

Request to Oregon Consensus – December 31, 2015

The City hasn't posted any information regarding the "next steps" regarding planning for the south Willamette Street area and the staff proposal for an extensive zone change. (See the City's "South Willamette Special Area Zone" web page.)

However, Terri Harding, a Planning Division staff person, has phoned several people and provided some information.

One person reported that Terri said that there was state money that had been "made available" to initiate the facilitation process. This person reported that Terri said the first step was an assessment, that was to be conducted by Turner O'Dell from Oregon Consensus and a local person, Tim Hicks. This person understood that the assessment was going to be a series of interviews of "stakeholders" that would begin after the New Year.

In discussions with various neighborhood folks, there is apparently a concern that the "assessment" is the first step in a facilitated process, rather than just interviews to help decide whether or not to conduct a facilitated process. The Oregon Consensus website at <http://oregonconsensus.org/our-services/collaboration-design/> is somewhat ambiguous in this regard.

It's important that the scope, process and products of the planned "assessment" be made clear in a publicly available document prior to the beginning of any assessment activities.

Both CSEN representatives and SWN have determined that they do not support initiating a facilitation process before residents, business owners, and property owners within and around the South Willamette area have had the opportunity to develop a community proposal for goals, objectives and implementation recommendations.

My understanding is that by participating in the "assessment," individuals and organizations would be able to make their views clear regarding the "next steps." However, the confusing information so far has led some individuals (reasonably enough) to understand that participating in the assessment would signify implicit approval of a facilitated process to follow.

It's important that Oregon Consensus clarify this as soon as possible by providing the information to [local neighborhood leaders], so they can inform their respective organizations.

Thank you,

Paul Conte

Response from Oregon Consensus – January 5, 2016

Hello Paul [and others]

I wanted to give you some quick/brief information that I hope will clarify what Oregon Consensus has been asked to do. I am also copying Terri Harding and the neighborhood representatives that you copied on your email to Julia - and I encourage anyone to contact me with questions or concerns.

First of all, let me provide some brief information about Oregon Consensus. Oregon Consensus (OC) is the State of Oregon's program for public policy conflict resolution and collaborative governance, providing mediation and other collaborative services to public bodies and stakeholders throughout

state. OC brings together communities, civic organizations, government entities, and businesses to find new approaches to public issues.

OC conducts assessments and, where appropriate, designs and facilitates neutral and transparent collaborative processes that foster balanced participation and durable agreements. Our program is housed in the Hatfield School of Government at Portland State University. The University helps OC to provide a neutral forum for stakeholders to come together to engage in impartial and open collaborative dialogue.

In the current situation, OC has been asked to conduct an assessment related to the South Willamette Street planning effort, and that will involve conducting interviews with many of the engaged parties. OC projects often benefit from the use of an assessment process to determine at the outset whether there is a good opportunity for collaboration and, if so, how best to proceed.

Before initiating a collaborative process it is often important to connect with key stakeholders and have some discussion about those parties' interests - not just their public positions on outcomes, but rather their underlying needs or concerns. OC then can assess whether there is a meaningful opportunity for the parties to work collaboratively to find a solution that works for all interests and determine the best scope and design for the process.

Participating in an assessment interview does not, in and of itself, signify approval of a facilitated process or willingness to engage in such a process. Rather, the interviews are an opportunity for OC, as a neutral third party, to learn about the underlying interests of the stakeholders and to explore what they think might or might not be appropriate next steps. A collaborative process would be one potential path forward to explore with interviewees. (As part of that interview process, OC will be interviewing City of Eugene leadership and staff to understand what they think would be constructive next steps as well.) A collaborative process has the best chance of success when all the parties believe it to be the best path forward and support the effort.

I hope that helps allay concerns that the use and design of a facilitated collaborative process is somehow pre-ordained. We are just at the point of learning about the issues and stakeholder interests and exploring options for moving forward. We can provide more information about the assessment process as we proceed.

Thank you for your interest and efforts, and please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Best regards,

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Follow up request to Oregon Consensus – January 5, 2016

Turner,

Thank you for the quick response. Your descriptions were generally consistent with my understanding, and I believe they'll be helpful to other individuals and organizations.

