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CITY OF SHORELINE

SHORELINE COMMUNITY FORUM SUMMARY MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

Thursday, April 1, 2004
7:30 p.m.

Bethel Lutheran Church of Shoreline
17418 8th Ave. NE, Shoreline

PRESENT: Councilmembers Chang, Grace, and Ransom

PRESENT IN AUDIENCE: Deputy Mayor Jepsen

ABSENT: Mayor Hansen, Councilmembers Gustafson and Fimia

1. CALL TO ORDER/FLAG SALUTE

Councilmember Grace called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. He reviewed the meeting schedule and stated that purpose of the forums is to seek input on what communication avenues between Council and the public work well, what could be improved, and whether input from the public is adequately addressed and incorporated into Council decision making.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

(a) Virginia Paulsen, Shoreline stated that she would like the City's *Currents* publication to be issued more frequently. She also suggested that the website provide information on all pending decisions by elected and appointed officials. She felt that three minutes of public comment was insufficient. She liked the format of the present "Town Hall" meeting, held in various locations on different dates, and hoped that there would be more such meetings for important Council decisions.

(b) Charlotte Haines, Shoreline, stated that she appreciated the original opportunities for involvement of the public in Council decisions, such as through the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committees (CPAC's), when the City first incorporated. She felt also that Council listened to the public when there was a debate over lot size. She recognized the need for Council to rely on staff to form good opinions. She also recalled the 1997 commission that was set up to evaluate how Council communicates with the public, and that Council implemented all of the commission's suggestions.

(c) Mark Deutsch, Shoreline, stated that the City started out well and considered public input, with the CPAC's, the Council of Neighborhoods, and the use of committees and boards on master plans. He suggested that the City provide information

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to the public on how they can best engage in the city process. He requested that information about specific decision points and decision makers be outlined for different issues. He expressed frustration at having wanted to provide input on the Interurban Trail plan, when it was never clear at what point there was an opportunity to do so. He discussed property development permits as another example of the process being unclear. He said it appears that there are other points beyond Planning Commission meetings at which one might comment. He recommended that the City establish a Citizenship Academy that would educate residents about the public process. Mr. Deutsch then said he didn't see how citizen input informs the Council Vision and Goals. He supported the idea of holding Town Hall meetings to allow for a less formal and more interactive conversation with Council. He expressed hope that there would be a return to civility and good intent at Council meetings, and that those who choose to speak would be polite.

(d) Harley O'Neil, Shoreline, reviewed his personal history in Shoreline and his efforts at making it a "proud city" by investing in property and encouraging others to do so. He said that he watches Channel 21 and appreciates Councilmembers giving their time to serve the City. He said that he feels he has had access to the Council. He requested that *Currents* be published more frequently. Mr. O'Neil explained that the only negative he saw in the public process was the negativity at Council meetings. He closed by expressing optimism for the City's future, including the completion of the Aurora Corridor Project.

(e) Diane Murray, Shoreline, said that having lived in Shoreline less than two years, she hadn't been aware of all the sources of information available to the public until recently. She said she found Councilmembers more than willing to listen to the public. She felt that the public comment time should be five minutes, so that speakers could make their points without feeling rushed. She supported LaNita Wacker's idea of allowing citizens to make 10-15 minute presentations to Council. She said that for emotionally charged or controversial issues, being rushed makes the discussion sound irrational. She felt that the citizen survey is limited because it is "one-dimensional" and doesn't allow for development of ideas. She supported more direct interchange between the public and Council.

(f) Dick Lemmon, Shoreline, reviewed the history of the City's incorporation. He felt that the survey was not useful. He addressed questions asked in the survey and criticized the design of the North City Business District Improvements Project. He didn't believe that three minutes was sufficient for speakers to make convincing arguments to Council.

(g) Pamela Steele, Shoreline, said that as Director of Communications of a large public entity, she understands that all public agencies have the same challenges. She felt that public agencies want input from the public and also want it understood that if the agency doesn't do what is suggested, it doesn't mean that they don't listen. She said that Shoreline is on par with or exceeds the communication methods of other public entities. She expressed doubt that increasing the opportunities for public input would improve the quality or increase the amount of comments the City receives. She

suggested that the City take advantage of email and develop a "Key Communicators" distribution list of community leaders. She recommended that the City use this list to send alerts to people who would then share with others in the community, and that the City also request of the Key Communicators that they let the City know when the public has questions or hears rumors about City activities. Ms. Steele then commented that more people may not be attending Council meetings either because they trust what Council is doing or because they are put off by the negative tone. She urged Council to make and implement decisions and not be delayed longer by the same group of people. She said that she expects decisions to be made in a timely and efficient manner for the benefit of the City as a whole. She submitted a decision-making matrix that she said was helpful in defining the public process appropriate for different types of decisions. Ms. Steele closed stating the Council does a commendable job involving the public, and that it is up to the public to take advantage of these opportunities.

(h) Marlin Gabbert, Shoreline, supported Ms. Steele's comments. He said that he agreed with the Council's vision for the City over the last eight years. He felt that Council was doing a good job of providing opportunities for input, such as through charrettes, meetings, and open houses. Mr. Gabbert said that many people aren't able to attend meetings, but that if the Council starts "moving off target," then they would hear from more people. He supported the Town Hall idea and hoped for more civility at meetings. He said he liked having the opportunity to break up into smaller workgroups in the CPAC meetings and suggested that Council provide such a meeting structure in the future. He expressed frustration that he doesn't get Channel 21 through his cable service. Mr. Gabbert closed by saying that he disliked the fact that the same people repeated the same comments at meetings.

