

**Nablus Working Group
August 31, 2016
Meeting Proceedings - Final**

Attendance

Working Group Members

Essrea Cherin
Sara-Jane Cohen
Liz Fox

Julia Halaby
Fred Greene
Paul Heller

Joan Nagel
Rob Schware
Marc Soloway

Facilitation

Heather Bergman and Katie Waller

<i>Heather</i>	Organize a meeting with Liz, Julia, Sara-Jane, and Essrea to craft a final report. Include Paul as a peer-reviewer. Then circulate the final version to the Working Group for final approval; upon approval, send it to City Council.
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Review and Discuss Final Report

At the previous meeting, the Working Group suggested that the facilitator draft a report about the process and major themes from past meetings. Members reviewed the first draft and submitted their comments. The Working Group spent time discussing the changes made to this document and how it should be used going forward. In this same discussion, Group members weighed in on if the Working Group should meet again, as this topic seemed to directly relate to the use of any final reporting mechanism. Below are the details of the ensuing discussion.

- To reiterate what was communicated in an earlier email to all Working Group members, City Council has indicated that they are expecting a final summary report, and they would prefer if the Working Group agreed to its content. If that is not possible, they will accept a summary report written by and on behalf of the facilitator regarding the conversations that occurred. It would be best to have a document that everyone can agree to, but if that is not possible it is okay. City Council indicated that they wanted the Group to talk together and try to come up with an acceptable document.
- I have a proposal. Reading through the comments that were submitted it became clear that there are so many different perspectives that are being attempted to be honored and included. In my experience, drafting a piece of writing by committee with quite divergent viewpoints is nearly impossible. What struck me when thinking about a possible way forward is that the first draft was much better than the second. I would propose Heather submits the original version not on behalf of the Group, and then Working Group members can submit their own summary with a 500-word limit. These individual summaries would represent each member's perspectives throughout the six meetings so that the final document will feel true to each person.
- First off, I am happy with whatever we do. I would like to have a report that is a reflection of the group. We do not have to agree with everything everyone said, but the final report is a factual representation of what was discussed. The first draft was a bit too short, but a good start. One problem with the revised report is that some were unhappy with where it was going. It became a lot longer, and there were some bombs dropped in the middle of it. I am willing to do a line by line review and would prefer the Group make one statement.

- At the last meeting, one of the opponents wanted to cancel all future meetings since there is nothing left to discuss. Others did not want the work group to issue a final report to Council. So I am a bit dismayed to find that the largest block of text added to the report claims that opponents concerns were not heard and that they were not allowed to discuss, for example, "specific instances (of) a trend of anti-Israel bias." It seems terribly unfair to allow anyone to terminate future meetings and then turn around and use the report to claim they were not heard. Rather than call this bad-faith, let's look at the positive side: we have two scheduled meetings available to ensure all concerns are aired. I asked Heather to add one sentence to the end of our report: "the Working Group agrees that their major concerns were adequately aired and reflected in the meeting summaries." So now I am asking everyone in the room to agree that we will continue our meetings until all major concerns are addressed.
- I agree with the proposal regarding individual statements and appreciate the idea of everyone agreeing that their concerns were aired. I wrote Heather and said thanks for striking a balance; it was an unbelievably even-handed treatment of what took place. The initial report left me feeling more accomplished than the revised version. I cannot believe I have been working since last school year on this project, and it appears we are in the same position as before. Since school has started, I have not had a chance to analyze all the revision, but thank you for your statement regarding all concerns being aired. I was shocked to hear that people contributed to the final report that they were not heard because when I consider the fact that I am the only Palestinian and one-tenth of the Working Group I could say the same thing. We have talked about Israel forever. If I were being heard, we would not be talking about Israel because this is not about Israel. I want to say again that this is about human interaction and connecting, and I did not see enough in the subsequent reports referencing people, humanity, and the people-to-people connection. I want to be real about how this process has been for me. It has been painful and at times dehumanizing. My voice has been here to say let us untangle from this "political mess" and talk about the people both here and there who which to engage in exchanges, and intercultural growth. When you read the revised report, it is evident that half the working group just wants to keep bringing it back to politics and Israel.
- I am not speechless because I am never speechless. First of all, in terms of submitting the original draft with individual reports, I had a lot of problems with the original draft. I felt it was extremely unbalanced, but not intentionally so. I felt the language that was used to describe the proponents' positions was more positive and respectful. It was trivializing of the opponents' view, and I sent a lot of edits; they were largely reflected in the new draft. I do not want to write my own statement, and I do not want to read others' statements. We all sent in our applications and City Council has the information that we have submitted. As ten individuals, I do not think we need to do this. As I reread the draft report, I realized that something is reflected there that I did not think was happening at all, which is that this was all about Israel. I do not think it is or was about Israel. The draft suggests that the opponents have a concern that here is a group of people who passionately support the application and Palestinian independence who are anti-Israel and speak anti-Israel rhetoric. This is not about Israel. This is about if it is a good idea for the City of Boulder to put its seal of approval an official relationship with Nablus. This is about what it means for the City of Boulder and the community, which is much more diverse than Dundee or Stavanger. It is different from Cuba and Nicaragua. This is a unique issue. In regards to those who are saying they were surprised that we did not feel heard, I have not felt like I was given an opportunity to say things that I needed to say about the issue of trust. I was shut down repeatedly when I tried to catalog things that were examples of my lack of trust for BNSCP. I

was shut down, like when I tried to inquire about what people were saying I was saying about Essrea and who these people are I was shut down. I have lots of issues that I do not think have been brought up.

