

City of Boulder

Public Participation Working Group

October 26, 2016

Draft Operating Protocols

I. Public Participation Working Group Purpose

The purpose of the Public Participation Working Group is to develop meaningful and actionable recommendations that improve dialogue between the city (Council, Boards and staff) and community members, resulting in increased transparency and civic representation in decision-making processes, improved relationships and informed community conversations.

II. Working Group Charge

The Public Participation Working Group (PPWG or Working Group) will:

- Review and assess current city public processes and decision making;
- Identify best practices, current successes and lessons learned from previous city efforts;
- Employ active listening communication techniques to ensure mutual understanding of both parties.
- Recommend ways for making improvements for civic engagement processes which foster success for both the city (Council, Boards, staff) and community members;
- Make recommendations to the City Council and Boards and community about possible modifications to public participation processes that improve the effectiveness of city decision making;
- Make recommendations that promote mutual respect and clarify responsibilities of the city (Council, Boards, staff) and community members to engage with and listen to each other more effectively.

Note: The PPWG will not make recommendations that address specific City projects. Instead, the PPWG will use lessons from the past and/or current projects to focus on ways to improve future civic engagement processes and efforts across the city.

III. Background

At the request of City Council during the January 2016 council retreat and based on public feedback, city staff conducted a series of interviews with members of the community who expressed interest in improving public process in the City of Boulder. Those interviews were analyzed and recommendations were shared with City Council in a [memo dated May 3, 2016](#).¹ Based upon the interviews, staff recommended and Council approved the formation of an advisory group to improve dialogue between the city (Council, Boards and staff) and community members that results in more thoughtful decision making and improved relationships.

In order to organize the PPWG, a small working group was created, including three facilitators, one City Council member, and three staff members dedicated to this purpose. This group reviewed applications and made recommendations to the City Manager regarding PPWG membership, based on participants' ability to meet the established criteria and other considerations. The work of this small working group has concluded.

IV. Responsibilities and Obligations

1. City Manager and Council

The City Manager and City Council hold decision-making authority regarding implementation of the PPWG recommendations.

Councilwoman Lisa Morzel will attend monthly PPWG meetings as the City Council representative and observer.

2. Individual Working Group Members

PPWG members are expected to:

- a. Attend PPWG meetings estimated at 1 meeting per month.
- b. Review materials prior to PPWG meetings, i.e. technical documents, background information, public comments and meeting notes.
- c. Be prepared to participate in sub-committee groups as determined and formed based on the direction of PPWG members.
- d. Potentially participate in a public meeting / public review of PPWG products in order to gather feedback.

¹ 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>.

- e. Be prepared to present recommendations to City Council.

3. City Staff

City staff will serve as a technical resource to the PPWG including, but not limited to, providing administrative technical and communications support, responding to questions, and providing other meeting support. City staff will also provide information regarding ongoing process improvements related to the charge of PPWG.

4. Facilitators

The facilitators from CDR Associates will remain impartial to the substance of the issues under discussion and are responsible to the whole group and not to any one PPWG member. The facilitators will enforce ground rules and discussion guidelines that have been established and accepted by the PPWG in the first meeting.

Facilitators will draft and finalize PPWG agenda with guidance and feedback from the PPWG, develop meeting materials and provide meeting summaries in coordination with PPWG members and staff. The facilitators will ensure that important information is available to the PPWG in advance of each meeting and posted on the website afterward.

A PPWG e-mail list will be created to serve as clearinghouse for information to be shared with the other PPWG members. The facilitators will ensure that meeting materials and other public correspondence is distributed to the PPWG five (5) business days in advance of the meetings.

V. Decision Making

As noted above, responsibility for adopting the PPWG recommendations will rest with the City Manager and City Council.

Working Group Recommendations

The PPWG will strive to reach consensus on recommendations to the City Manager and City Council. Consensus in this context is defined as a process for reaching agreement that does not rely on voting, and consensus recommendations are generally ones with which all members can agree. However, consensus does not mean unanimity. Some members may strongly endorse a particular recommendation or solution while others may accept it as a workable agreement. A

consensus is reached when all parties agree that their major interests have been taken into consideration and addressed in a satisfactory manner.

In the event that a consensus is not reached on a given issue, a PPWG member has several options:

- a. A PPWG member who is not in agreement with the general opinion in the group may "stand aside" and not block the consensus,
- b. A PPWG member may stand aside, allow the rest of the group to reach a consensus, and request the inclusion of a minority report be added to the final agreement/recommendations, or
- c. If no consensus is reached, the PPWG may announce that there was not an agreement on a particular issue or recommendation. The complete views and perspectives of PPWG members will be forwarded to the Council for their consideration and decision making.