(i) Walt Hagen, Shoreline, said that the City is going to great lengths to meet the letter of the law but not the spirit of the law. Public hearings, he felt, had a predetermined outcome. He explained that it is difficult for people to remain civil after coming before Council again and again, and that they grow exasperated and feel that Council is not listening to them while they speak. He criticized the recent Planning Commission appointment process, stating that the process accepted by the public was not followed. He stated that Council is elected to represent the people but that City staff doesn't respect public input. He accused staff of "spinning the numbers" in publications to benefit staff or "individuals who seem to have some very significant interests." Mr. Hagen said he would like to see his input at meetings "mapped" to Council decisions and felt that Council should provide a written response to all comments made at meetings. He repeated his claim that except for development groups who may "shade" the truth, "the public has no reason to lie to the City." Mr. Hagen closed by encouraging Council to return to citizen committees to receive more input from residents.

(j) Dale Wright, Shoreline, said that since incorporation, Council has aggressively sought citizen input. He noted that in 1997 Council hired consultants to make recommendations to improve public involvement, and that Council implemented the entire recommended program. He felt that most complainants form a "small, vocal group," not the majority of citizens, whom he feels are satisfied with the system. He

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suggested that this group is displeased because the Council does not act upon their input, but that the Council is not obligated to, nor would it be possible for Council to follow all citizen input. He listed the various means of providing input for any citizen who wants to express his or her views. He emphasized that citizen input is important, but that it is only part of the decision-making process, which includes recommendations from staff, consultants, legal counsel, and other public agencies. He said he felt that the citizens had all the tools they need to participate. Mr. Wright stated that many people see public comment as "badly abused," and recommended that public comment periods not be televised. He encouraged Council to keep in perspective all citizens' views when listening to public comment.

(k) Mary Jo Heller, Shoreline, thanked Council for holding these public input meetings. She stated that she has spoken to every past Councilmember informally and at Council meetings, and that even when she was opposed to a Council decision, she has always felt listened to. She emphasized that being listened to and agreeing are two different things. She supported Mr. Wright's idea of not televising public comments. Ms. Heller noted that a phone survey of residents revealed that people don't have time to attend meetings. She said that she was embarrassed by behavior at Council meetings, which she said would not be tolerated at a junior high school assembly. She said that people don't go to meetings because they see what the meetings are like on television. She expressed enthusiasm for the Interurban Trail and Aurora Corridor Project.

(l) Steve Cushonen, Shoreline, said that he moved to Shoreline because it was quiet, yet near Seattle. He felt that when the City incorporated, the need for tax revenue drove land use decisions, making the city lose its character. He expressed concern that the City is still losing its character, and that Council isn't listening to people on this issue. He said that as a working student, he is unable to attend Council meetings. He suggested that Council take advantage of new technology to allow live broadcasts of meetings over the Internet and have call-in and emailed public comments, as is done on television talk shows. Mr. Cushonen said that this would allow people with tight schedules or those with limited mobility to participate in Council meetings.

(m) Dennis Heller, Shoreline, thanked the Council for providing the opportunity to speak and for giving their time in public service. He stated that he felt listened to, even when he disagrees with Council. He agreed with Dale Wright, and stated that the public has many routes to access Council. He felt that process gets in the way of action. He said that the Shoreline Merchants Association, which he sees as an anti-government group representing a minority opinion, has "created Hell" in City Council meetings. He urged Council to go with decisions that have been made. He felt that bringing up the subject of decision-making may in itself be a delay technique on the part of the Shoreline Merchants Association. Mr. Heller felt that the majority of citizens' opinions shouldn't be thwarted by a small minority.

(n) Ken Cottingham, Shoreline, recommended that Council could communicate better with the public through small-scale public works projects. He recommended that the City focus on building sidewalks and improving street lighting,

and he went into detail on right-of-way width and other technical issues. He asked that Council schedule meetings so that they do not conflict with other public meetings. Mr. Cottingham then requested that Council meetings be broadcast the day after the meeting takes place. He said he was surprised by how many people watch the Council meetings, and he commented that the quality of the video and sound on the broadcasts has improved.

Councilmember Ransom asked if there were any others who wished to speak in the remaining time.

(o) Virginia Paulsen, Shoreline, commented that as Precinct Community Officer for East Central Shoreline, she has been disappointed by public indifference to City issues. She described residents as being too exhausted with their own lives to become involved. She felt that when only a few people come to meetings regularly it is because those people in particular are "energized," and that it is a general problem that others do not have the energy to participate.

(p) Dick Lemmon, Shoreline, described how commenting on decisions made by city planners seems ineffective. He also felt that staff was unresponsive to citizen's service requests and suggested to Council that they "need to get a whip and go after their hired hands."

Seeing no further attendees who wished to make public comment, the meeting recessed. Councilmember Grace thanked those who attended and noted that the public comments on this topic would be compiled and considered at the next Council Retreat. The meeting then reconvened for another comment from the public.

(q) Janet Way, Shoreline, thanked Council for taking up the issue of public involvement. She expressed support for LaNita Wacker's suggestions from the previous forum. She requested that Council hold more forums to allow more give-and-take between Council and the public. She described the process of the 32nd District Democrats platform committee meeting, where ideas are hammered out to create a higher quality position. She recommended that Council include public comment at the end of both meeting formats, because she said it is confusing for people to remember which of Workshops and Regular Meetings has a public comment period at the end. She also asked that Council extend the public comment time allowed for each speaker.

3. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:30 p.m., Councilmember Grace declared the meeting adjourned.

Carol Shenk, Deputy City Clerk

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