

STRATEGIC PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SPAC)
CITY OF WASHOUGAL
FEBRUARY 16, 2012

I. CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 PM

II. ATTENDING:

Trevor Evers	Betsy Williams
Bill Macrae-Smith	Bobby Holley
Claude Rorabaugh	Maddie Down
Molly Coston	Shena Frentsos
Susan Hullinger	Terry Babin
Tina Bair	Tom Crozier
Sean Guard	David Scott
Micki Mulder	

III. INTRODUCTION:

Trevor Evers welcomed all attendees to the first Strategic Planning Advisory Committee Meeting (SPAC). He introduced Betsy Williams, Sean Guard, David Scott and Micki Mulder as staff partners. Trevor quickly reviewed the process to date within the Strategic Planning Department beginning with the Council's decision to create the assignment, to the public engagement (PE) campaign, and finishing with the personal business owner interviews. Once the PE campaign was completed the department proceeded with the advisory committee selections resulting in the members present this evening. Trevor then introduced Mayor Guard.

IV. WELCOME FROM MAYOR GUARD:

Mayor Guard first asked the committee members to give a brief personal introduction:

Susan Hullinger – formal federal employee – resident 1 year

Tom Crozier – former paper mill employee – resident over 30 years

Tina Bair – former City of Washougal employee – resident most of life

Bobby Holley – former Marine, works for medical device company – resident

Maddie Down – Senior, Washougal High – resident entire life

Bill Macrae-Smith – former banker & Commissioner at Port of Camas-Washougal – resident over 40 years

Micki Mulder - Executive Assistant for Washougal Public Works Department

Shena Frentsos – owns and operates Edward Jones office – resident 3 years

Terry Babin – retired – resident 16 years

Betsy Williams – co-facilitator, former Assistant City Manager for City of Vancouver (retired) with a background in strategic planning

Claude Rorabaugh – investor – former Council & Planning Commission member – resident 20 years

Molly Coston – former Council Member, Mayor Pro Tem, CTRAN Chair, Liaison for Parks & Cemetery Boards - resident 12 years

David Scott – City Administrator, former City of Vancouver as Director for Development Services, worked for City of Tigard and City of Los Angeles – resident 2 years

Mayor Guard welcomed all participants and thanked Betsy for assisting in Joanne's absence. He noted that there are a wide range of interests represented by the committee. All members are Washougal residents and many also serve on various local committees or with local organizations and will be bringing those perspectives to the table. Mayor Guard congratulated Maddie, from Washougal High School, for her participation on a committee that is tasked with forming where the City will be going for the next generation and beyond. They will construct the "road map" for the next 20-30 years for where the City invests its time, infrastructure, money and where people are placed and what is important to this community. The Mayor and elected officials are not directly participating in this program so that the local community can bring their vision and plans for the City forward for action. Where do they believe this community should be going? Trevor will be bringing the information gathered from the public outreach portion of this plan to the table, but the Mayor stated that he believes that this was only the beginning of the intended course of action. He stated that while there is a process that Trevor and Betsy will be guiding the committee through, and while it all looks very neat and tidy on a calendar, that the committee should be ready for additional changes once the first draft of the plan is released. More information is likely to come forward at that time and the committee should be ready to hear from additional residents and that this input may result in changes in the initial timeline, thereby extending the process. Mayor Guard suggested that the SPAC treat the current timeline dates as "soft" dates in light of potential public input. He again thanked the members for their participation in this effort.

David thanked all the committee members for taking time out of their busy lives and schedules to participate. It is a commitment to helping out the local community. David has no intent to influence the committee, but will assist where asked to do so. He is looking forward to the final plan findings.

The Mayor iterated that there are many points of views being brought to the table from all the committee members; help each other through the construction of this plan. This plan has nothing to do where the elected officials which to see the City going, but what the citizens want. What is best for the community? He also looks forward to their results.

V. BREAK:

Trevor then called a 10-minute break for refreshments.

