

## MEETING SUMMARY

**City of Boulder**  
**Public Participation Working Group (PPWG)**  
**Tuesday, December 6**  
**4 pm – 7 pm**

**Purpose:** To provide a discussion forum for PPWG members to brainstorm, identify key questions and themes. To identify gaps in PPWG data and knowledge around public participation in Boulder and initiate additional subcommittees as needed.

### Agenda

| Time        | Topic   |
|-------------|---|
| 4:00 – 4:10 | <b>Introductions and Agenda Review</b>  |
| 4:10 – 4:20 | <b>Public Comment</b>   |
| 4:20 – 4:35 | <b>Communications Subcommittee Report and Discussion/Decision</b>   |
| 4:35 – 5:35 | Large Group Discussion: Identify key questions, themes, common threads and outliers that have come up in meetings, public comments and public outreach.<br><br><b>Desired Outcome:</b> Categorize questions, themes and issues to address in subcommittees. Narrow issues and identify gaps in data, knowledge and information gathering. |
| 5:35 – 5:45 | <b>BREAK and Public Engagement</b>  |
| 5:45 – 6:30 | Small Group Discussion: Brainstorm “breakthrough ideas” and examine selected topics emerging from the previous large group discussion.<br><br><b>Desired Outcome:</b> Small groups identify innovative approaches to public participation and dive deeper into key concepts and topics.   |
| 6:30 – 6:40 | <b>Additional Subcommittee Formation based on priorities/topics from the meeting?</b>   |
| 6:40 – 6:50 | <b>Agenda item suggestions for 12/12 Meeting</b>  |
| 6:50 – 7:00 | <b>Public Comment</b>   |

## In Attendance

**PPWG Attendees:** Darvin Ayre, Michael Caplan, Carol Cogswell, Sean Collins, Ann Cooper, Sandra Diaz, Lisa Harris, Marjorie Larner, Brady Robinson, Bill Shrum

**Members of the Public:** Susan Balint, Steve Pomerance, Karen Hollideg, Ben Binder, Lydia Reinig

**City Council Representative:** Lisa Morzel

**City Staff:** Patrick von Keyserling, Jean Gatzka

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

## Meeting #2 Summary

### Introductions and Welcome

Group exercise to get to know each other. Each group member shared something that they didn't think anyone would know about them.

### Public Comment

Karen Hollideg – Has been involved in PP for decades with OSMP and less with planning department. The thing that I find aggravating about PP is getting to the end of a long PP and finding out that the deal was baked before the PP ever started (by staff or administrative levels or staff and an interest group involved in discussions early on) – the truth always comes out in the end. Must be done and planned early on before decisions are made so that people involved know that their PP helped frame the results.

Idea of small group facilitators from the community has been good. But last night, the North Boulder facilitator had no idea what was going on in South Boulder (i.e. flooding), etc. Totally unaware of issues and reality. Facilitator could not articulate the group's views because she was clueless about it.

Steve Pomerance – Has been thinking about PPWG job since they got started. Ultimate determination of whether PP works is if decision-makers are receptive to it. If receptive, anything works, if not, nothing works. The measure of success is the interaction with and feedback between citizens and decision-makers. Example: when I was on City Council, we started to invite people to come testify on hot topics of the evening, people knew that they were going to testify and people would ask questions.

One way to improve process is to do good policy work:

1. Problem statement
2. Alternatives
3. Weigh the pros and cons
4. Interaction of Alternatives

Policy work must be done up front to clarify issues, then get input on actual issues you need input on. That is not being done right now.

If I was on PPWG, I would look at specific instances on what has happened in the City, need to go through specific examples. 1) Right-sizing, i.e. staff actually did an analysis of benefits of right sizing on bike accidents, but this hasn't been made public. 2) Co-ops, no policy has been done. 3) Design of Energy Efficiency programs (weren't working) – 40 experts assembled (finance, outreach, etc) totally open and anyone could show up, BUT if you weren't an expert, you looked like a jerk. Nationally recognized program

Ben Binder – I think the public can really help. Registered engineering and land surveyor. When University negotiated a secret land purchase property until the day when the papers were signed with Regent. Land was in the S. Boulder Creek Flood Plain. After gravel operation took place and gravel removed, FEMA did a new flood plan study and it was determined that these lands were out of the flood plain. How could this happen?? It was against City and Council policy to allow big earthen levies. Called back to Alexander Virginia, well, that berm is an original topography and don't need to be permitted. Wait! This land didn't exist 15 years ago? Is this intentional fraud or incompetence to get land out of floodplain to sell land?

City does not know how to negotiate, does not know how to play hardball with CU. Citizens need to be able to provide expertise and knowledge. Many staff haven't been here. Citizens need to be involved in day-to-day meetings.

Susan Balint – All of my comments are cumulative. Glad you got the one from yesterday that lists my concerns from last meetings. NEPA – tried to do research and pull together standard interdisciplinary collaborations. NEPA – designed to evaluate environmental and cumulative impacts – Context. These guidelines from NEPA can be applied to other PP movements. Neighborhood Summit – should have been directed to staff, they don't understand how to incorporate public input. Council should not be elected at large, cannot get to them because they are not. This group is not subject to Open Meeting Law – it is an advisory committee, not decision-makers

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### **Communications Sub-Committee Report and Discussion**

We did our own analysis about whether we are subject to open meeting laws; rather than a special letter, good to find other municipalities that have done this. We do not think we are subject to open meeting laws.

**We have a proposed solution:** Google Group. On-going meeting that doesn't end and invite and observe. Transparency is essential, beyond reproach; try to satisfy in spirit.