- You can write a statement of things that you think were left out and send it to us, and we can talk about it at the next meeting. I do not want to leave the room thinking that things were left unsaid.
- I appreciate that, but I do not think that it is going to happen. I think the second draft had more meat but still needs lots of work. In terms of being heard, my issues are different from other opponents. I was worried about revisionist history and past BNSCP leadership, and I felt that I was shut down when I tried to bring up these issues. I am not sure if there are things left that we should be discussing. There are things that have happened to me that are awful – maybe too awful to talk about in this setting. We have made agreements, but there have been multiple letters going to the newspaper from only the proponents' side, which is problematic. Trust is more of Sara-Jane's issue. I have not seen a critical statement of Nablus or a Nabulsi from the proponents. We should look at what goes on in that town and bring it back to our City Council to see if they should give recognition to that City. I still do not think that we should give that approval and no one has convinced me otherwise. We keep hearing that there is only one Palestinian in this Working Group, but there is no Israeli. I will keep meeting if we have to, but I am not sure how it will help.
- If we are dialoguing to heal, are you willing to share your pain? I would like to give it air space if you are willing to share. I am confused about the shutdown. I thought we discussed that, and it is confusing to me. If this is not about Israel, then can we wipe the Israel bashing from our vocabulary so that we are talking about the people of Boulder and the people of Nablus?
- One addition that I thought was helpful is that doing what you are doing in front of all these people has resulted in a different conversation than if this group was more private. Building trust would have maybe been easier in private. We were not in an environment that was safe for building more trust and being vulnerable. The public nature of this group probably influenced the type of conversation that we have had here.
- I have always been very grateful to Heather for taking this on and running all the meetings and organizing communication. So when I reviewed the first draft, I took a page out of Paul's book and sat down with my wife to discuss the report and we both agreed that it was a pretty accurate, level-headed, even-handed, and fair representation, containing a lot of truth. It might have missed a few things but I think it was fantastic. I am grateful for the first draft. It offered a glimmer of hope that we have some common ground. There were some bombs in the second draft, and I think it was a complete distortion of what happened. I will not proceed at all with the second draft. Through this whole process we have all learned to think and talk about this differently and we have all been challenged. Through this process the BNSCP has done nothing but amply demonstrate trustworthiness. When I hear that there is no trust, I am willing to stay the course to be able to talk about it. I could support another revised draft and we all come back next week to discuss it.
- I appreciated the revised summary because I did offer some comments and I thought they were heard. The second draft is better. I disagree with those who have said the Sister City decision is not about Israel. For me, this is only about Israel. I think that the people-to-people BNSCP projects--training yoga teachers, bringing dancers here--are fine and should continue. Most of the people of Nablus should not be held responsible for the actions of their government. They do not have control over their leaders. I am concerned that the head of the Dundee Nablus Twinning Association said that he was not aware of any use of his group for promoting anti-Israel messages or propaganda when there were numerous

examples of such messages and links on their website. Another thing that concerns me is that there was a public comment attached to a past summary that was virulently anti-Semitic. At our last meeting, the head of the BNSCP was asked for her reaction to the comment and she did not distance herself from it. She said that she did not like the style in which it was written but said nothing about the content. I am fine with activities in Nablus but I do not want the city to provide a platform for the type of Israel-bashing that is on the Dundee website. I do not know where that leaves us, but I want my concerns to be in the summary report.