Could you also clarify who is/are the client(s). (In my consulting business, this was SOP, mainly so I knew to whom I was ultimately responsible.) I understand that OC operates, in principle, as a "neutral" consultant. However, it should be clear with whom (e.g., the State of Oregon, City of Eugene, etc.) OC has a client relationship.

Also, our elected officials have provided direction to the City Manager (and thus, to staff) of which you'll want to be aware. You may want to view the November 9, 2015 webcast of the City Council meeting at which a motion made by Councilor Greg Evans (and then amended) was adopted. (The link to the video is: <http://ceapps.eugene-or.gov/CEWebcast/WebCast/Play.aspx?mid=1939>)

Here are some excerpts (times listed are from the webcast recording):

34:07 Councilor Evans: "My intent is for us to take a timeout, and take a little bit of a break, so that we can have a conversation, a facilitated conversation, between the City and the affected neighbors in the special area zone. ... My perspective is – I support the intent of the motion that I voted on on the twenty-first. I think that we have some issues that are problematic in that motion, and I want us to have an opportunity so we can have some time to be able to engage the affected neighbors and the City so that we can be able to get the best outcome possible. And so, with that in mind, I'm going to put this motion out on the table."

[Highlighted text below was added by amendment at 1:06:10]

"I move to suspend the council's October 21, 2015 motion until after the council has had a work session to consider the outcome of a facilitated discussion that includes at a minimum the Council of South Eugene Neighborhoods, affected residents and businesses, and the City, utilizing the services of a neutral facilitator such as Oregon Solutions; except that the council shall not hold a public hearing on the South Willamette Special Area Zone until after the council confirms a public hearing date following the completion of the facilitated process."

49:22 Councilor Evans: "What this motion is saying is suspend what we did on the 21st, comeback, and have a conversation with neighbors that we, basically, have not had conversation with before, up to this process."

51:20 Councilor Evans: "So, let's take a step back, let's take a breath and let's begin a real conversation with the residents so that we can shape policy appropriately."

Here are some noteworthy points:

- There is no scheduled public hearing or scheduled council action at this time. There is nothing related to SW-SAZ on the council's "Tentative Working Agenda." Thus, the elected officials have not set any deadline for developing additional work products related to planning for the area around south Willamette Street.
- Councilor Evans was very clear, and repeated, that the intent of his motion was a "facilitated discussion" with "affected neighbors and the City." This explicitly included: "affected residents, businesses" and the Council of South Eugene Neighbors.
- The motion did not state that the "facilitated discussion" should include parties or organizations other than "affected neighbors and the City." I have no idea whether or not City staff have

suggested that “engaged parties” (the term from your explanation) should include parties such as 1000 Friends of Oregon (whose representative has been a very vocal advocate), Sustainability Commission or Planning Commission volunteer members, or anyone other than the “affected neighbors.” However, the adopted motion and Councilor Evans’ words speak for themselves. This is a sensitive issue, and it would be helpful if you also clarified the scope of “engaged parties.”

Thanks again for your help making sure everyone knows what’s going on.

To my knowledge, the City has not provided any public details about what the staff or OC are doing or planning to do, which is symptomatic of the problems with the “south Willamette” process thus far. Terri Harding may want to address the other recipients of this e-mail on that point.

Best regards,

Paul Conte

Follow-up response from Oregon Consensus – January 19, 2016

Hi Paul [and others]

I have attached a memo that I hope will answer more of your questions about OC and the assessment process. (Some of the material will be repetitive of what I previously sent you, but it seemed like it would be helpful to collect all the information in a single document.) We have also provided this memo to the Mayor, City Council, City Manager and staff at the City of Eugene.

As always, you are welcome to call or write if you have additional questions. And I look forward to the opportunity to speak with you directly as we move ahead with the assessment. It is still an open question whether a collaborative process would be appropriate - and if it were, just how it should be designed/structured - and I look forward to hearing all of your thoughts on those subjects in the coming weeks.

Best regards,

Turner Odell