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Revised--March 29, 2004

## CITY OF SHORELINE

### SHORELINE COMMUNITY FORUM SUMMARY MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

Monday, March 29, 2004  
7:30 p.m.

Shoreline Conference Center  
Mt. Rainier Room

PRESENT: Councilmembers Fimia, Grace, and Ransom

PRESENT IN AUDIENCE: Deputy Mayor Jepsen, Councilmembers Chang and Gustafson

ABSENT: Mayor Hansen

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER/FLAG SALUTE

Councilmember Ransom called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and led the flag salute. He announced the schedule for the remaining community forums and explained the meeting format. He then read the public participation handout and asked speakers to address their comments to the questions raised therein.

#### 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

(a) Ginger Botham, Shoreline, made the following points:

- the City should fund cost-effective citizen surveys to seek guidance on policy decisions;
- since 1998 the City has shrunk the opportunities for public comment and these should be increased to previous levels, including allowing citizens to speak on action items after staff and Council discussions--if citizens are only allowed to speak at the beginning and ending of meetings, their comments are basically irrelevant;
- Council should be more responsive to citizens' questions and requests since citizens will only come forward when there are real problems or issues to be addressed;
- Resolution No. 212 should either be killed or at least a public notice requirement should be added to it;
- the title of workshops should be changed if action items are to be discussed;
- speakers should be allowed to donate unused time to others;
- the three-speaker-per-side rule should be abolished, since everyone has a right to be heard and there is no way of knowing in advance how many speakers will address a given topic.

Later in the meeting Ms. Botham added that staff reports should include citizen letters in their entirety, rather than staff summaries; this was done in the past and it is not good

process to expect Councilmembers to review the letters in the Council Office or deprive citizens of access to them. She also agreed with the criticisms given of survey instruments.

(b) Jean Christensen, Shoreline, felt that people generally do not respond to mail surveys. She suggested the Council read *Sons of the Profits* by William Speidel, a book about the early years of the City of Seattle, for ideas on improving the public input process, and asked that it look to the past to see how it can improve in the future. She also suggested that Council use informal venues such as picnics or parties, which might be supported by local businesses, to make people feel more comfortable and improve communication. She commented that there should be a better way of tracking the comments made at Council meetings. She also asked that speakers' time be increased to five minutes.

(c) Walt Hagen, Shoreline, said people get the impression that public input is irrelevant because there is no Council feedback. He said the public is beginning to believe that Council does not care what citizens have to say and that the Council believes staff and consultants more than it does the public, even though citizens have no reason to lie to the Council. He emphasized that Council's role is not to make decisions for citizens but to represent them in its decision-making.

Continuing, Mr. Hagen felt there should be some method to track citizen input, and suggested that citizen requests be treated as Council action items. He used the example of his questions regarding the Aurora Corridor project costs and said he was given "half truths and innuendoes." He said that staff should "map back" to City Council decisions what citizen input has been. He advised that items should not be "spun" so that citizen input seems to support Council or staff goals.

Responding to Councilmember Fimia, he said people should not be required to support their statements with detailed documentation because, unlike the City, they do not have technical staff to research the information. He said speakers should provide their impressions and then the City should have to support its position.

(d) Tim Crawford, Shoreline, asserted that City staff is not honest in its dealings with the public. He said the City Attorney lied in court in the Aegis matter regarding the listing of streams as a sensitive feature in the variance process. He believed that there is less environmental protection in Shoreline now than when the area was in King County because stream buffers were not "varianceable" under the County Code. He emphasized that the City staff has all the control in disputes between the City and its citizens and that the City Attorney and the Planning Director are able to change the Development Code without any public process or Council input. He felt that the only rule the Council follows is "to take the City Attorney's advice."

Continuing, Mr. Crawford said that the change Council needs to make in its process is to investigate independently the assertions of citizens. He said he does not make claims regarding staff lightly and he understands the gravity of doing this. At the same time, he

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expects Council to look into his assertions. He noted the judge said in his ruling that the Crawfords were acting in the public interest. Yet this is what the City Council and staff should be doing. Instead, he and his wife were having to spend their own money in this battle. He concluded that the Council should take the public seriously and do its job by considering the public's views.

(e) Patty Crawford, Shoreline, said there should be an audit of changes to the Development Code because she simply "stumbled" onto the change in the reasonable use definition and she wondered what other changes may have occurred without public process. She pointed out that the discussions of changes to the Comprehensive Plan occurred during the day in the Planning and Development Services Department, which makes it very difficult for the public to be part of the process. She reiterated that the Council has not independently investigated the Crawfords' allegations and she felt she and her husband were alone in working for the public interest. She said there is no case law in which private citizens have tried to defend their City's Code while the City itself is working against them and for developers. She commented that the City can deny the Aegis permit because the Superior Court has voided the SEPA determination. She said Council can direct staff to do as the Crawfords ask.

Continuing, Ms. Crawford noted that Shoreline has a television channel that allows government access and educational access, but no public access. She felt that Channel 21 should serve both the government and public access needs. She opposed Resolution No. 212 and the three-speaker rule, and felt speakers' time should be increased to five minutes. She felt the City should avoid an "us versus them" mentality, and said Council should direct staff to work in the public interest. She pointed out that the latest version of the Shoreline Owner's Manual no longer includes the City organizational chart or the permit section.

