

## City of Boulder

### Public Participation Working Group

September 19, 2016

### PPWG MEETING # 1

### SUMMARY

#### In Attendance

**PPWG Attendees:** Darvin Ayre, DeAnne Butterfield, Michael Caplan, Carol Cogswell, Sean Collins, Ann Cooper, Sandra Diaz, Lisa Harris, Marjorie Lerner, Claire Riley, Brady Robinson, Bill Shrum and Seth Spielman

**City Council Representative:** Lisa Morzel

**City Staff:** Jean Gatzka, Amanda Nagl, Patrick Von Keyserling

**CDR Facilitators:** Jonathan Bartsch and Taber Ward

#### Meeting #1 Summary

##### Welcome and Introductions:

City manager Jane Brautigam welcomed the group and highlighted the importance of the work of the PPWG. Jane noted that the City looks forward to recommendations from PPWG to increase dialogue and ensure that citizens feel heard.

PPWG participants, CDR facilitators, members of the public and City Staff and Council introduced themselves and addressed the following questions:

- Who are you and what motivated you to serve on the PPWG?
- What is one goal you have for the PPWG process?

##### Agenda Review:

The group reviewed the agenda and was given an opportunity to modify or comment. The agenda suggested the following topics:

PPWG Operating Protocols  
PPWG Vision  
PPWG Meeting Framework

## Public Comment Period

The group requested adding breaks to the agenda going forward. Otherwise, no additions or changes to the agenda.

**\*\*Note\*\*** In the future, at the end of each meeting, facilitators will check in with PPWG to see what topics should be covered in next meeting agenda. Facilitators will then draft the next agenda and send it out to the PPWG for comment before finalizing. The Framework will outline the overall topics along with a timeframe for such topics, guiding the development of agendas.

### **Operating Protocols Review:**

- Purpose and Charge
- Responsibilities and Obligations
- Decision-Making
- Working Group Process
- Discussion Guidelines
- Observers and Public Involvement
- Communication
- Meeting Schedule

The Draft Operating Protocols suggested the following as the purpose and charge of the PPWG as outlined by the City of Boulder, Update on Public Participation Initiative and motion to appoint one Council Member to a Citizen Participation Planning Committee, May 3, 2016, <https://documents.bouldercolorado.gov/weblink8/0/doc/132768/Electronic.aspx>.

#### **Purpose**

To develop meaningful and actionable recommendations that improve dialogue between the city (Council, Boards and staff) and community members, resulting in better decision making and improved relationships.

#### **Charge**

- **Review and assess current city processes.**
- **Identify best practices, successes along with lessons learned from previous city efforts.**
- **Make recommendations:**
  - for improvements for civic engagement processes which foster success
  - about possible modifications to public participation processes that improve the effectiveness of city decision making
  - to promote mutual respect and clarify responsibilities of the city and community members to engage with and listen to each other more effectively.

**Group Discussion: The PPWG proposed the following changes to the purpose and charge:**

#### **1. Purpose:**

- a. The word “better” is vague – need a new word or need to define “better”; more efficient and/or effective?
- b. The focus of the PPWG should include improving dialogue between residents of Boulder as well, not just between City and residents. Need for more community conversation and a less “vertical” decision making processes.

**2. Charge:**

- a. Change: “Make recommendations to the City Council and Boards about possible modifications to public participation processes that improve the effectiveness of city decision making;” to “Make recommendations to the City Council, Boards **and community** about possible modifications to public participation processes that improve the effectiveness of city decision making.”
- b. Add the importance of “active listening” to let people know they have been heard.
- c. Since a large part of the charge is around assessment of current processes – we don’t want to get caught up in replay – we don’t want to rehash too many passed decisions and focus on the future. It is important to fly at 30,000 feet. Let’s not get bogged down rehashing specific city projects, how do we learn from past, and how do we bring that forward with a goal of our recommendations.
- d. Can’t look at 30,000 feet without being on the ground and taking off. Interested in understanding the difference between one department and the next re: are there different approaches to public participation across departments? What are the results, how do they start out on the landing strip before they take off? It is important to map out decision-making processes and how they are different around the city. What is different, what is the same – can we create continuity across the board?
- e. Is it possible to have a broader scope on charge so we don’t preclude community recommendations that may be outside scope of City Council jurisdiction? A: yes it is possible, but need to ensure that there isn’t scope creep and that the PPWG accomplishes the core charge.

**What is the scope/level of PPWG recommendations?**

The scope of the PPWG is a challenge, there are many issues – how do we narrow them down:

- People don’t feel like their voice is heard
- How do we tie decisions back to Comprehensive Plan and other plans?
- What is the culture of public participation? How do we create a more inclusive and respectful culture of dialogue that doesn’t pit community members against themselves and the city?