VI. OVERVIEW:

Trevor directed the committee's attention to the section of their notebook that lists the responsibilities of each member. He read all of the requirements and stressed that the current list is a draft and that he and Betsy invite input for changes and additions. It is open for discussion. The Finance Director will be coming in at one of the April meetings to give the committee a sense of the present and future bonding capacity for current and future programs and services. A Strength/Weakness/Opportunity/Challenge (SWOC) analysis will be the focus of the committee between March and April meetings for review and make recommendations. The current intent is to close out the process in June, but the Mayor did allow for additional time due to the possibility of additional input and changes in the project timeline. Trevor asked that all email communications regarding the feedback portions of this project be sent as well to Micki as she will be able to direct all communications to a specific file and collate the results in spreadsheet format. Claude asked that all email attachments be sent in Word format. Micki assured him that the current system at the City is a 2003 version of Word programs but invited all members to let her know if an attachment does not come through correctly and she will send it hard copy. Trevor

went on to state that Staff realizes that the schedule has been moved around a great deal and every effort will be made for inclusion of members that cannot attend the meetings. Also, as the project nears completion and the committee members have more interaction with the community Trevor counseled the members to contact staff should assistance be needed. It is the intent that the Strategic Plan be adopted by Resolution, but there will be time to choose the individual committee members to participate in the advocacy portion of the project. Trevor then briefed the committee on the operating principals and again urged the committee to review and bring additions and changes to the table. There will be email reminders and updates in between the longer periods between meetings. There were no additions brought forward at this time.

VII. GROUP DISCUSSION – WASHOUGAL COMMUNITY:

Betsy took a few moments to encourage input from the committee members on the responsibilities and overview draft. She emphasized that this process is intended to determine the sense of the community and where they want the City to go and what they believe the government's role should be during the project. Determining whether the task or service is a municipal responsibility or a stakeholder responsibility will be important. This plan is intended to be a community process. She cautioned the committee that getting the community involved is a difficult process, especially in an area where citizens work outside of the City. They spend a lot of time outside of the community and don't have a lot to "give" when they get back. Usually such effort goes to their children and their activities and needs. The committee members have the "ear" of the local community and will be the City's eyes and ears and bring to the Council what the local people think and want. Trying to get people engaged will be very important.

Also she told the committee that the operating principals were called a draft to allow all members to determine the directives that will govern the operation of the group as a whole in a manner that all can work comfortably.

Terry asked what specifically staff wanted the committee to achieve during their discussions. Betsy assured him she was about to discuss that expectation. She went on to outline the work to be accomplished: a mission statement, a vision statement, values for the community and organization, and ultimately the goals/priorities that will be included in the plan. What are the values that this plan should be based on? What is the vision of this community? What are the priorities? What are the financial capabilities? The plan is intended to be visionary but should be rooted in reality as to what is feasible. When the draft is completed, it is likely that the community involvement and public dialogue will show more interest in the overall plan. That can mean repeating prior processes in order to include the new input/information. It is always a challenge with multiple points of view and perspectives and will require collaboration to form a joint vision that all members can stand behind.

Betsy asked for the thoughts of the committee on:

Where are we today and where do we want to be 30 years from now? How do we reconcile these different questions? What would you tell a visitor coming to town for the first time? What is Washougal like?

Tina: It's a small town.

Susan: Clean air.

Molly: Very safe and friendly.

Claude: We have some great parks with the River, both Rivers and the parks are very kid friendly.

Maddie: I guess a little bit negatively: there are not a lot of things for young people to do. There are some activities that you can form (join) through the schools, but not a lot of places to go in town, most go to Vancouver or Portland (teenagers).

Bill: Even for adults, there is not a lot of local entertainment after the sidewalks are "rolled up".

Susan: No shopping.

Claude: Limited shopping.

Shena: I find myself describing Camas more than Washougal. Because of the way the downtown is, with the nice structures, trees and the shops that are lining it.

Molly: There is, and has long been, a negative perception of Washougal, even from its own residents. And for many years among the school kids, that attend the schools. But this perception is changing. I see Washougal as a diamond in the rough. We have more potential amenities than Camas ever dreamt of and 20 years ago it was a blue collar, mill town. We are about 20 years behind what Camas is today. But they have some real community support and functions and togetherness. That is what I am hoping that we can work toward that as well.

