

CITY NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
Draft Minutes for the February 22, 2010 meeting

District Council representatives in attendance: Paul Stoms, (East District); Janis Maloney, (East District); Robert Drucker, (Ballard District); Nicole Franklin, (Magnolia/Queen Anne District and CNC Secretary); Jim Del Cielo, (Southwest District and CNC Vice-chair); Chas Redmond, (Southwest District and CNC Chair); Dennis Ross, (Southwest District); Matthew Stubbs, (Greater Duwamish District); Chris Leman, (Lake Union District and CNC Budget Committee Chair); Irene Wall, (Northwest District and Neighborhood Planning Committee Chair); Sharon Sobers, (Central District); Laine Ross, (Downtown District Council and Neighborhood Matching Fund Committee Chair)

Guests in attendance: Ted Divina, DON; Peter Hahn, Seattle Department of Transportation Director; Esther Handy, Council member O'Brien's Office, Brian Ramey, Eastlake

Agenda and January Minutes

Were approved

Peter Hahn/Seattle Department of Transportation Director, to be confirmed

Peter expects to be confirmed by the Council in March. He has lived in Seattle for 30 years and formerly worked for the City of Renton and Snohomish County and has a background in engineering and city planning. Peter passed out a handout highlighting the accomplishments of the bicycle and pedestrian master plans since 2007 and 2009. Peter met with Kevin Desmond, Chair of Metro, to discuss the electric trolleys in Seattle that are nearing replacement. Peter plans to work with Metro to ensure that the city continues to extend or expand the use the electric trolley buses.

Q: How does your experience working for Snohomish County translate into helping you with the position as Director of SDOT in Seattle?

A: Pointed out that in Snohomish County, transit was a huge topic and great deal of the issues related to Sound Transit and Light rail were essentially covered by the cities and not the jurisdiction of the County per se. The City of Renton had major projects like a bike and trails master plan that he was actively involved with. He is excited to work on the projects in Seattle like the incoming rapid ride buses and the street cars.

Q: There are some concerns that SDOT does not respond to the neighborhoods' concerns regarding traffic signals.

A Pointed out that the City is required to spend \$1.5 million a year in the neighborhood street fund (NSF) and Mayor Nickles changed how that was done. Concern that there are not enough smaller projects in the NSF. Further concern that non-arterial streets are not funded by the levy and they are further deteriorating. Also, the people would like for the City to address the damage that is caused to roads and bridges from extra heavy buses, but thus far the former Mayor and Council have shown little interest in the topic.

Q: The backlog of the NSF is huge and with revenues on the decline there will have to be reductions.

A. Believes Bridging the Gap (BTG) is a step in the right direction for the City. Mayor McGinn has publically stated that he would like to put a levy on the ballot and ask the voters what to do at some point.

Q: Have you assessed the staffing needs and functions at SDOT? Is there the right distribution of talent; is it effective? Is it too big of a bureaucracy?

A: Still in the process of figuring these issues out, including the staffing needs for things like BTG. Will inquire whether there are, in fact, too many higher level managers that are not needed.

Q: Two concerns regarding livability in Seattle. One, is the City willing to work with other agencies to make garbage pickup more efficient? Two, will the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) require that developers make spaces for bicycles?

A: Working closely with DPD Director Diane Sugimura in terms of building and zoning requirements to accommodate these issues, like spaces for bicycles.

Q: Are you going to work out the parking situation at King Street Station?

A: Yes. If the station is to be truly multi-modal, we will need parking spaces for cars and bicycles and will look at the King Street Station parking schematic closely.

Comment: The East District has found SDOT to be slow to respond to citizen concerns. Specifically, the City recently installed an island on East Madison with inadequate notice to the affected citizens. The trouble with the island is that it is dangerous. A plea was made for SDOT to pay closer attention to the concerns of the neighbors.

Comment: It was pointed out that in Ballard, some private developers who cut open streets for development have failed in their duty to fill potholes and otherwise restore the quality of the streets post-development.

Q: When will the construction for Rapid Ride begin? How long will it take? What will the traffic look like?

A: Pointed out that the planning is being done by Metro. Unsure of specific details yet, but planning is underway this year.

Comment: Ref Lindmark, Co-Chair of CNC's Transportation Committee and employee of Metro pointed out that the design work putting in stations is happening this year with the expectation that Rapid Ride will begin the end of 2011.

Q: As the County threatens to shut it down, what are the City's plans regarding the South Park Bridge?

A: The Mayor and Council support the project and agree that they have to find a way to handle the County's threat to shut the bridge down.

Q: Is the Mayor going to listen to you, Peter?

A: He recently met the Mayor for the first time. He pointed out that the Mayor has strong opinions and a definite priority and vision. Specifically, Mayor McGinn believes that the answer to the transportation problems in the City is not more roads. The Mayor is not looking to Peter for guidance when it comes to his vision. It will be Peter's job to ensure the Department is doing a good job, including making sure the roads are safe for pedestrians and to include more transit.

Q: Are the Mayor's goals accomplishable?

A: Yes. He quoted Councilmember Conlin who said "the days of the car being the master are over." It is the Mayor's belief that now is the time to act on a transportation plan that is not centered on the vehicle and building more roads. When finances are at a lull, transit should rise to the top as more economical policy.