- What are the mindsets, skillsets and behaviors that we need to promote. When people come together in these environments, what encourages people to communicate in certain ways – how do we help with mind sets? Cultural norms.
- Will recommendations be programmatic, cultural, process or project specific?
- How many recommendations – 3-5?
- How do we make these meaningful, actionable, implementable? Other criteria? Scalability? Able to replicate?
- Important to include Spanish-speaking residents/language and others whose voices are underrepresented in decision making.

The group will need to narrow down the scope at the October meeting.

### **Discussion on Public Comment at PPWG Meetings:**

#### **How do we do public engagement for the PPWG?**

*Suggestions from the PPWG Group:*

- Provide opportunities for public comment in throughout meeting, maybe three times. It is a lot to have people sit through a 3 hour meeting and only comment at the end. If they had comments throughout, we can address comments and give feedback.
- Leave 15 minutes at the end of every meeting for comment, but leave comment cards out for the duration of the meeting
- How much time do we give each person that comes into the room and when?
  - How does this impact PPWG time?
  - How do we hear from people and give them a reasonable amount of time and they feel like they have been understood.
- Have both online and cards at the meeting (to facilitator), promise to get back to public via email or at a meeting
- How can people know what their expectations are when they come in for public comment? Need to clarify in the agenda for the meetings.
- This discussion is a microcosm for the the issues that the Council faces.
- This is hard to know early-on – can it be fluid and change over time instead of binding ourselves to rules at the start?
- People may have specific concerns related to sub-committees for public comment
- Interview people – do a scan to figure out how to do better public comment. We need to solicit meaningful feedback on ideas but we also need to accomplish goals.
- Waiting until we have recommendations for public comment is too late – we need people to diagnose the problem
- We are trying to get something done, do we have time for significant public comment at meetings, could we do something else?

- Is this part of our deliverable?? We may not know what that looks like now, caution us from repeating the process that is instinctive to us already, i.e. 15 minute comment period. Maybe we can use a different technique than city uses.
- What is the present process used by City Council now re: public comment? What is working and what is not? Option generating and start trying options and do an evaluation of these options to see what is working. We are a role model for how to do a public process, so we should find some better options to give to council
- What are the forums (in-person and electronic) that can enable community dialogue and relationship building?

#### **Short-term proposal for public comment at PPWG meetings:**

- This will be an agenda item for October meeting with the goal of coming to a consensus on the public comment process for PPWG meetings at the October meeting.
- The October meeting will provide public comment cards throughout the meeting and there will be a 15 minute period for public comment at the end of the meeting.

#### **Discussion on Engaging with Public outside of Public Comment Periods:**

- How does PPWG discuss comments received from the public, needs to me more than just online communication.
- If public writes to PPWG, what is our process to acknowledgement and response? How can we do this effectively and efficiently?
- The group requested a list to tap into knowledge outside of meetings –
- Should we do a survey? When? We need to be careful that we recognize that this tool does not capture the views of all.

#### **Visioning Exercise:**

**What is the common community vision for Boulder? Can the PPWG develop recommendations around how to identify such a vision?**

#### **Question posed to the PPWG Group:**

Imagine, five years from now, the City is recognized nationally for its excellence in public participation. There is agreement among the public and the City (Council, Boards, Staff) that there is improved dialogue, better decision-making and improved relationships.

1. What is happening and what has been accomplished?
2. What is innovative about the City/Public's efforts?
3. What types of forums and structures exist?
4. What resources are put toward engagement efforts?
5. Who are the leaders of this effort?

6. In the past five years, what is the most significant breakthrough(s) that helped to build trust?

**PPWG Group Responses to VISION EXERCISE:**

**Metrics – defined targets, trackable data, evaluation and representation from different communities, both quantitative and qualitative**

**- how can demographic information and other technologies identify who is missing from public processes in Boulder?**

**Meet people where they live, work and play, Going out to communities to meet people one on-one – outreach plan to engage public, not just at formal meetings**

**-there is a less intimidating process**

**- include perspectives from people of color and Spanish-speaking populations the beginning**

**- Create environments that are easy to participate in; i.e. climbing areas, shopping centers, farmers' markets, etc.**

**Majority of citizens have developed and feel ownership over a public engagement shared vision – City understands how to hear people and take viewpoints into consideration in a timely manner; makes good decisions**

**City, Council and Staff are skilled and committed to framing and engaging community dialogue and hosting conversations – not just saying yes or no to a particular proposal**

**Smaller forums – more intimate scale to engage people with common interests and geography**

**Quickly discern and communicate information – using the public as the “expert” on issues – public comments are used to inform policy**

**There is dialogue and people communicating and listening to opposing views with civility, people are communicating regularly with people they disagree with.**

**Technology provides an accessible forum for communication and creates a shared space for productive engagement**

**Space for people to get to know each other - we are all human-beings discussing issues, the public had a responsibility, this is not just the City's job. There is a shared responsibility for making decisions.. Civic responsibility to engage and come together more. Not pitting ourselves against people with a different agenda.**

**Council and community are so excited to get together and talk because there is honesty and respect. People are not embarrassed to speak, respect and understanding the different skill-sets people bring to the table**

Surveys and door-to-door census are utilized - understand who is in Boulder and why they do or do not engage.

