

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
390 North Robert Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Wednesday, October 31, 2012

3:15PM

Members Present: Chair Susan Haigh, Gary Cunningham, Adam Duininck, Jennifer Munt, Jon Commers, Steven Chávez, Roxanne Smith, Lona Schreiber, Steve Elkins, Sandra Rummel, Rich Kramer, Harry Melander, Gary Van Eyll, James Brimeyer

Members Absent: Edward Reynoso, Wendy Wulff, John Đoàn

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Chair Haigh called the Committee of the Whole to order at 3:18 PM on Wednesday, October 31, 2012.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved by Van Eyll, seconded by Melander to approve the agenda.

Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Rummel, seconded by Schreiber to approve the minutes of the October 17, 2012 meeting of the Committee of the Whole.

Thrive MSP 2040

Overview of Results of Outreach & Engagement—Susan Hoyt, Denise Engen, Libby Starling, and Michelle Fure

When the plan for the outreach and engagement effort was laid out, it was intended to reach a wide range of stakeholders in the region including the traditionally under-represented communities. The ultimate goal of this work was to have a greater level of involvement in the creation of the plan, and that the overall plan would accurately represent the needs and interests of the region. In the phase I work, there have been 50 conversations/events and over 1100 participants. Some of the overarching themes have been connecting the planning across the various systems with an interest in integration across the silos (particularly jobs, housing, transit/transportation, and amenities such as parks and natural resources). There has been a strong interest in connection and a lot of conversation about regional investment in regional infrastructure.

Susan Hoyt stated that the grass-roots community engagement was meant specifically to reach immigrant communities, communities of color, low-income communities, persons with disabilities, and people who do not usually engage in local planning. The meetings included a 5-8 minute presentation about what the Council does to inform the

groups of whom the Council is and why we were asking for their input. The conversations were designed around a conversation circle, which allows all participants a chance to answer the question asked. There were 11 group conversations, 146 participants, and 14 cultural groups in the grass-roots community engagement. Susan read some quotes from the engagement sessions.

Denise Engen shared information from the Council member listening sessions. There were 12 sessions with a total of 323 participants. The sessions included wide ranging discussions, and each session had good representation from around the region. There were many conversations about affordable housing (providing it, the need for it, and the Council's specific requirements). Perhaps the most pervasive theme was on relationships (people expressing their gratitude that the Council was interacting with citizens). Another central theme was economic competitiveness. Denise also shared several quotes from participants in the listening sessions. Another topic was a desire to have the transportation system better integrated (even if it isn't all operated/owned by the Met Council). SAC charges, education, and technology were also topics that came up.

Libby Starling highlighted the organization-sponsored events portion, which was made up of 26 conversations/events and gathered 400+ participants (these numbers will continue to grow). Some of the organizations were specifically sought out by the Council, and some invited the Council to their meetings/events. Some of the key themes were balance (regulatory vs. a regional vision), water supply, setting priority sites for development/redevelopment (specifically for areas that are too large for any one local government to take on), affordable housing, regional parks, and transit.

Michelle Fure gave the update on the online opportunities, including the YourIdeas site which gathered 300 registered users, 125 ideas, and 1800+ votes/comments.

Questions and conversations were also on Twitter and Facebook. The number one topic was transit/transportation. There was some advertising done at the beginning of the effort, as well as cross-promotion done by partner agencies. The number one topic online was transportation, including the transit services provided by the Council and bottlenecks in the highway system. Michelle noted that the online venue reached a group that would not typically attend a public meeting or engage otherwise.

CM Munt asked what our stakeholders were expecting as far as follow-up from the Council. Susan Hoyt answered that they do expect us to come back and are anxious for our return. She stated that the challenge will be in making sure that what and how we communicate is understood and made relevant to them.

Discussion led by the Thrive Working Group—Gary Van Eyll, Chair

CM Van Eyll asked the Councilmembers to share what they heard.

CM Brimeyer said the thing he heard that surprised him most was that the Met Council would be the convener and leader of collaborative efforts among cities to get them to share services. He also said he didn't expect to hear that the Council needs to leverage its public investment dollars for private investment and the Council does not need to have a set of rules that applies to everybody. He also said he heard that cities want help with constructing affordable housing to accommodate the changing demographics and changing expectations.

CM Cunningham said that the issue of safety on bikes came up at almost every listening session he attended. Access to opportunity was another topic he heard repeatedly.

CM Munt said what surprised her was that there was a common vision for what a livable region looks like, and a common theme throughout was the desire for connectivity (connections with other human beings, connections to jobs and transit and housing). She also said there were a lot of conflicting views expressed, but that is where leadership comes in and when the planning gets difficult.

CM Smith stated that one of the things she heard in the rural areas was that not much has changed due to the downfall in the economy, and perhaps the Council could have modified way of approaching comp plan amendments to make it a simpler and more cost effective process. CM Van Eyll said he'd also heard that.

CM Rummel said she heard suggestions for the Council to think sub-regionally for certain issues, such as comp plan issues (in small communities), or water issues.

CM Chávez said it's possible to construct a real partnership model in the region. Much of it is set by the tone and/or expectations of a city/region and requires good communication.

CM Melander offered the observation and concern that we may be getting the usual cast of characters participating.

CM Van Eyll said yes, it is a concern, but we do have to move forward.

Libby Starling responded that one part of the engagement was giving the opportunity to the usual cast of characters the change to respond, but the grass-roots and online engagements reached a much broader audience.

Chair Haigh stated that part of the engagement process is making sure it's a broad enough vision and not just the Council's vision. She also said she loves the engagement process that is happening and we can think of the elected officials as representing the views and interests of a broader group.

CM Munt said we should be bold and present the scenarios in such a way that we can get the resources to turn it into a reality.

CM Rummel asked how we will deal with the contradicting desires and interests.

CM Van Eyll answered that we will have to be the leaders and make decisions based on what is best for the metropolitan region.

CM Cunningham said we should position the region, both nationally and internationally, to compete with other regions and this should be a priority.

CM Commers stated that communication is very important and gave the example of a city manager at one of the listening sessions who asked what the Council's responsibility is, and CM Commers stated that when we have an answer to that question, most people will have an objection to our answer, but it is important for the Council to stick to the message that emerges.

CM Munt stated that equity is a superior growth model, which doesn't necessarily mean the majority rules, but that we will use the resources we have to create a region where everyone can prosper.

CM Smith suggested looking over the equity materials from John Powell's presentation last year.

CM Schreiber asked the group to look at page 21 in the RDF where communities are separated into developed, developing, agriculture, when in reality they are usually made up of all three.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 4:47PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Getty
Recording Secretary