November 3, 2016
Comments To: Members of the Public Participation Working Group (PPWG)

"If You Always Do What You've Always Done, You Always Get What You've Always Gotten." *Quote attributed to: Henry Ford and many other innovative thinkers*

I spoke to you at the closure of your October 17th meeting with frustration at what I was again observing: A group of intelligent and vested work-group members, chosen to address a long standing public participation problem/perception, being skillfully herded through a process structured by Staff without Staff stepping back and trusting the group to explore and understand the problem within its own determination of direction, parameters and investigation.

Following are the issues I addressed at your meeting, other issues I did not have time to address and a perspective of the problem with some solutions.

- The physical set-up of a U-shaped conversation area facing away from observers is uninviting to anyone attending as an observer or wishing to give productive input. It is a set-up that is dismissive to non-workgroup attendees and eliminates, in part, non-verbal observations by all parties. Council, as the City's workgroup, faces attendees when they are in session, and workgroups should observe the same protocol.
- Public Participation: I would encourage the workgroup to set a time, preferably at the beginning and end of the meetings to allow the public in attendance to address the workgroup, for no other reason than the more differing views and suggestions you can get, the more substantive the outcome will be.
- The workgroup should not be pre-limited to the number of recommendations it passes to Council.
- I would also encourage the workgroup to direct staff to forward email input to workgroup members as the emails are received and not try and restrict any workgroup member in how they might respond. There is an argument that addresses the problem of 'over-whelm' when input information is presented for review as one, large packet. In addition, It is a bit incongruous that a workgroup chosen to work through improving the problem of public participation, is being led to consider how to receive, limit and structure how public input is to be reviewed/answered. Trying to sanitize and over-structure how this input is received and responded to by the workgroup will be counter-productive. It will stymie the process of peeling-the-onion to get to the real problems that have created this relationship dysfunction between the City and Staff, and the Public.
- Minutes of the meetings, as well as the final compilation of recommendations, should include summaries of the comments by the public.
- I would encourage the workgroup to reach out in an open and aggressive manner to hear from those that feel disenfranchised so you can try and see patterns that may be core to the problem.

I would suggest that the workgroup would end up being more empowered, and the public would have more confidence in your deliberations, if your group considered the following:

- Chose a work-group leader or foreman amongst yourselves to work through the groups management of discussions/direction and number of future meetings, if a limit must be set. Please remember, this is at least a decade-and-a-half problem that the Council is now asking you to involve yourselves with.
- Redirect the Staff and Facilitator, chosen by Staff, to be considered as assets and observers for the group rather than orchestrators and leaders of the workgroup.
- Have the agendas/minutes/research that the workgroup wants compiled to be directed <u>by</u> the workgroup <u>to</u> Staff/Facilitator as task assignments rather than be pre-arranged, directed or orchestrated, as is currently being done <u>by</u> the Staff. What I am again observing is the pattern of a "herding" approach to keep the group contained and controlled by the premise that the Staff knows how to best utilize the workgroup and to then structure their progress along with a Facilitator to keep the group on this pathway. There is a strong reason for my suggestion: Council wants this problem solved and Staff has been directing and structuring public input for many years in a way that has created either a real or perceived disenfranchisement of the public input process. So to be following the same orchestrated structure of

meetings involving the public and workgroups would seem to doom any real new approach for change. The old adage I started with rings true: If you do the same thing over and over, the results will ultimately be the same.

- I would suggest that the "DRAFT MEETING FRAMEWORK' as prepared by Staff and presented at the October 17th meeting be re-assessed by the workgroup so that the workgroup can operate as the leaders of this process rather than the followers. In particular, the subject chosen by staff for the November 14th meeting under "Identifying issues/problem statements",1st bullet that states, "How do we prioritize public outreach with limited resources?" I would comment that the Council has been stymied by why the public feels disenfranchised for many, many years because Staff has been representing to Council that they are doing a great job of public outreach. Council is now recognizing that there is a disconnect between what they are being told by Staff, and what they are hearing from the public. As a result, Council is finally trying to solve this problem by inviting the public (your workgroup) to investigate and come up with solutions. So "cost", should not be a consideration for problem solving by this group…..Council needs to put their money where their mouth is…..and stifling your creative solutions should not be stifled in any way by interjecting a cost consideration. If you come up with ideas that require investment of money, Staff can be directed to get approval for the expenditure. It should not be your job to limit your creative process by cost considerations as you are the ideas people, not the budgeting people.
- In addition, please note that the theme throughout the prearranged future Agenda presentations/discussions revolves around you making decisions about public participation based on Staff's view of how, why, when they do what they do. There is no meeting scheduled to consider frustration by the public with what they see as staff process flaws, and no suggested methods of outreach to the public to aggressively draw in this information.
- Each Agenda should have a line item for group discussion of any email, verbal, phone call or letter input that any workgroup member has received since the last meeting. Minutes of the meetings should include reference to this as this is the only way the public can be assured that their voices are being considered.

Now for other issues I would ask the workgroup to consider as ideas for bettering public participation.