Staff helps people frame input in a way to present to larger community.

Need to teach people to come in the door with an open mind to come to what is best for everyone. Customize adaptable processes for everyone to participate. Resources to support participation and especially minority communities.

Moderation, prototyping and tailored public participation approaches – feedback loops and compromise

The public is open to experiences that are shared in the international arena and diversity – using media to educate around diversity – awareness of diverse perspectives. Help clarify the perceptions about immigrants.

Gradually building trust in community with people with different point of views – technology is used for people to give input without being present

-experts on staff available to public to assist with engagement training

- forums and panels with issues important to communities

Diversity of engagement (i.e. people of color, Spanish-speakers)

Resources are allocated to proactively engage citizens early and often; beyond a specific project

Coaching and skill-building so people know how to “show up” to public engagement efforts and there is an agreed upon structure and model around public participation

Engagement opportunities are accessible to the most people and we have found the easiest possible way for people to participate

- streamlined process
- citizens determine how they participate

Kids in high school are educated and engaged

Transparency with decision-making; the public know when and how they can influence decisions

## Meeting Framework Discussion

How do we move from September to June, starting with introductions and ending with recommendations? What is the sequence and timing of PPWG discussions that will lead to

**recommendations? How do you see this process unfolding and what do you need personally to get there?**

**PPWG Response:**

**October/November goals:**

- Would like to share additional information and do co-learning and review of information in October
- Need to understand different levels of public involvement in decision-making processes and the law around involvement, what are the structural pieces and limits to public processes?
- Would like examples of public participation in places that are working
- Would like to hear from City staff what the public participation process is like for them
- Start interviewing the public and figure out what's not working – diagnose the problem
- Uncover our assumptions
- Start forming subcommittees

**CDR to draft Meeting Framework and send out to group for comments/suggestions**

**PPWG Data Needs from the City Staff**

1. City to provide PPWG group with 3-4 representative situations and discuss how public participation works and map out city decision making process.
2. When the PPWG members identify potential engagement strategies, policies and approaches, City to provide guidance as to whether this idea has already been tried and why this did/didn't work
3. PPWG would like to understand what parts of the public participation process is broken from City Staff perspective.
4. What is the present process used by City Council now re: public comment? What is working and what is not?

**Sharing Resources:**

If people want to share resources, please send links, titles of books and published documents. The sender will also write a few sentences on why the resource is relevant and what it pertains to. Send resources to: [publicparticipationworkinggroup@bouldercolorado.gov](mailto:publicparticipationworkinggroup@bouldercolorado.gov)

The City will group these resources and send out to the PPWG group as a packet. The City will also post resources on website at <https://bouldercolorado.gov/city-council/public-participation-working-group>.

### Meeting #1 Action Items:

- CDR – make changes to Operating Protocols based on PPWG feedback – send out to PPWG
- CDR – outline Meeting Framework – send out to PPWG for feedback
- CDR – organize information collected during vision exercise and send out to PPWG group to assist with establishing PPWG Vision in October meeting
- CDR – send out draft October meeting agenda to PPWG for feedback
- CDR/City/PPWG – send resources and a brief description to [publicparticipationworkinggroup@bouldercolorado.gov](mailto:publicparticipationworkinggroup@bouldercolorado.gov) . Review resources prior to next meeting for resource review discussion.
- City – begin identifying a range of public participation processes and staff perspectives to present to PPWG group in November

### PPWG Suggestions for Meeting Agenda #2:

- How do we engage the public during the PPWG deliberations? Format, structure, time?
- Review of documents and resources
- Determine the type and “level of recommendations”
- Agree Operating Protocols
- Review of Meeting Framework and timeframe
- Identify subcommittee topics
- PPWG Input for Meeting #3 Agenda

The City staff will provide information to PPWG on City public participation processes in November.

### Public Comment Period

**Lynn Siegal** – interested in more informal process, less procedural, how open houses are conducted and better interactivity between people and direct dialogue and how people can connect in with direct dialogue. Specifically, impact working group

### Announcement:

Boulder Neighborhood Leadership Summit

Oct 29, 2016. 8:30-5:30 at Touchdown Room facilities in CU Expansion. Open to anyone in community who wants to attend, explore concepts of neighboring and being good neighbors, communication skills training and setting agendas, showcasing neighborhood activities and revitalization. Feedback from people in relationship with city. All day event.

