

Gresham Butte Neighborhood Association

October 14, 2020

Officers present: Jim Buck, President; Sandy Davidson, Vice-President; Theresa Tschirky, Treasurer; Tracy Slack, Land Use Chair; Lynn Saint, Secretary.

7:03 p.m. Meeting Called to Order

Approximately 13 individuals participated throughout the meeting. Michael Gonzales, the City of Gresham Neighborhood Community Enhancement Manager, sat in as an observer on the Zoom connection.

7:07 p.m. Tracy Slack Addresses City's Progress

Tracy Slack presented his study, with a Power Point overview, of various needs within the City of Gresham for greater interaction and communication, increased transparency, project implementation, planning and completion, a new city manager, information accessibility, along with suggestions for meeting and correcting the perceived flaws within the system.

Connectivity

Zoom technology makes us more connected with the advantage of other individuals being able to sit in on meetings from a remote location. Because of this manner of connecting, citizens may have better indications as far as progress being made which could result in more volunteerism.

Ideally, an awareness of who to contact needs to be in place. Although Carol Rulla and Michael Gonzales have their fingertips on the pulse of city happenings, it would be preferable to not rely solely on them for finding who is responsible for specific areas. The city needs a chore chart for assignments within the scope of city activities. Cross department sharing is crucial to assist in greater communication. In other words, secret information needs to stop. When the public can resolve questions more efficiently, activism is encouraged.

One way to discourage communication is to reference meeting minutes. The city website has no means to provide a searchable tool to look up specific topics. A way to cross reference, index and identify most issues needs to be addressed.

Burdens on City Staff

Employees under the jurisdiction of the City face a widening budget gap, the loss of staff and an accelerating rate of change. The staff must accomplish more with less. We need to find ways to both empower the workers to complete their tasks and to help us understand what the staff is doing. The city staff are smart and conscientious; they have gained respect from the Council.

Many plans have been implemented but have not been completed. The staff should be able to look at their tasks with a greater sense of direction. The City needs to prioritize what needs to be done so as not to create a maelstrom of confusion surrounding the plans and how they are to be realized. Too much has been left undone due to lack of appropriate planning and goal setting.

Issues the City Must Address

Hopefully, what is needed may be done already. However, it does not appear to be the case. A myth to tackle is that the City is “not like the private sector.” The City is more like the private sector than it cares to admit. Because the city is stressed now indicates this is the right time for change. The coalition and the senior managers need to be questioned. There is a need to influence the influencers. To achieve change, this transformation must be driven from the top.

My Gresham, a city adjunct for the community, invites more citizen involvement. Jim Buck has also reviewed progress made with My Gresham. Through My Gresham, 500 requests were made. Of those, 125 align with a predetermined project. Another 200 align with a long-range plan, but they will not be resolved this year and are tabled for at least one more year. The maintenance queue saw an addition of 100 more requests. Another 75 were rejected as undoable, period.

City Manager Position

Last summer, the city manager submitted his resignation after serving the city for 15 years. Now is the time to look at what a city manager is required to do for Gresham. Tracy laid out several areas of skill and basic qualifications. The selection process, according to this report, should include neighborhood associations and their interests. Private submissions to the neighborhood coalition have been made Tracy, himself, has been chosen to work on this search

Hard skills—These must include an MS in business administration with budgetary, administrative and supervisory capacities. The person chosen would understand project management, project change management enhanced by continuing education and a hunger to do more.

Soft skills—A city manager must have the ability to tell the council “No.” Some departments are keeping things to themselves. They need the skills to sell those changes. We are in a state of flux and challenge.

General abilities—The individual chosen needs to show prowess in sprints and marathons. A long-haul individual will have commitment to the city and to the work entailed. He or she must be able to take inventory of what is there. With work in progress, the manager must anticipate if the section is on track for completed projects. Are the plans amenable to subsequent work? Can observers see actual progress? What do similar cities do?

Coalition Involvement

In July, Tracy presented thoughts to the Coalition about pressing needs within the city. Documents were submitted to the City following the meeting. One need exists for a Coalition representative to be involved in hiring and interviewing for the city manager’s position. Perhaps because of the presentation, Tracy is now involved with a search term. Within the documents are proposed interview questions. There is a peer review for these questions.

By November, the city’s website should be scoped out. Besides interviewing the city manager, the Coalition should have greater involvement with the 2021 work plan cycle.

Project Management

Project management lacks tracking and accountability. When a work plan is finalized, every line item needs to be assessed to 75% success. All projects need deliverables spelled out. Strategic planning within each department needs to define goals quantitatively. For example, what will a set project look like in five years? Ten years? Progress towards goals? Staff can

measure decision making from the past. There needs to exist greater involvement in work plan labs. The work plan items must be quantifiable with real world suggestions.

Tracy also wants the neighborhood association to involve itself with the city manager's selection. Initial proposals have been submitted to the Coalition. Tracy has also presented some items as a private citizen.

Plans vs. Projects

A major difficulty in running the City is that terms "plans" and "projects" are confused. A plan can lead to a project but the plan, in and of itself, is not a project.

In looking at planning documents for Pleasant Valley, as an example, verbiage discusses plans based on plans. There is nothing specific. What is missing is a link to further action. Modifications are suggested without specifics. Vagaries inhibit forward-moving projects which do not exist without solid plans.

Most approved plans have no current owner, hold no date to show how old they are, consist of half plans which have no status. Recommendations are almost never ranked in manner of importance. Furthermore, most recommendations do not drive a future project. No downstream efforts exist to assess if the plans are happening. The public does not see it.