The Google Group is a solution to collaborate and communicate; google group, e-mail list; web interface, see what is posted on-line. Served as an interactive platform for the group that is open to the public.

**Questions remain:** Who can e-mail the group and moderate? Should we only distribute approved public comments? Can we link this to City's PPWG webpage?

**Goal of the group:** We don't want an on-line discussion to take the place of a meaningful discussion.

When we come across articles; share with everyone and available to everyone electronically and have anyone else comment. Chat room kind of thing, but vetting and information sharing. Overwhelmed by e-mails; circumspect about how we do this. Principle of not to overwhelm each other.

**Group Agreement:** PPWG agrees to experiment with Google Group— see what we can do; sharing the information in the overall community. At the moment communication is too clunky, public comments.

The public weigh in and will be moderated. At the PPWG meetings, group comes back to summarize what is happening on-line. Group discusses key topics back at the meetings.

Creating a practice that can be done just for PPWG or is it replicable. We need to push the City to get at this.

Minimum website – instructions on where to go; notes to the summary; easier way to

PPWG will develop protocols on this document for the Google group. (i.e. public comment, topics, group work).

## Discussion Circle:

### Proposed Subcommittees

1. Systems and culture of engagement
2. Standards and principals for public process
3. Issue Identification subcommittee
4. Case Studies
5. Best Practices/Worst Practices

### These subcommittees are explained further below:

There was some discussion about creating **short**, **medium** and **long-term** recommendations (i.e. What can council get done immediately!! What issues are more long-term and how do they continue??) Short-term goals could help validate the process to ensure it is working

1. Systems and Culture of Engagement
  - a. Need a cultural and systemic view of how we move forward
  - b. Vision of what we want Boulder to be
  - c. Explore decision-making processes
  - d. Can there be more informal/unofficial meetings with decision-makers and community
  - e. Can there be dialogues with decision-makers? (e.g. informal co-op meeting between Council members and community)
  - f. How do we approach the problem that the decision has already been made? When is there a benefit to the City to hear from people early on?
  - g. Education plan - How do we structure and educate the public on how to participate?
  - h. What “story” are we telling?  
How do we ensure that the decision-makers in our community that really care about public participation?

2. Standards and principals for public process (some suggested this topic go under Systems and Culture Subcommittee)
  - a. looking into different departments and what they do
  - b. Can the public participation process be standardized across departments? Development of a city-wide process or principles?
  - c. How do we engage the public in a timely manner?
  - d. How do we report back to the community?
  - e.
  
3. Issue Identification subcommittee
  - a. Eg, diversity, developing problem statements – how are we going to get this information
  - b. How do we create interview questions to get answers from people?
  - c. Need space to hear from a lot more stakeholders.
  - d. Education is an issue a lot of people are not currently engaged because they don't show up at meetings and go to council. These people do not respond to a single form of questioning like this. If we are doing things the same old way, doing things that don't work – don't want to see that codified.
  - e. How can we organize interest groups? How do we address crime, housing, quality of life?
  - f. Need to look at the “real Boulder” and what is facing all of the different citizens
  
4. Case Studies
  - a. Deep dive into some case studies as suggested by Steve P. e.g. right-sizing, co-ops,
  - b. Need to look at what went wrong and what went right – Identify common themes
  - c. Use case studies as a communication strategy to help illuminate specific issues to decision-makers
  - d. Low-income housing work group
  - e. Armory in North Boulder
  - f. Airbnb
  - g. Boulder Valley Comp Plan
  - h. How does policy support PP?
  - i. Need to diagnose problem
  
5. Best Practices/Worst Practices
  - a. Develop Outreach tactics – e.g. “Do you want to meet with city staff? Come to open meeting? Unofficial meeting?”
  - b. IMPORTANT to consider that education is a loaded term and needs to be used carefully
  - c. Demonstrate what works well and how to engage more people
  - d. Produce a list of tactics that work – use case studies as guidance.
  - e. How does policy inform practices

**Questions to Help Narrow this discussion?**

Where are the challenges and difficulties that we can suss out?

What is the root cause – the city needs more leadership == people willing to take a stand and lead.

How do we do this? Executive Leadership committee?

Do we need an internal process advisory group?

### **Agenda Topics for 12/12 Meeting**

- A. Next steps and actions concerning subcommittee group formation -- develop and standardize a structure and report-out system for subcommittees
- B. Subcommittee scoping and issue spotting - do this in break-out groups?
- C. 10 minute review of how Google Group is working
- D. Revisit the PPWG Charge to ensure that group is on track
- E. Plan for how do we invite PP and comments?
- F. Discuss PPWG Report for Council
- G. Develop a Questionnaire to start collecting additional data from the public

### **January Agenda Items:**

- A. Public engagement event/workshop/outreach??
  - B. Re-examination of June timeline for final recommendations
- Issue area Scoping and doing breakout groups

### **Public Comment**

Karen Hollideg – I've enjoyed listening. The group talks a lot about Council, Staff and Citizens. What about the role of the City Manager? She plays a key role in all of this from case studies

Susan Balint – encouraged by this group. Creating a vision statement is extremely important and what they recognize as problem.

Systemic and cultural change

1. Inclusiveness – staff and city saying I want you in (an attitude coming from the city)
2. Participation – I'm willing to participate
3. Engagement – end process of these two components coming together

There are no cross-conversation – this only happens if you have an “in” with a council member.

The public outreach needs to come from the city reaching out to every city – a different mode of reaching out. I liked the idea of Town Hall meetings with 1-2 council members. Attitude of inclusiveness.

Case studies are also a good idea -- Right-size, coops, etc.