

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PRINCIPLES AND ADVISORY COUNCIL

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Subject: Testimony to the Portland City Council on the agenda item to establish principles to guide public involvement in the development of policies, programs and projects of the City of Portland, August 4, 2010

For several months now, I have been considering addressing the City Council on the subject of public involvement, including the citizen advisory process. Now with an item on the agenda to establish principles to guide public involvement, I thought it the right time to do so.

Currently the public process is broken. To coin a phrase that came about a couple of decades back; "round up the usual suspects – another citizen advisory committee needs to be formed." Unfortunately, the system still operates in somewhat that same manner. Some of the same individuals serve on multiple citizen boards, commissions and committees. Examples include the same person or persons serving on the planning commission, the City's budget advisory committee, various citizen transportation committees and/or boards, and also on citizen committees at Metro. The process has for the most part become a stacked deck and one of cronyism, often representing a special interest, with members hand picked and vetted based on subject opinion and insider connections rather than knowledge, background, interest or a willingness to serve.

Today's appointments ^{of} ~~to a~~ seven members ^{the} ~~to a new~~ Public Involvement Advisory Council will to some degree test that premise. Will the appointees be the "usual subjects", or individuals that serve on no other city level citizen board, commission or committee? Moreover, is the primary reason to create a combined Planning and Sustainability Commission the unveiling of yet another stacked deck of cronyism that eliminates appointees whom don't fall in line as yes people to a social engineering agenda?

Additionally, much of the citizen outreach is both bias and broken. This can best be described with the Bicycle Master Plan where the citizen involvement numbers were highly touted, but the vast majority of the participation was from the freeloading special interest bicycle community wholly disproportionate of road users in general. In other words, the majority of average Portlanders who drive and pay the gas tax to fund projects had no involvement in the process. Equity was and is totally missing.

To fix what is broken, more openness is needed within the citizen process that includes not only all aspects of diversity – ethnic, income level, background, age and gender - but also a diversity of opinions whereby the differing views and values of all Portlanders are fully represented.

In addition to improving outreach that aspires to include the general public rather than just being aimed at a special interest, I have three recommendations to create a more diverse and equitable public involvement process: First, establish a policy whereby an individual can not serve on more than one city level citizen board, commission or advisory committee. Second, and again this can better be described by example using PBOT; establish guideline principals whereby all transport modes are specifically represented on transportation related citizen boards, commissions and especially advisory committees based on actual mode split along with a heavy emphasis on representation from the user stakeholders that will foot the bill, but not to exclude ample business interests and neighborhood representation. My third recommendation is to revise the appointment process in a manner that eliminates any vetting or litmus testing of opinion related to appointments. If implemented, all three recommendations will provide for not only a more open and diverse public involvement process, but one that better represents the entirety of citizens and taxpayers in Portland.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terry Parker