(f) Dick Lemmon, Shoreline, commented on his receipt of the recent citizen survey, noting he did not return his because it was "blatantly stupid." He felt that City surveys are not useful or cost-effective because they don't include relevant information that citizens need to be able to respond in an informed way. He felt survey questions could be manipulated to achieve a desired result. He commented on the North City project, noting that it will obstruct traffic and force it into the neighborhoods. He also felt the Council should not ignore public input and that the City should adopt a "citizen-driven" process.

Speaking later in the meeting, Mr. Lemmon suggested that high school students could conduct door-to-door surveys to save the City money and possibly fulfill their community service requirements for school.

(g) LaNita Wacker, Shoreline, thanked the Council for "putting this issue on the table" and emphasized that she wants to see participatory democracy in Shoreline. To that end, she made the following points:

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- the public input process should be based on Shoreline's needs, not on other cities' practices.
- Council meetings are dominated by staff presentations that leave little room for public input.
- Council meetings have too many items scheduled so that there is no time for citizen comments.
- Citizens should be able to speak on action items after staff and Council discussion, otherwise it appears the Council is "rubber stamping" staff recommendations—a shift should be made to the concept that citizen input is as important as staff presentations.
- Allow citizens to comment for two minutes after a motion is placed on the floor; also allow one-minute comments on any amendments that are proposed.
- She disagreed with the three-speaker rule because citizens bring diverse input that cannot be categorized as for or against something.
- Allow citizens' concerns to be placed on Council agendas as action items and allow citizens 15 minutes to present their item--many Shoreline citizens are experts in their fields but the Council does not often consider their views.

Later in the meeting, Ms. Wacker said that two things that are working are the coverage in the *Shoreline Enterprise* and Channel 21. She suggested that the print media be used to advertise Channel 21, which is her main source for City information. She said City publications "are a lot of fine print." She also suggested that when a speaker comes to a Council meeting, or writes a letter to Council, they should receive a thank you note for sharing their views. This type of follow-up for speakers at Council meetings as well as letter-writers is common courtesy.

(h) Betty Lynn Crezik-Brown, Shoreline, said she is working hard to "activate" the Briarcrest neighborhood and distributes 1,150 newsletters that she writes independent of City funds to try to help bring together the community so they will have a voice in matters of governance. She felt that people on the west side have more influence on the Council because of their wealth. She commented on the City's homepage, noting the scenes on it are of "elite Shoreline" on the westside.

Continuing, Ms. Crezik-Brown said the main issue to be addressed is one of trust. She felt the Council treated the public "hard-heartedly" during the last meetings of last year. She also reported dealings with staff in which she felt staff acted defensively toward her. She suggested that the Council get together with environmental advocates and watch the video "Up Thornton Creek." She felt the City should cultivate a sense of kindness and seek out people with more knowledge, wisdom, and experience. She felt this approach would result in better representation for all.

(i) Laurence Yaffe, Shoreline, explained what he sees as problems with the current public process:

- The Council often receives citizen letters more than a week late.
- The three-minute time limit does not allow enough time to address a complex issue.
- Citizen topics should be placed on the agenda at Council meetings.

- When staff responds to public comment, citizens should be allowed to make a rebuttal if they feel the staff response is not accurate.
- Public comment should be taken before contentious votes.
- It is very difficult to design surveys so that the responses are really useful.

Mr. Yaffe concluded that staff works for the Council, and the Council works for the people.

(j) Pat Murray, Shoreline, suggested that speakers be allowed to talk for five minutes, with a one-minute warning light reminding them to sum up. He felt people do not get adequate feedback from the Council, and he supported public comment periods following action items. He noted that many citizens have expertise in certain areas. For example, he is a fisheries biologist and his fisheries expertise would be of value regarding certain issues. He suggested that the Council get direct input from citizens rather than through expensive surveys, noting that meetings cost much less. He hoped that the lack of respect he witnessed by one past Councilmember is never repeated. He concurred with the previous speakers' comments, noting that for every speaker who comes to a meeting there are probably several more who share the concern. People are reluctant to take the time to express themselves because they feel it will not make a difference..

(k) Richard Johnsen, Shoreline, expressed support for previous speakers' comments:

- He agreed with a citizen-driven agenda and public comment following action items.
- He felt the City needs an outside party to scrutinize the City Manager and staff, noting that staff does not adequately inform the Council.
- He felt the Council should conduct more meetings if it cannot complete its agendas in one evening.
- He suggested monthly City newsletters and expanded programming on Channel 21 of other City meetings such as the Planning Commission or Library Board.
- He also suggested an expanded *Enterprise* column.
- He supported a return to the Council committee system, which would allow more citizens to become involved in topics of interest to them.
- He felt the City could use more interaction between citizens and staff, and that the public should have more opportunities to respond.
- He said his preferred method of communication is through public comment at City Council meetings, not voice mail, e-mail or letters.

Councilmember Grace noted that the public comments on this topic would be compiled and considered at the next Council Retreat.

### 3. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:00 p.m., Councilmember Ransom declared the meeting adjourned.

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Scott Passey, Communications Assistant