- I sent in two small comments, and I am fine with the first draft of the report. I leave these meetings feeling depleted. I am not inclined to keep meeting. It is not conducive to building trust. People just continue to write letters, some are angrier than others, and I do not think this is helpful to the City. City Council has ample information to deal with this issue, and as a Working Group, not a dialogue group, I think this has gone as far as it is going to go. I can live with the first draft of the report. Most of the comments were not mine. I have a hard time imagining the two versions are going to be reconciled tonight and I do not know if it is healthy for any of us to move forward.
- It is hard for me to separate this meeting from my life, which is just overwhelming. I did not spend as much time looking at the documents. This is my second meeting, but I agree with Paul. I am very sad, depressed, and heavy. Last time I came in with a sense of pain. I would prefer to sit down with people one-on-one. This process feels like a fishbowl. The thing that is so painful is the idea of opponents and proponents. If you look at the “opponents” in this group, we are all involved in social justice and that is what we want. I feel that people in this room and the community think of us as these big Jewish demons. There was an email that came from someone that calls for protests outside my synagogue at Yom Kippur. I have to agree that you would not distance yourself from this man who would, I can’t even get through this sentence. If this process is about building peace and understanding it is not working. If there are other ways to do this, I will keep working. If City Council approves this, I will go to events and will support it. I feel some intense pain about this process. I never, in my whole life as an activist and a religious leader, have felt as demonized as a bad guy.
- I thought the concerns that Joan said and was under the impression that those were addressed in the Statement of Commitments. In the last meeting I distanced myself from the actions that escalated this division, and I have been doing dialogue for years. I came here to deepen my friendships and build bonding around this issue. This is about people. I am asking for inclusivity, BNSCP aside. I am really sorry and do not approve of terrorism in any form.
- I just noticed that I am feeling a bit defensive and I just want to respond to things that were said about me. It does not feel good when I feel like I am being judged poorly without people coming to me and asking for more information. I think that if we want to create a more peaceful community we have to assume the best of each other. If I do not do what you think I should do, please ask me to explain what was going on behind my behavior or decision that offended you. I would love for you to ask me instead of making a judgment that is unfavorable. Usually when you get more background, it makes more sense. Then you can judge when you have taken the courtesy to put the effort in and check your assumptions. I would like to explain that my work is conflict management. It is my belief that we are all part of the human family. There are some people that are hard for me to include in my family, but all are worthy, valuable and belong in my family. If I do not understand that man, I will judge his words and his actions. I will not judge the man. No one asked me to condemn other letters that were sent in that were strongly worded. You will notice that when responding to the anti-Palestinian letters that I sought to address the pain under the words.

I see your fear. I do not condemn others and if someone shares their fear-filled and hateful thoughts, I will do my best to help and seek understanding; my role is not to condemn other people.

- We have heard that people were not heard. I am not willing to allow a report to be used to say that they were not heard from people that wanted to cancel meetings. I want to hear that everyone has been heard or we can meet again.
- What I have seen is that some things that people want to express feels to others like a personal attack. This should not be about personal attacks. For some of you, you have to say what you need to say. I do not think it is a good idea for you to share those things in this environment. I think it will diminish you and the time you have spent here. If there are things that have not been expressed, we could meet in pairs. Each person would say who they wanted to meet with to make it more comfortable. I am willing to meet with you beforehand if that would help. Then, the partners can write a shared summary and that could be part of the report. Not everyone has to be a part of the more heartfelt conversations.
- I do not want to do that. I will probably keep talking to some people from this Group. I listened to what Essrea said, and I tried hard to understand what she is saying; though I have real trouble. I think, towards the end, I started to get it. It is so foreign to me – to how I think and feel. I do not see how we could get to that point in two meetings. I could come to two more meetings and express myself, but this is hard. We were here to give City Council guidance. We have done that to the best we could. We are not here to answer all communication issues. We are not a dialogue group, but a working group. It is time for City Council to make a decision - whatever that is. City Council should not approve this and put into action the relationship, but others feel strongly the other way.
- The problem I have is that the BNSCP, headed by Essrea, is going to be the group that determines what appropriate material for posting on the website is. I do not trust her judgment if she feels that everyone is one big family and will not condemn things. I want someone monitoring the website that will be discerning to identify hateful information. At this point, I do not trust the BNSCP leadership to monitor website content.
- I am not for your proposal even though I appreciated you helping us try to move ahead. We have been working as a group of ten. If there are things that people want to share but feel constrained because of the fishbowl environment. How would we feel about going to City Council and stating that the Group needs a private meeting that is not in a fishbowl? We would not have the same type of close-to-verbatim summary. We have to give people a chance to say things that they do not feel comfortable saying. I do not know how the rest of you feel.
- Would we capture what was said, or just keep it amongst ourselves?
- I know that everyone who is here is here because they care. We would have to talk about documentation.
- You say that you need to know what you should have done. I have a hard time hearing that because I think we have, on several occasions, very directly asked you what you would do in certain situations, and there was silence. There was no “what do you mean?” It was just silence. I think there were several letters on all sides that came in and continue to come in that were hurtful, challenging, and troubling. They were not all pro-BNSCP letters. The letter that came in from Michael Raab was hateful in the extreme. Your only response was that he chooses his words indelicately or speaks indelicately. Calling us Nazis is not indelicate. I take that personally. It is not true. I am not a Nazi. You can condemn his words and say you understand where he is coming from because of his background, childhood, mental health, or political stance; but you did not say that. This is the same as the situation with Guy

Benintendi. You are not condemning their actions. That makes it hard to trust the organization that you lead. You do condemn people whom you consider racists; you call them racists. You allow posts on the website that are hateful that have now been removed even though they were there for two years. You allow posts that call someone a racist. You cannot plead that you do not judge people, but then do the opposite when you do not agree with them. I think the commitment statement that BNSCP put together is a terrific first step, but it is words. We have so many words on the website, in the application, in interviews, and other places. We have lots of words, and we have yet to see actions. I have yet to see any actions that give me confidence that the lack of trust I feel is no longer justified. That is going to take time. I am willing to give you and the organization time, and see what happens over the next two or three years regarding types of projects, speakers, and activities sponsored by BNSCP. I have not seen any of that. There is room for trust, but there is currently no basis for trust.

