.

The need for estimated dates of completion were discussed. Mr. Bauman agreed and offered to advise the Committee on the pace and timing.

Having a combined meeting for Council and its Boards and Commissions were discussed. Citizens would be invited as well.

2. Clearly Identify and Address Hot Button Issues:

Ms. Norton-Arnold suggested combining this recommendation with #4 - Broaden Notification Procedures. Mr. Ferguson agreed making the recommendations more concise makes it easier for everybody.

The recommendation of forming a citizen advisory team to assist in identifying hot button issues was suggested. Mr. Ferguson felt it may be problematic to try to form this team. Ms. Norton-Arnold suggested a sounding board that comes together on occasion to discuss and give feedback on what will get the citizens excited.

Mr. Sigua asked how hot button issues will be determined. In addition to signage, perhaps a survey could be sent in the mail. It would be a convenient way to get feedback from the community.

3. Implement Consistent and Standard Protocols

4. Broaden Notification Procedures

A discussion was held regarding communication/engagement techniques for projects and issues under consideration by the City. The idea of a standalone kiosk that is connected to the City was discussed, but it would be costly. The City’s website does serve as a kiosk and there are improvements underway to make it more interactive via a mobile app as well. Having a sign posted at public places (grocery stores, trail, farmers market) asking for feedback on topics and directing people to the City’s website was suggested.

Mr. Bauman advised City staff is working on a quarterly magazine which will include tear-out surveys on specific City issues. Citizens can fill out the survey and mail it back to the City. Mr. Bauman hopes to have follow-up forums on these topics.

5. Enhance Transparency in City Decision-Making

The proposed transparency procedures were discussed and were found to be helpful for the City to relay accountability when decisions are made affecting the citizens of Snohomish. Ms. Dunlap suggested the checklist follow entire projects, proving to citizens their input was considered in the decision making process. Mr. Brown suggested the name be changed to *decision making procedure*.

Mr. Bauman said the City is working on open portal data which would allow citizens to get raw data on how local government operates, for example, financial records, budget documents, warrants, etc. The goal is to give the public very open, easy access to this information. The Finance Department might be the first of these efforts, but down the road it could be done for Public Works and the Planning Department as well.

Ms. Dunlap suggested making meeting minutes more readable and having a drop down menu allowing someone to skip to the section of the agenda which interests them.

The option to make council meetings available by video was revisited. Mr. Bauman said the City is thinking about making council meeting audio available online, which would be less expensive and less problematic. Citizens can listen to the audio and fast forward to topics of interest.

Ms. Emge said City staff will soon be learning how to create “smart” PDF’s. These documents will have a table of contents making it much easier for citizens to navigate City documents. This discussion item will be presented to Council on May 3 and staff hopes to have it implemented by the end of the year.

Ms. Dessen said perhaps the procedure should be named *accountability criteria*.

6. Expand the Use of Volunteers

Discussion was had regarding the use of volunteers in a more meaningful way by utilizing professional skill sets. It was determined liability, union issues, and the need for a hired volunteer coordinator would need to be considered. Further discussion is needed on this recommendation.

7. Offer New Venues and Formats that Actively Encourage Greater Citizen Participation

Overall, the Committee felt this recommendation included some great ideas for activities which encouraged greater citizen participation.

8. Communicate the Key Issues and Why People Should Care About Them

Ms. Norton-Arnold suggested this recommendation be combined with some others. Mr. Merrill agreed and felt there is a successful way to combine the recommendations into three areas; channels, processes, and how we use them. Ms. Norton-Arnold asked Mr. Merrill to send her his idea of what this looks like.

Mr. Brown felt it wasn't necessary for the City to show a "con" on every issue. People who are opposed will surface and express the con. Mr. Merrill suggested the City show alternatives instead of cons.

Ms. Dunlap suggested an impact comparison handout so informed decisions can be made, avoiding anger from the community, or an information file, perhaps online, which is kept up to date and is from start to finish.

9. Improving the City's Website

The Committee agreed this is an important, ongoing recommendation. The City already has plans in place to improve the website.

10. Incorporate Social Media into City Communications

Mr. Sigua recommended the *Experience Snohomish* app include more information on meetings, agendas and hot button issues. In addition, a discussion forum should also be added.

Mr. Bauman advised part of the upcoming website design includes a new City app.

Mr. Merrill suggested the app's name be changed to something clear which draws citizens in. Mr. Bauman suggested a "name the app" contest.

Ms. Emge said the mobile app will be very similar to the website as the same designer is doing both. Also, any changes made to the website will show up automatically on the app. Staff anticipates the first version of the app being developed within a month or two.

11. Create a Signage Program

The Committee did not have any suggestions or edits to this draft recommendation and agree it is an important part of the goal of this Committee.

12. De-fog City Communications

The research on this draft recommendation was primarily done to show the readability of the City's website and for the staff to be aware of the reading grade level of the language included in some sections of the website.

Stepping Back to the Bigger Picture

Ms. Norton-Arnold asked the Committee if there were any big ideas missing from the document. Ms. Dunlap would like to see more about citizen feedback and two-way discussions. Citizens can speak at council meetings, but there isn't a dialogue. There needs to be a venue for dialogue between citizens and the City. She felt there needs to be a method in place showing citizens they have been heard and considered.

Public Comment

None

Next Steps

Ms. Norton-Arnold will be re-drafting and combining applicable recommendations and sending them out to City staff and the Committee for further input.

Mr. Bauman will be taking a look at the revised drafts and come up with specific questions to the Committee for the May 9 meeting. He will be presenting the final drafts at the Council workshop on July 19 and asked Committee members to attend.

Ms. Emge let the Committee know there will be a town hall meeting/community forum on May 21 at the library. She encourages members to attend.

Ms. Dunlap suggested this ad hoc Committee meet in 6 to 8 months after the last meeting to gauge how things are going.

Mr. Bauman also asked if the next meeting could start early for the magazine consultant to speak to the Committee and get feedback on how the magazine will fit into the Committee's recommendations. The Committee agreed with starting the May meeting at 4:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.