Betsy: That leads to the next question; and it is getting into the vision of the work, what is the potential for this community? But right now, if you want to take someone anywhere you take them into Camas?

Tina: Or to 192nd.

Susan: Or into East Vancouver.

Tina: But we are the "Gateway to the Gorge" and you do go up the gorge and it is gorgeous. But if you want to go to a nice restaurant or go for somewhere for dinner, etc., you go into Vancouver, there is nothing out here. At one time there was the Parker House but that closed years ago. I can remember the Mill taking all of their clients to the Parker House when I was growing up.

Claude: Well, in deference, there are a couple of places to go, good restaurants in town. But if I want to take a client who is visiting to dinner I take them into Vancouver or Portland unless they like Los Dos Compadres.

Bobby: I deal with this all the time; this is very common for me with no family in the Northwest. We get visitors from all over the country. I can echo all of these comments. I usually start out in Camas. Unless it is an outdoor activity, and I couldn't agree with Molly more, it is definitely a diamond, heading out Washougal River Road, outdoor activities, the gorge, the docks. But the activities are limited. Especially for youth. I hear that from my sons all the time.

Claude: When my son was in high school, he used to go into Portland for lunch. But I work with people in San Francisco and they know about Motor Cross. I am not a Motor Cross enthusiast, but there is a familiarity with that sport.

Betsy: That's something that is big here? I am not familiar with, Motor Cross?

Tom: It is one of the national tracks.

Molly: In the past couple of years they have televised it nationally 2-3 years ago – it's a big draw. About 30,000- 40,000 a year.

Tina: But the problem is that they all go up to the track, but we need to draw them back down here, into town.

Betsy: So this is a huge event?

Tom: But it is one weekend a year. There are smaller events through the year, but they are not as largely attended. There is only one big event a year with 20-30,000 a year.

(many overlapping comments by multiple members, they sound positive and excited about the topic)

Tina: But it all happens up at the track, there is nothing down here to draw them back into town.

Claude: Do the local restaurants do better business at that time? I am usually out of town on that weekend on vacation.

Tina: No.

Claude: So economically...

Molly: But the Best Western Hotel is packed.

Tina: Yes that has just happened recently.

Claude: The gas stations do well.

Tina: Yes. But as far as the rest goes, they just head up there and out of town when it was done.

Betsy: What are some other things that you might tell someone that wanted to relocate in Washougal?

Tom: Well, it's the other side of the coin. We tell people that it is a quiet town with a lot of great outdoor activities. It is accessible to the airport, downtown Portland and all of the culture that goes with that.

Betsy: So you take advantage of being a small town with close proximity to big town urban amenities.

Claude: You're within 15 miles of the airport, Vancouver....

Betsy: What about employment opportunities here?

Molly: The School District, the Port and different businesses in the Port, Pendleton Mill....

Betsy: I made an assumption earlier on that was that a lot of people who live here that aren't retired work elsewhere. Is that pretty true?

Claude: Houses are affordable here. You can get a decent sized lot and house if you want that.

Tina: Washougal was once thought to be one of the bedroom communities to Portland....but this area has grown. When I started working for the City, there were approximately 3400 that lived here in 1985, and now we are at 14,000.

Betsy: What about your children growing up here and going through the Washougal School system? Evidently, they are becoming successful. What about the school system – is it a plus here?

Tom: In comparison to Camas we are viewed as a poor system. I would say that Camas is the superior school system, but there has been a great deal of improvement in the last 20 years. We have low income housing and kids with special needs, more than Camas. We do a good job with the limited resources and available services. I would say Camas is superior but ours is excellent.

Molly: It is hard to compare Washougal to Camas because honestly, Camas has one of the best school systems in the state. We are often compared to them and they are nationally recognized. There are people that specifically move to Camas for the School system. But if you compare the Washougal School system to Portland districts, it's superior. We don't have a lot of problems that the Portland schools have.

Betsy: It is disappointing to see Portlanders moving over here purely for the schools.

Tina: The people over here realize how important the school districts are, passing the levies are important and they know that. Washougal took some time to catch up.