- It felt really personal and not issue-based.
- It is personal, and I am sorry, but it had to be said.
- These are things that people feel like they have to say. This is part of what makes it hard, because what everyone needs out of this process is different.
- My heart hurts a lot right now. I am sorry if I did not say or do what you wanted me to say or do. I acknowledge that I am fallible – a fallible human being – I do not necessarily operate well when I feel like what I say and what I do is being judged through a negative lens. I can tell you that it shuts me down like nothing else. Yes, it is true that I may say things that are not what you are looking for or asking to hear. To be honest, we do not distance ourselves from anyone. Our project is required by the City of Boulder to allow all people, regardless of their ideological views, to be members. We are required to do that, and we do not distance ourselves from anyone. People can choose to distance themselves from us. I have frequently been asked if Michael Raab is a part of our organization and I always say that he is not nor has he ever been; he is an activist, and we are not an activist organization. We are too boring for him. He does not come to our meetings, and he has nothing to do with us. Guy Benintendi has nothing to do with our organization. He was the leader for the first three years but now has no connection whatsoever to BNSCP. I also want to say that I hear that there is little trust of me, and that is okay. Trust is a tricky thing and requires effort from all parties to build. It is very delicate. I am offering to all of those who have said they do not trust me to have a one-on-one conversation with me; I am always interested in continuing the dialogue. The beautiful thing is that trust is not requisite in this particular situation as it would be if we were going to be in a relationship with each other. The BNSCP Board of Directors drew up the Statement of Commitments because we recognized that trust was an issue. There are 13 Directors on the Board, all of whom have an equal voice. It is a beautiful and healthy organization. I leave those meetings appreciating that we have such a strong group of directors. The commitments were drawn up so that you do not need trust. This is what the Board has committed to do to address the concerns that were stated. We will continue to be careful about what we post on the website. You are referencing something about racism, and I think we are interpreting things differently. I have never said that all opponents are racists. If we miss things, please let us know. Your input is helpful. You are pointing things out to us about what is still disturbing you. We are prohibited from using our, do not use, and never have used our communication platforms for political statements or advocacy. The Statement of Commitments document clearly addresses these concerns. It does not require trust. You have the commitments on which to judge us. I also want to share a statement from the Vice President of Sister Cities International about why an official relationship is so important.

"While doing the activities is great and obviously the focus of the relationship, establishing it under the banner of a "sister city" is an incredibly important step in establishing it as a part of this 60-year-old peacebuilding effort. It strengthens your identity as a nonpartisan, nonpolitical group and serves to provide some more sustainability to the relationship. It promotes cooperation with other sister city programs and opens up a community of like-minded citizen diplomats to provide advice and assistance. It may open up more funding opportunities as well as partnerships with other organizations. It is not that City Council approval is in and of itself the goal, becoming a sister city is the goal, and the bottom line is that in Boulder if you want a sister city, you need City Council approval."

- Do you really believe the statement that you said about not being able to distance yourself from anyone? That is concerning to me that if someone comes to a movie and is passing out boycott, divest, sanction (BDS) fliers, are you saying that you would not distance yourself and your organization from them?
- We would welcome them, and we would let them know not to hand out fliers. We have done this in the past.
- I think we get stuck in our conversation when we use words like trust or anti-Semitism. I think the issue of trust came up several times, and we agreed that the past is the past, but it keeps coming up. I think it is a red herring and a scare tactic. I grew up in a communist family in the McCarthy era when everyone was concerned and fearful of communism. I do not want the word "trust" in the final document. Thanks for saying that the Statement of Commitments document was a good step. That BNSCP got 13 to 15 people to come up with and agree to the document is a step in the right direction. We should be proud of that document coming out of the Working Group
- I did hear that City Council tasked us with healing. The idea of some way to air the pains that exist has to happen, or we did not do what they asked us to do. We are here to talk about the appropriateness of an official relationship; that is what some people have said. In America, it is not safe to be Muslim and Arab. After seven approved sister cities in Boulder, saying no to Palestine will add to 67 years of dispossession and communicate a message to me so that I will feel like I do not belong. I know that I am speaking for every other Palestinian and Arab in the area. We have a long habit of being quiet and under the radar. It gets tiring to hear that talking about us is just too political or must be linked to Israel and feelings of being unsafe. This is what City Council asked us to discuss. I want to know how your life will be less safe by reaching out to people in another country that are represented here in your community. If people do not feel heard, we are not done.
- People said that they felt heard at the August 11 meeting. We need more of that then. We need that without the fishbowl.
- I am perfectly happy to participate in anything. That said, it is important that everyone agree that their concerns have been aired and heard, even if not everyone agrees with the content.
- I am not sure if we can get permission for a private meeting.
- I came here with the understanding that this is the last meeting. I cannot be at the meeting at the September 22 because I thought this was the last meeting. I do not know if it is within the mandate of the City Council, but I am interested in one-on-one discussion and would be more open to that forum. I do not know if that is what City Council has asked us to do, but I am fine with it. If we have to do a report, I will do it. I am interested in continuing the dialogue.
- I echo that. I think that one-on-one dialogue is valuable and is not this. If we are going to, I am happy to have those conversations. That is not new Torah for us. I think that is real and