VI. Working Group Process

1. Communication

- a. Internal: The PPWG e-mail list will serve as clearinghouse for information to be shared with the other PPWG members. The email address is:
publicparticipationworkinggroup@bouldercolorado.gov
Members will not directly receive messages sent to the email list. The facilitators will distribute meeting materials and other public correspondence to the PPWG.
- b. External: The City will maintain a website, <https://bouldercolorado.gov/city-council/public-participation-working-group>. This website will contain meeting schedule, agendas and summaries. The website will also include a "Resources" tab to house materials related to the PPWG charge. If PPWG members would like to post related resources to the website, they can send suggested links to City staff. City staff will not be able to post unauthorized resources that infringe upon copyright law, including unauthorized uploads, downloads, or links.

2. Sub-committees Formation

Sub-committees may be established to explore specific issues in greater depth. Sub-committees will be determined and formed based on the direction of PPWG members. The PPWG sub-committee members will communicate any relevant small group

discussions with the full PPWG membership to ensure that the entire PPWG benefits from sub-committee discussions.

VII. Discussion Guidelines

The following guidelines will be used to encourage productive deliberations and decision making. Members of PPWG will commit to “best efforts” at following the guidelines and give the facilitators the authority to enforce them:

1. It is crucial that everyone have a chance to be heard and to hear others.

PPWG members will:

- Pay attention to what is being discussed in the meeting and avoid side conversations or distractions (phone calls etc.)
- Allow people to speak and refrain from making interruptions
- Be brief and speak to the point

2. It is important to find creative, innovative solutions.

PPWG Members will:

- Provide opportunities for each other to present proposals and requests
- Avoid judging ideas prematurely and try to remain open minded
- Look for ways to improve proposals
- Promote positive behaviors that result in agreement

3. Disagreements are inevitable; however they should be focused on the issues involved rather than on the people holding a particular view.

PPWG Members will:

- Raise issues or concerns in a productive fashion and as early as possible
- Address one another in respectful ways
- Clearly articulate, after deliberation and when appropriate, whether a particular PPWG recommendation can be supported

VIII. Observers and Public Involvement

The goal of the Working Group process is to develop meaningful recommendations on how to improve public processes in Boulder. Frank and open discussions of the issues and options to address them is essential. Therefore, ideas discussed in the process of the dialogue, prior to agreement by the whole group, are for discussion purposes only and should not be construed to reflect the final position of a PPWG member.

PPWG meetings are open to the public. However, in order for the PPWG to achieve its objective, discussion and deliberation at PPWG meetings must be focused and manageable. Participation by non-members of the PPWG will be at the discretion of the PPWG. The PPWG will establish protocols for non-member participation.

PPWG meetings will experiment with different public involvement protocols throughout the process in an effort to test and prototype different mechanisms to engage the public throughout the process. These may include a period for public comment at meetings, asking the public to provide e-mail comments to the PPWG members, or public outreach initiatives.

In addition, public outreach meetings may be held after development of the draft Recommendations to raise awareness and solicit broader input. PPWG members will be encouraged to provide outreach assistance for public meetings to raise broader awareness of the issues under discussion. Information, including meeting notes, will be posted at <https://bouldercolorado.gov/city-council/public-participation-working-group>.

IX. Communication with the Public and the Media

Meetings of the PPWG will be open to the public, including the media. The PPWG process is a solution-oriented, problem solving approach, not a platform for lobbying the public through individual conversations or the media. The media is permitted to capture all comments during public meetings. PPWG members may speak to the media on their own behalf but not on behalf of the PPWG as a group. No PPWG member will characterize the point of view of other PPWG members. Stakeholders may refer any questions about the PPWG process to the facilitator.

X. PPWG Meeting Schedule

The PPWG will meet approximately 10 times from September through June 2017 to develop recommendations. Monthly meeting dates will be established and agreed upon by the PPWG members. Proposed meeting dates follow from from 4pm to 7pm.

- September 19, 2016
- October 17, 2016
- November 14, 2016
- December 12, 2016
- January 9, 2017
- February 13, 2017
- March 20, 2017
- April 10, 2017
- May 8, 2017
- June 12, 2017

Note: Light snacks and coffee will be provided at the meeting.