For the **2020 year**, the **Council work plans** display no owner. With a two to three sentence description and a title, only two projects are open to the public. Most projects lack status and foreseeable completion. Of 16 out of 23 projects, these are carry-overs – five from 2016. Work plan items are added each year. Hot topic items reflect organizational thrashing. Thrashing occurs with many tasks at the forefront. Figuring what must be done employs one hundred percent of the work energy. Falling before the tyranny of the urgent, everything is urgent. More time is spent spinning wheels than accomplishing goals.

Was there a public engagement component so the public's input was sought to bring the issues to the City of Gresham? In fall 2016 – the Coalition endorsed the project reporting framework. After submitting this to the City Council, it went nowhere. Then 2017 surfaced for data evidence. The 2018 work plan focused on a data and analytics demonstration project. Progress was shared with the public. In the 2019 work plan, the data and analytics continue. The city was moving in a promising and encouraging direction. Nonetheless, the 2020 work plan just disappeared. Nothing surfaced with data and analytics. Work plan items come with hoopla and then they go missing. This does not reveal accountability. Nineteen plans display no starting or ending dates. Plan objectives demonstrate active planning efforts, but no owners appear. The work plans from 2020 have no owner, thus no status and no start date.

What are other cities doing? Some cities do a lot with graphics and mapping such as Phoenix, Arizona. Louisville, Kentucky glows with an office of performance approval, with an excellent website. In spite of the competition, Portland, Oregon's website remains uninspiring with a single text font for the whole website creating an underwhelming impression.

With a stretch goal for upcoming 2021, the Council will demonstrate a work plan cycle. What are the benefits? Observers will know what the City is doing and why it is doing it. The City will have more accountability for what the City says it will do. Possible new residents would recognize the appeal of this City. Staff efficiency could increase if they understand how to track standards within a blend of public and private sectors.

Projects

Projects need to be followed until they are completed or dropped. The City should assess if or how its goals are being met. Updates on council work plan items are required. Nevertheless, there is not a whisper of an update.

A narrow definition of a project holds a beginning, middle and an end, e.g. a street, a new website, a funding effort. Many things attempted are plans. Projects will have results.

Start tracking what can be seen and ask questions. Start and end? Status? Goals? On Time? Complete? What are they intended to generate? Is it clear to the public? Who is the author of the plan? Who is the current owner? Are the goals quantifiable? What recommendations?

Accountability and Transparency

To further emphasize his concerns, Tracy reiterated the need for responsible openness on the part of the City. While it is self-evident the City accepts Coalition suggestions and gives them weight, at issue is the need for every project on the list to receive valued and sought attention. Within the scope of this rest quantifiable comments that specify the degree to which goals are being met. Tracy presented examples to explain: “Three out of five goals have been achieved since the project was initiated on the specified date.” Or “Seventy percent of the targeted goal has been met.” Using actual achievements will obviate the addition of subjective and ambiguous adjectives that hide inaction and dormancy.

Open Discussion and Group Comments

“Things get lost,” affirmed Charlotte Becker. “Too much falls through the cracks over the years. There is a need to move forward.” Charlotte continued, “It is very hard to find someone who is responsible.”

Tracy stressed his respect for the managers and his desire not to malign anyone. City management has felt powerless. A new manager will come in and change their world. When people who are deeply involved get onto the city’s web page, they look around to see if they can find out any information, basic information. Is it current? Is it close to the finish line?

Vagueness of goal relates to forestry. As an example, with the Bella Vista development on the west side, off Powell, officials did not anticipate that developers would take out all trees. The Planning Commission laments that code was not followed. According to Jim Buck, “No one is an inspector to make sure a developer does not violate regulations and codes.”

The need for accountability and transparency can be taken in varied directions. Theresa Tschirky informed the association the finance committee is responsible for making sure payments are made. “Two years before deciding on the salary for the mayor, the minutes showed compensation, but the amount cannot be found.” In her opinion, this demonstrates a desire to remain ambiguous with a lack of transparency.

7:50 p.m. Grant from the City

Michael Wallace has identified an area on Gresham Butte for treating blackberries. He is asking for help to rid the plants. Work will be conducted during winter and spring months. Jim B. will put notices on Next Door for work activities as they occur. Native species plants will be used for replacing the blackberries. Volunteers are required to get this work done.

Sandy Davidson asked about trees that have been falling because of die off. In her observation, trees fall across road with too much frequency. On the Saddle Trail, a tree fell next to where the bench was installed. She stressed that snags must be identified.

Jim B. explained that, of the plantings, half will die off. Even with thicker plants, attrition will occur. Young trees will be tubed and watered as they won't survive without moisture. Deer have chewed away at trees causing more die offs.

Planting near the Springwater Trail should avoid problems. The City will indicate where new plants are needed.

8:00 p.m. Election of Officers

The board has four elected positions: president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary. Theresa suggested the slate continue. Sandy motioned we elect the current slate. Theresa seconded. A unanimous vote accepts the same board members.

8:05 p.m. Minutes

Minutes from the June 10 meeting were adopted by all.

8:07 p.m. Other Reports and Meeting Topics

Theresa Tschirky presented the treasury amount as \$2, 104.15. She explained the balance was higher than previous because of the grant receipt.

Tracy Slack reported no land use activity.

A question arose regarding a house on Regner on 20th. Why are there no street trees bordering Regner? When developments go in, where is the provision for trees?

A burning topic for the GBNA could be the **homelessness issue**. Sandy's friend is willing to meet with GBNA to discuss her research on homelessness. More planning processes need to be underway.

The Gresham Butte Neighborhood Association should **connect the second Wednesday in December** for the next Zoom meeting.

8:25 p.m. Adjournment

For those interested, the link for the meeting can be accessed:

https://greshamoregon.zoom.us/rec/share/nxeoS7znVlzEgscqYryshoSp-g_an0HeoFFS3zqUZ0cPX-a9qb0iQnl1DHlbTZd.AsMquIQN4R3g-bq