authentic, but I do not think it will help to get a final draft or to move forward as a working group. I think the report and continuing dialogue are two different topics.

- There are two conversations, what to do about the report and when. We are not obligated to submit a consensus report. I am obligated to submit a report. I can submit it on behalf of the Working Group or myself; either meets City Council's threshold. I have to write what happened. For those of you who found the first draft biased, and I apologize and know it was not intentional.
- We can get together people from each perspective to work on the draft. It is achievable work. I have had people, who hate each other in a way you do not, be able to come up with a final report. I have never had a group unable to submit a consensus report. It is an achievable task; however, it may not be an achievable task with ten people working on it in one room with 60 people watching. My report-related proposal is that a few people volunteer to help us figure it out.
- What is the timeline?
- We want it to be done before November, but I told them September 15. That date can change.
- I would ask that we try to go through some of the report tonight to highlight concerns, without editing it line by line. This will allow the Group to work through the report and dig into each issue. Then the small group would finish the report by the next meeting, and the whole Working Group could review it at that time.
- What I am hearing is that if there is another meeting, the report will be completed by Heather and the small group before being reviewed by the entire Working Group.
- Typically what happens is that everyone in the Working Group would support or endorse the work of the people who volunteer to be in the small group. There is another version of this scenario where the Working Group gets to do more revisions, and it is still possible to have another meeting. The report is doable but only if people have felt heard. If we need to have people talk one-on-one or in another setting, we can do that. I can meet with you away from City Council, and I will not charge you. You do not need anyone's permission to meet to talk amongst yourself. Maybe there are people that you would prefer to speak with offline. Part of why these meetings have to be public is because of a facilitator. I would be delighted to do it for free if that is what you need to get past this place. We have one hour left. What do you need to do?
- Regarding the airing of concerns, we did that piece. We have decided to do things as a group up until this point. My concern with breaking off and doing one-on-one discussions is that I am missing out on the larger conversations. We are here to learn and talk amongst each other. I want to meet again without the public. I do not care about them knowing what I have to say, but it would provide an environment more conducive to sharing and working through hard issues.
- We would have to ask City Council if they want to allow us to meet privately.
- I feel very strongly when I read the past documents that we would work to heal. I think that is the key ingredient to what City Council asked. They want community building, not divisiveness. I already have a structure, place, and time dedicated in perpetuity to continue a dialogue. For any of you who are aware of the practice of compassionate listening, I am Colorado's only licensed teacher. I have a dedicated place at the Friend's meeting house to hold compassionate listening sessions. Compassionate Listening is different from dialogue; it is more potent than people know until they have seen it for themselves. There are techniques that the audience can engage in to actively listen and respond. The ~~people~~ speaker speaks for as long as they want, and the audience uses only opening and reflective language if and when they ask questions. There is a potency of having to work on yourself to

know what is going on with your triggers. There is great opening for people speaking until they have nothing else to say. I want to offer opening listening sessions once a month for as long as people are willing to talk and listen. If we are talking about this topic, I hope you know that my message is about human connectivity over Jewish or Palestinian identity, Israel being safe, or issues being too political. The only way to do that is to listen. My proposal is that I would like to facilitate open listening sessions for the City of Boulder/my community. Each session will follow the protocols for Compassionate Listening and listeners need not be trained, but will receive in the process of participating. Open, generous listening does something that dialogue cannot. It provides for the speaker a breath of fresh air, spaciousness, and self-awareness. (I am happy to provide testimonials from those who have experienced this.) However, equally important is the impact on the listener, who not being allowed to talk back, and are positioned to hear in themselves truths not always examined. I hope my Working Group partners will value this as a continuation of our work together, as well I hope the city as a whole will utilize this for the myriad of issues that appear to divide us, such as homelessness, zoning and density and other such as they arise.