Comment: The communities want to be involved in the City's transportation plans and have historically been left out of the process.

R: Agreed. Peter shared a story with the body about how he recently discovered a problematic pothole in Queen Anne and how his Department responded quickly, but filled the wrong pothole. This is why people have to be included --- the City and people have to work together.

Q: Will Mayor McGinn continue the Pothole Ranger program established by his predecessor?

A: Yes. 99% of potholes in the City are fixed within 48 hours and fixing potholes will be given the same priority by the new administration as it was with the old.

Q: There is a growing shortage of citizen generated projects. Two years ago, the former Mayor had a way to allow for the people to suggest citizen generated projects. What is Mayor McGinn's position on them? Hope that SDOT is not scared by citizen generated projects.

A: Agreed that citizen generated projects are important. In fact, the bicycle master plan and the pedestrian master plan both had citizen committees that proposed projects that are currently in the backlogs.

2010 Workplan

The draft was not distributed in time for the meeting due to the absence of Veronica Sherman-King. Thus, this will be circulated prior to and discussed at the March meeting.

Committee Reports

Neighborhood Planning Committee/Irene Wall:

NPAC had its final meeting in January and Irene provided an overview on the issues that were drawn out at NPAC. One important issue concerned the validation process and the need for better clarification of the neighborhood design guidelines and design review process. (SORRY-this is what I missed) Another issue that came up was how to treat the City's growth targets at urban centers. The consensus was that when growth targets are created, there must be some mechanism to allow people to weigh in on the growth targets of the City. NPAC also spent a great deal of time discussing how to improve communication between the City and the Citizens regarding neighborhood planning. The mechanisms for outreach were hotly debated with the focus being on what works. The conclusion to be had was that different outreach mechanisms may work better in different districts and that all methods should be tried. The outreach dollars should be spread out among different mechanisms such as email, mail, and the money should be maxed out. There was a certain level of inefficiency with outreach, i.e. sometimes groups will have their own lists of citizens for outreach that does not get communicated signifying there is room for improvement in outreach.

Irene then answered several of the body's follow-up questions.

Q: Is NPAC implying that trouble with community outreach is a sign that DON is not doing its job? Outreach is not a science and public organizations do struggle with outreach.

A: NPAC is not saying that DON is failing completely, but the conclusion here and DON likewise willingly accepts that it could have done better and has learned for the future. There is also recognition that it is difficult to do three neighborhood plans in one year. The bottom line is that there is always room for improvement.

C: Pointed out that the trouble may be the fact that the City is engaging in a central planning method for neighborhood plans, unlike that used in the 1990s. Centralized planning did not work in the Soviet Union and will not work here.

Q: Who came up with the criteria for DON to determine which neighborhood plans would be next?

A: A criteria that is very important for DON to determine where to do neighborhood planning is willingness. All recognized that willingness on the part of the neighborhood is critical and the planning has to be done in neighborhoods where the people want it done. Never really came up with an answer beyond that.

Q: The SW District, on its own initiative, chose to review three neighborhood plans. The goal was to look at the entire area, including urban villages, integrated with rapid ride and to be developed property and have a sense by November of where it will want its neighborhood plans to go. Is this a reasonable approach?

A: Yes, although the approach outlined was an approach to leadership and not outreach. Using District Councils in the neighborhood planning process did come up in the discussion at NPAC. Irene endorses the idea.

Q: If willingness to be engaged in the neighborhood planning process was the critical criteria, why was Ballard not selected as it was very engaged in the selection process?

A: NPAC was not involved in the selection. Did engage in a ranking of six neighborhoods. The representative from Ballard expressed nervousness. Also, in ranking the neighborhoods, NPAC wanted at least one of the neighborhoods to not be light rail affected.

Q: Seems that Councilmembers O'Brien and Clark have reticence around the validation issue. What is NPAC's view on validation?

A: NPAC is done now and Council never did respond to the issues concerning validation and consultants.

Q: What's next?

A: Nothing really. NPAC is an advisory board. The validation subcommittee came up with a short recommendation drawn largely from the 1998 document. We agreed that validation comes from the process and that we have to have a process designed to engage people.

Comment: The CNC can say anything it wants about validation and other areas in a letter.

Budget Committee/Chris Leman: Thanked everybody for their participation in the Budget Conference. The thank you letters have not been sent out yet. Copies of the program were handed out. The written evaluations were by and large very positive.

Neighborhood Matching Fund Committee/Laine Ross: The Citywide Review Team will have the list of the projects to the CNC for the March meeting. Laine pointed out that the open house process was changed this year and is being test driven.

A comment was made that the District Councils should still be permitted to do their own review of the NMF projects.

Laine reported that she would draft a letter to go on record that the CNC is not happy with the new set up and the letter will be copied to Council, DON and the Mayor.

The new plan is staff driven, but the letter will express that understaffing of DON effects neighborhoods and their role.

Transportation Committee/Ref Lindmark: Metro received the CNC's letter on the electric trolley and found it useful and helpful. The Committee will continue to work on the electric trolley bus issue. There will be an upcoming public comment forum on transit 20-40. Orca cards are free until March 1.

Executive Committee: Chas will continue his tour of the District Councils and plans to visit each one twice. The Executive Committee is planning an outreach activity similar to a gathering of District Councils that will, in part, help District Councils that were left out of the audit.