Tom: It took a while for the city to realize it through the new growth. With the change from a blue collar town where education was not valued. As we grew, we brought in high income, educated people. They moved into the area and they know how important education is.

Maddie: A lot of the problems stem from the size of our schools. Camas is twice our size and so the competition among the students is different. Because of Washougal's size there are not as many advanced placement classes available for Washougal students by comparison. But there has been improvement in the last 5 years. My sister graduated in 2009 and had more problems and had more trouble with being challenged than I have.

Bill: We have a new Superintendent in our School District and I am really impressed with how she is focused on improving this District.

Betsy: How long has she been here?

Bill: Just a year.

Betsy: Okay that is a pretty good description of Washougal today. Let us say that you want the same person to come back 20 years from now. What differences would you like to see? How would Washougal look? What would it be like?

Bobby: An actively involved community. Listening to you describe how to get people involved, that is the reason I came forward for this process. I believe that the more involved and active the members of the community are it lowers crime, increases levy passage and it increases the positive occurrences. Get involved and get it taken care. What I would like to see in 20 years is a lot of community events; parades and gatherings reminiscent of the 40's and 50's. I grew up in a small town and I remember all of the small events we had, the festivals, and all the involvement. Pride in the community, it was clean because people were proud of their town.

Tina: Also, I would like to see that we have a town where it is not necessary to have someone, especially the elderly, into Vancouver. That the services, clothing, groceries and restaurants and retail opportunities are here covering our personal needs. I grew up with this type of stores available. I walked to work everyday and could walk to the store and home and back to work. Now you have to get in the car and go somewhere else to shop.

Betsy: So you would like to see more retail and see a more "walk-able" community? So that people are not so "car dependent"?

Tina: Yes, some of that.

Claude: My thought about downtown is that is where Safeway should have been built – downtown retail. It is one mile from my home to City hall. But the stakeholders of the community need to be employed in the community. But not just retail. Industrial, manufacturing opportunities for tech jobs here. Retail jobs will not allow you to buy a house. Generally, people that own property tend to take care of that property. If you have a stake in the community that you own a piece of, and are employed in town and are not stressed by a long commute, there is more participation in the community. That kind of community goes back to the 30's and 40's where your folks worked close to home, shopped close to home and going to the Mall was a big event.

Tina: And you felt safer in that sort of community in those times. It was easier to let the kids walk to the store or go to the movies, there were fewer worries. You were not worried about someone picking your child up off of the street.

Betsy: Is that a big concern here?

Group: No more than elsewhere.

Trevor: Concerning having amenities in closer, the local busing CTRAN has limited routes in East County. They travel on only the main arterials for the most part. Any thought on that? What about mass transit?

Tina: We should look into that. As you get older you do not always feel as comfortable driving.

Bobby: I took it a couple of times so I would know how it worked. I am an educated and intelligent person and it confused me. I really feel that older people would be unable to use the system in place. I asked "would my grandmother be able to do this?" and came to the conclusion that absolutely not, she would not be able to use this system.

Claude: Bobby would you propose that the City utilize its own mini transit system? On demand or limited runs between Camas and Washougal.

Bobby: I don't think I have enough information but I think it is something that could be looked into. I looked at CTRAN and tried to use the system to encourage my kids to use it, but I will have to educate myself more on this system.

Betsy: So what I am hearing is that regardless of who uses the system, we need to consider a more robust transportation system? Even for youth that do not have cars yet.

Maddie: I think that there would be youth involvement. It is easier to get around. Even now, kids buy their own gas and we limit ourselves and save it up for a weekend or event. I started driving later and thought how convenient it would be to walk to say, the library. Or to have a transit system like the do in big cities where you go everywhere.

Bobby: A connective trail system. Everyone could use that. There are trails now and they are well utilized. It would be more productive if they went into locations (linked) in town.

Betsy: So, if you were King of the World, and could make it happen, how else would Washougal look and be different in 20 -30 years?

Trevor: It is a bit pre-meditated to ask these questions before the Finance Director is brought in until about 6 weeks into the process. (laughter)

Tina: Not necessarily. When you have all of these nice amenities in town you draw people in, your tax base goes up. The money is there and it is a win/win situation.