- What do you all think about more compassionate listening?
- Is it appropriate for me to ask about compassionate listening? I think the idea is really interesting. The question I have is that for this particular issue, you have an investment in the outcome, as do I. Can you be a compassionate listening facilitator on a subject on which you have an investment in the outcome?
- I have washed my hands of wanting an outcome. It is an opportunity for people to connect. I would not facilitate less well if Joan or Sara-Jane or Rabbi Soloway were speaking. Your husband was my first choice when envisioned making this proposal. I want him to feel heard, not to put him on the spot. I went on a Compassionate Listening delegation to Israel, and I told my family, and they all said I was crazy because those are the people who ruined our lives. By listening without being able to talk back, I learned to deal with what people said and what it means to me. I do not see us as separate. I do not like talking about opponents and proponents. I came to this table because I feel always shut out. I just want to belong. My ax to grind is belonging. I think if we are constantly working to belong to each other we can have kind and civil ways to disagree.
- Would engaging in compassionate listening mean that this group would be done and then people would self-select to participate in that venue? I do not want to only go on the Unity Walk. I may not even be able to make it. Because the door has been opened to seeing and hearing each other, I want that to continue. I think the community would only continue to grow. If you want to be a listener, you can just come.
- Does that mean it is one speaker at each session?
- Is it public? I do not understand the setup.
- One person speaks and as many people listen as they want. There are ways that listeners can reflect, such as asking opening and exploratory questions. Each evening one person would speak. It is a service I wish to offer.
- I hear that we want to have a non-fishbowl meeting. We would want everyone to be able to be there, so we would have to deal with scheduling. We can also say that we will write a report and Group members will continue to pursue this topic in other ways. I hear an honest conversation that the connection is hard in this environment. We have tried, but this is not the place to do this. I want there to be a next step that is right for you.
- I want to poll the group and want to hear if you agree.
- We have to finalize a report. Option One is to see if the Group should have another meeting without the fishbowl and with City Council permission. This meeting could also occur by ourselves to discuss what needs to be said before the final report is completed. Option Two

is that we stop now, write the final report, say that we are continuing to talk to one another, and City Council can deal with this issue however they would like.

- I have problems with these two options because, like someone said, the two options have various components. There are other ways to put the pieces together. One thing you said a while ago that could be an option is to get on opponent and proponent to come up with a final report. Option B is to see if we as a group can struggle together to come up with a final report. Option C is that you write whatever you want in your name only. Those are the three options. Those are separate from if we need another meeting before we do that.
- What is your gut feeling in regards to meeting again and on the size of the group?
- My gut is to have one more non-fishbowl meeting where things that have not been said about trust or personal information can be shared. That is not a meeting to look at a report.
- We should have one more private meeting.
- If I were to agree, this meeting is about airing people's feelings and everyone has to feel heard.
- My gut is that I would like to continue in informal ways, so this is our last formal meeting.
- I would concur that this be our last formal meeting. I am very drawn to the idea of compassionate listening. It is extremely powerful. It would be so healing for this group of people. I am enthusiastically behind that. I do much better in one-on-one connection. I feel there is a lot that can happen there that is harder in a group setting.
- I am fine with non-fishbowl, and I do not think we all have to be there. That is my preference
- My preference is that this is the last meeting and that people can engage and have conversations for their personal needs or the welfare of the city. I think it is time to move that into where people are comfortable if they are so inclined. I would trust people to work on the report with you.
- As long as we are all comfortable with a report that says that the Working Group agrees that the concerns were adequately aired and represented in the summaries, I am fine with this being the last meeting. If we cannot commit to that at this time, we can have as many meetings as necessary to get to that place. We only terminated the meetings because one person said they did not want to continue meeting. Unless we agree that we are not going to leave this process saying that they were not heard, we have to keep meeting. I would like anyone who has not felt heard to write about their concerns before the next meeting. If it is about instances of anti-Israel sentiments or five pages about Guy Benintendi, that is fine. City Council can decide if they are moved by historical grudges. We have to agree to that.
- I would agree with options A or C, and I would like to go out for coffee with Julia.
- For those of you who want to meet again, having people come reluctantly will not yield the results we want. I do not know how we crack the nut that some people do not feel heard.
- Let us ask people if they can agree to say they have felt heard.
- I hear that the ideas of the report and meeting again are not able to be separate.
- I have aired all my concerns
- *The Working Group was polled about whether they felt that they have been heard. Most indicated they had. Those who did not feel heard explained why in the following lines.*
- I have not felt heard.
- I have not aired all my concerns, but I am not sure if one more meeting will help.
- What if you look back and can write something about instances in which you felt shut down? We need to let people speak. If someone reflects and feels like they have been shut down or not allowed to speak, they can write something down that reflects their concern. These could be included as a footnote