- Planning Department and City of Boulder Website Calendars:
  Stop using abbreviations or acronyms for committee, workgroup or any city sponsored meetings on any and all calendars. Currently there is no legend of what the abbreviations or acronyms mean so the public is not being correctly informed about meetings they may want to attend. I made this request of the Staff member who prepares the planning department calendar a week ago and so far she only made the changes on the October Calendar.
- The City Website Calendar is in an obscure location, in the very upper right part of the page in dark lettering. It should be front and center, should have tips on how to affectively use it with the name and phone number of the person to call if there is something missing or if someone has questions about the calendar.
- <u>All</u> city sponsored meetings should be listed on the Calendar. As of last week, the CAMP (Chautauqua Access Management Plan) workgroup meetings had not been listed on any of the calendars, even though they have had 2 meetings.
- Request individual Council Members to meet with the public in "town hall" format, rotating through the different regional areas of the city at regular scheduled intervals so the public can interact with them on an informal, public basis. There is a valid reason for this: Currently, since the Council is elected "at large", the citizens have no single representative to talk with. There is no incentive for a council person to do this because they are not elected by district, but by the whole city "at large".
  At-large council representation for towns of our size is counter-productive for the public's ability to be heard, because the public has no district representative to go to who relies on staying connected with his/her constituents in order to be re-elected. This Band-Aid patch for town-hall meetings would help to overcome part of this problem.
- Involve the public in controversial City think-tank ideas from the beginning of the discussion instead of after Council has handed it to Staff and Staff has already started structuring the process and outcome.
- Put controversial decisions to the vote of the electorate, such as the Co-Op issue, instead of to an in-house Council decision where the public perception is that Council and Staff are doing an end-run around the voters to avoid a ballot vote for rezoning.

- All workgroups should allow public input at some point in the scheduled meetings. For the same reasons I stated above.
- There should be far more public outreach through multiple avenues, including door-to-door leaflets or mail notices/surveys prepared by an impartial party or jointly by opposing views when any issue affecting the citizens is under discussion. The more you focus on the public having to search out the information on line, the more you will not reach whole segments of the citizenry.
- Council members should post opposing views of pet projects they are supporting so that they can be seen by the public as looking fairly at the bigger picture of both sides of an issue. All too often, the web links posted by Council on the Hotline are one sided and makes the member look partial, rather than open, to finding a well researched path.

I would like to point out that all of you on the workgroup are successful, intelligent, adult people who make decisions in your everyday lives that help to manage and improve your families, your business, your departments and your jobs. You have problem solving skills without always having to have someone else tell you the steps you need to go through to find a successful solution. You know how to validate and evaluate. You know how to look at a problem you have not faced before and work through the deductive reasoning to find a solution. When something is going wrong over and over, you know that if you do not interrupt the cycle that is creating the problem, you will not get a different result.

In my opinion, you have been placed in a workgroup, to follow a pre-selected path of discovery that is comfortable to Staff because it maintains their control over the process. But in reality, it is the path that has caused much of the dissention between the public and Council. It is not a blame game, but rather an acknowledgement that the public, in many cases, has been put in the position of input after-the-fact, such as the Folsom living lab decision. The public has been put in the position of listening to what is best for them through carefully crafted presentations and carefully selected memberships into workgroups so that there is as little opportunity for dissention as possible. The current process used by Staff is driving the dialogue instead of the dialogue driving the process. This ends up backfiring through the public's outcry of being ignored, as has been the case over and over here in Boulder. If staff could move toward a point of trusting the public as part of the creative process, knowing that it is sometimes messy, there would be less criticism of being disenfranchised. The idea is to accept the value of a bottom-up approach to solutions instead of a top-down approach.

I would love to witness a first meeting of a Boulder workgroup chosen by Staff that would go something like this:

Staff: "You have all been chosen for your interest in this issue. We have also chosen you because you have expressed a level of knowledge of what is the problem we are trying to solve. We have tried to balance the group to include a significant number of members of the public we have not had any previous relationship with, so we get new and fresh ideas from people that have had limited or no involvement with the City on workgroups, Boards, contracts or in-house employment.

We would first like you to discuss amongst yourselves generally what you perceive the issue is that we are here to address. We would like you to tell us, as Staff, what you would like our involvement to be. Would you like a professional Facilitator or do you feel comfortable in your own abilities to productively work through this process? We know this may seem messy at first, but we have faith that as you all work together, a unified direction will present itself.

Please choose a leader amongst yourselves to run your meetings. Give us a heads-up of how often you would like to meet, what you would like us to have on the upcoming agendas for discussion, who you would like to interview, what research you would like us to prepare for your review and generally if you want to have a timeline to work through or if you would like to work through to solutions in an open-ended timeline. We want you to listen to Staff and the Public about this so that you can let us know how we can improve and how the public can feel engaged.

We will assist you in any way we can, but we want you, as the workgroup members to direct this process since Staff's approach in the past has evidently fallen short of what the public expects of us."

I hope this workgroup can produce meaningful results. I believe all of my comments fall within the intent of the 'Working Group Purpose" statement.

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