Tom: Trevor what is our maximum population limit expectancy? 25,000?

Trevor: About 25,000...

Tom: We are limited in our growth capability. We are constrained by Camas and the Gorge and the river. So we can't grow indefinitely.

Betsy: What do you think would be a good population for Washougal?

Claude: Are we talking about increasing density? Removing single family homes and putting up multifamily?

Tom: We are already high density.

Trevor pointed out the City limits and the UGB to the Committee utilizing the large aerial map on the wall.

Molly: UGB, the Urban Growth Boundary, every city is required by the Growth Management Act to provide or start to consider potential areas where you expect growth to occur and provide services in those areas where you see the potential for growth to occur, (growth being driven by the private sector as much as the public). The City would have to want to annex all of those areas in.

Trevor: Annexation can be initiated by the parcel owner or the City inside the UGB.

Shena: When I look at the map, the business part of me I think how can we attract businesses to the area? That is how we will grow. One of the reasons that Camas has such a good school district is because they have attracted big corporations and are getting that tax base. How come as a City we have not followed that path to a degree that will attract such large businesses? Is that a vision that we don't want as a City? But here is an opportunity for us. Yes, we want to keep the small town feel but bring the business money in to support the small shop owners.

Tina: There have been a lot of revitalization projects in the past without too much success. What about Outlet Malls as an idea? Bring the business in and draw in the tax base.

Betsy: You need a good balance between living wage jobs with retail. But how do you draw in that large business?

Shena: Yes look at The Dalles, they brought in Google.

Tina: Sun River has all sorts of shops and restaurants. I asked why we can't do that.

Molly: But they are a big tourist town, they have skiing and the tourism that brings nearby.

Bobby: We are missing out on the traffic that goes past into the Gorge.

Claude: You get skiing, windsurfing and folks like that which do not stop in town to eat or buy something. What makes Hillsboro successful – they are near Portland. What makes Lynnwood successful? They are looking at putting in a convention center and turning it into a convention location because of its nearness to Portland. Would this City consider that option? We are close to the Airport; we have all this natural beauty. What types of industries do we want so that we can employ locals and maximize our return on investment?

Tina: I was always thankful to work locally. I didn't have the long commute and could contribute to the community in additional ways.

Terry Babin: We need the right sized City Government. What do I mean by right sized? It is a Government that provides those things that the citizenry cannot provide for themselves. Where it requires a common collective effort and is not so big or involved that it is not supportable. It is affordable. My tax dollars will be used in a way that will make the community better and be part of the vision of the community. I see the paradox. How do we grow but maintain the small town atmosphere? I saw the preliminary results of the survey. The more you have small town flavor, the

more people that want to come and live here. It is a Catch – 22. What is the proper role of the City government? What can/should the City do? What should it do to partnerships? What other things does it need to do, whether it is public relations or other non-cost measures? There are things that cost money and things you encourage that cost others money.

Betsy: That is a good segue into Trevor's presentation describing the current City government and the services it provides now.

Trevor gave a Power Point Presentation regarding an overview of the current structure of the City of Washougal and the services provided. All members were provided with worksheets to follow along. Trevor encouraged the members to go over the additional information not covered in the presentation at their convenience and bring any questions that they may have to the next meeting.

Betsy asked for feedback from the group on how they think the first meeting went. Knowing this will keep them productive. Terry enjoyed the sandwiches. Tom expected to hear a little more about the process that would be utilized for the plan. Betsy will add detail to the next agenda of what the members will be doing and seeing in order to move through the process. The only homework assignment from this meeting is to review the operating principles and bring them to the next meeting. The next agenda will include a better overview of the process and committee involvement. The survey results and public engagement information will be presented at the next meeting for comparison.

Molly was complimentary of the number of participants and the vast array of backgrounds involved in this process and committee. It is a great beginning.

Maddie appreciated the overview and found it informative.

Claude complimented Maddie on her participation as the youngest member of the committee and the fresh perspective she brings to the table.

The next SPAC meeting is March 1st from 6-8 p.m. A reminder to all members - please bring the notebook to each meeting!