- I feel like I got some things out today that I have not been able to get out before. I have to say I have not aired all my concerns because there are some things that I can never share. I am not saying that people shut me down on this. One thing that I found valuable was when we brought up issues, and the group reflected on them and then talked about them. If we put our issues in a paragraph, we do not have the chance to discuss.
- I would find it to be bad faith for this group to conclude and have people say that they were not heard.
- I am not there yet.
- Is your impression that if we had another conversation where you could have a chance to share and reflect like the last meeting, you feel like the job is done? Can we write a report that said that people wanted more, but this is not the forum to share more deeply?
- I could live with the statement that not everyone felt they could have said everything.
- Why do people say that?
- I do not want to ever bring up the hurtful things that I have heard. I do not think we can get to where everyone has said everything.
- I will not accept a report that says you did not want to continue engagement and that not everyone was heard.
- Is there a way to write the report that says that some people had more things to say, but sharing in this environment is not going to solve everything? Can we say that we were satisfied with the process?
- With what you are saying, would the statements of not being heard be stricken?
- We would nuance it in the way that we said.
- I would want to be involved in the drafting, or I would like a chance to read the current drafts more deeply.
- I have not felt shut down, and I have been heard. I would be comfortable saying that we support the process.
- I feel OK.
- I feel okay, as well.
- It sounds like some people are going to help me write a report that will be awesome. I think the feedback gave a more well-rounded perspective. If that is the plan, then this is our last Group. A small group will meet to create the final report and will submit it to the entire Working Group. It will then be submitted to City Council as a consensus document.
- Liz, Julia, Sara-Jane, and Essrea volunteer to work together to craft the final report.
- If those people can agree, it will be a good report.
- I volunteer Paul as a peer-reviewer. He brings a different twist.
- I would want to review it.
- The whole group should review it. The balance you represent would be useful.
- We will come up with something and run it by the rest of the group. How open are we to feedback after the small group has drafted the report?
- We do not want to wordsmith, but we want to hear critical flaws. If a Working Group member has major concerns about the report, then I would ask someone from the small group to reach out to that person and explain why we came to that. We will have come up with a timeframe and talk after the meeting.
- We are going to come up with a document. I confidently think we can.
- Thank you for the conversation you have had. I appreciate your willingness to discuss and find a path forward. Do you want to spend time talking about healing or do we think the Group will come up with words to reference that?

- I feel like I am a person who has the intention to continue dialogue. I will volunteer to help with the structure of helping an ongoing conversation of suggested ways of meeting.
- I want to talk about the public input.
- Do we trust City Council to think about the messaging or do we want to leave the small group to discuss?
- The opportunities to engage in people to people should be highlighted, as this group has been helpful and positive in identifying those.
- I do not want to be guilty of making generalizations. The Palestinian community does not hang together and does not put itself out there like a critical mass, but it does exist. I think that the voices I represent are not gathered in a 'single' community. The harm to them if we are deemed unworthy of a sister city will be large. As long as we can adequately express that in the report, then I am fine to skip talking about healing right now.
- I think we can do that in the small group. We can work on the language.

Reflecting on Public Comment to Date

- It seems like a minor point now, but I am troubled by some letters to the editors and one that was sent to the Working Group. I was concerned about masses coming to the meeting tonight and protests. I am shocked by Brenda's letter, and I was extremely disturbed by Carl's letter to the Working Group and to the City Council as well as others. He, again, brought up the hundreds of hours of outreach to opponents that were exaggerated in the current application. None of the 12 rabbis in town were ever contacted after 2013. We talked about not reaching out to the press and making this process more public and that is what he called for. Carl is a BNSCP board member. I want to share that it felt bad to me. After all the progress we have made, it felt like a stab in the back.
- I agree with what was just said.
- I think we have learned debating people's feelings is not useful.
- In the BNSCP application, there is a statement that says members of the organization engaged in hundreds of hours of outreach in the community with people who did not agree with Nablus becoming a sister city to Boulder. We have done the math, and it is well in the hundreds. If you do not believe me, I would invite you to come over so I can show you the array of outreach we have done. It is literally in the hundreds of hours. I know you have the opinion it was not that extensive but it was.
- It included rabbis signing the letters, but they were not actually contacted. To bring it up again publicly this week was not helpful.
- What I heard you say is that you were hurt and disappointed and that it undermined the group. Thanks for sharing.
- I hear you saying that the letter was accurate, and it says what happened. Thanks for sharing.
- We have seen the chart, and it was sent to us. We have real problems with what you, as a group, consider as outreach. We see your hours, but we do not agree.
- It has been expanded since you have seen it, and we have added considerably more meetings.
- I hear that some of you whose interactions were counted as outreach felt bad that it was counted as outreach and not human-to-human interaction.
- I think that we all came to this effort, except for Paul who was open, with pretty strong convictions about one side or the other. We all came with the expectation that we would have the opportunity to speak our views so the other side would hear us in a way that they had maybe not heard us before. We were sitting in a group selected by City Council, and we were given a task, and maybe we would moderate our position. What we really hoped is

that people would change their position. I knew that BNSCP would not turn their back on Nablus. I would fantasize that they would understand the divisiveness and hurt around this issue, and they would say that they would pull their application and continue what they do. It did not happen. I would support a sister city relationship with Paris in a heartbeat. I think they felt that when opponents saw what good work they were doing and how sincere they were, the opposition will melt away, and everyone would be on board. Neither of those things happened, and it was naïve to think that would. We have worked hard to listen and express ourselves as carefully and accurately as possible, to separate out prejudices and unsubstantiated fears, and to examine what we each consider fears based on fact and experience. I think we have done our best in that way, but no one has changed their positions, and it was foolish of anyone, including City Council, to expect that.

- I saw a neighbor here, and he came to me saying that he had read the letters and he wanted to educate himself. Thanks to all those people for coming. Those letters engaged more and more people. Thank you all for coming.
- I hope that my reason for coming here was not naïve. You just illustrated what I have been trying to communicate all along, that you would sister with Paris in a heartbeat but not my people, Palestinians. That really hurts. I want a place at the table, to belong and to be valued as any other citizen of Boulder, but you continue to communicate that is unacceptable to you.
- It is not your people, and you still do not understand. It is the government and what they have done.
- I hear you saying that it feels like a double standard. I hear that the hurt is about how hard it is to feel anti-Semitism. Every time you generalize that my people are terrorists – you clearly have not been there. You are welcome to go there and experience phenomenal hospitality and generosity. My feeling is that you do not know how it feels to be continually excluded in your own community. We share this sense of exclusion if that is what you reference when you invoke anti-Semitism. But your willingness to sister with anyone except Palestinians is more of the same.
- Thank you for sharing, and I heard you say earlier that your voice did not feel heard in the draft report. I hurt because I left you out of it. I think we can better reflect your voice in the new report.
- We've discussed the harm a Nablus sister city might cause the Boulder Jewish community at length. But that seems at odds with the email from Ira Barron: pro-Israel, pro-Zionist, cousin of a former Israeli ambassador. He sees a Nablus sister city as a positive for Jews because it will increase understanding. So here is a question - are there any folks that think like Ira in your congregations? Or Jews like my wife who doesn't like the Nablus thing but is even more opposed to "the Jewish community" being blamed for shutting down the enthusiasm of fellow citizens? I'm struggling with the depiction of fear in the Jewish community against what seems to be a very wide spectrum of views among local Jews.
- I hear that they do not want to start a scorched earth campaign to get this turned down. I hear that turning this down is a harm to Ira Barron
- It is a no-win situation,
- I know in our membership, there are lots of Jews who participate in our projects over the years because they see the benefit of extending a hand of friendship. Lots of Jews in Boulder are supportive of this and donate every year, and we have Israelis on our Board of Directors. We are a very heterogeneous group and represent many different faiths and perspectives.
- Would your congregation be interested in this?

- I do not think the community is monolithic. There are some more active than others. There is a broad range of opinion. There are some who are uninformed of the nuances of the conflict or the opportunities. I often hear that we should get over our fears, and I feel like that is projecting. This is not about fear of the other or the Palestinian. I stand by what I wrote in my first letter that real engagement and dialogue involves multiple narratives. If City Council passes this, the Jewish community will maybe not be entirely up in arms. Some will be, and some will write letters. We will not have injury to the level that leads to protest. Some will be concerned. We are not monolithic. We have some people who are not connected to the larger Jewish community. I have made my concerns clear enough. This is not going to cause for most Jews a trauma to our community if we “lose”. If we “win” some will say that this is a missed opportunity. I am not sure that this is the place to be building bridges of coexistence. Aziz Abu Sarah believes that peace can be accomplished by tourism. He does not use exactly compassionate listening, but his group brings people to places with open minds, and I find that to be so powerful and so significant. This is not about fear of the other or you or in general. It is a concern about the backlash to the Jewish community. I do not feel great about being demonized about expressing my concerns as constructively as I can. I am concerned about the political ring in Nablus. It does not mean Nablus is a terrible place. People put their stake in the ground without looking at the nuance. At this time, this table does not look at the nuance. That is my answer about the Jewish community.
- The Ira letter seems very nuanced.
- My congregants disagree with me often.
- Would someone with a different perspective feel comfortable voicing their opinions?
- Yes. We even have Republicans.
- There is a difference because I create a safe space for my congregation, and we have a covenant community. They can challenge my thoughts about a two-state solution. Most feedback about my involvement has been good. It is our house, and we will take care of ourselves. People will find another house if I am too far to the right or the left. People can dissent; that is Jewish. Our whole way of learning and growing is through dissent. That is how we grow.
- I know that your work together was hard, and allowing me to be part of it was really hard at different times for each of you. Thank you for allowing me to help you. I have learned so much and am very grateful. I am confident we will come up with a report that everyone can stand behind. I hope that when you speak about this process, you can say that it was hard, but it added value to your life.
- Thank you for your service.