

## **City of Snohomish Open Government Committee Discussion Guide for May 9 Meeting**

The Open Government Committee recently completed a third draft of its recommendations. Snohomish City staff, led by Larry Bauman, have reviewed those draft recommendations and commented on their feasibility in light of staffing and budgetary constraints, as well as existing city policies and procedures.

The goal of the May 9 meeting of the Committee will be to review the draft recommendations and determine the types of modifications that may make the set of recommendations acceptable to all parties – that is, we will be working toward “win-wins” for the recommendations. To aid in the discussion, we will review the recommendations as follows:

### **1) These three recommendations appear to have a definitive “yes” from all parties:**

- Improve the City’s website.
- Incorporate Social Media into City Communications.

The City is currently working with a consultant on website redesign; a citizen focus group will be used for review and feedback. Implementation is scheduled for late 2016-early 2017, which is also in line with the committee’s recommendations. The City has also suggested the addition of a city government “owner’s manual” and open data portals. These would be incorporated as part of the redesigned website.

- Establish Consistent Visions and Missions for All Advisory Groups

The City agrees that this is a good idea, and notes some existing documents that could serve as a starting point. Staff members will work with the various committees to implement this recommendation. The implementation schedule extends into early 2017.

***Does the committee agree that we have come to “yes” on these three recommendations? If so, we will set these three aside and move forward with discussion on the other recommendations.***

### **2) These recommendations appear to be close to “yes,” with some modifications**

- De-Fog City Communications

The City asks that “de-fog” be changed to “Clarify City Communications,” and agrees that this is generally a good idea, with some caveats related to specific technical reports. The city has some concerns about the level of training required, noting that this could delay the time necessary for implementation.

***Does the committee agree to change the title of this recommendation? Is the committee comfortable with a slight delay in terms of the implementation schedule? Can we get to yes on this recommendation?***

- Experiment with New Formats that Actively Encourage Greater Citizen Participation

The City agrees that this is a good idea, but suggests that city staff would pick two meeting formats and experiment with them, rather than involve a citizen panel in this selection. The city also suggests that a community picnic could be organized for Kla Ha Ya Days.

***Does the committee agree with this suggestion for how this recommendation would be implemented? Do committee members have other “experiments” to suggest out of the list provided by the group? Can we get to yes on this recommendation?***

- Create a Signage Program

The City is primarily concerned about the staffing costs involved hiring a single individual to monitor a signage program, as well as potential visual blight. The City suggests that this recommendation be put aside for now, then reassessed after a year or two, and after other committee recommendations have been implemented.

***Does the committee agree that this recommendation could be postponed, contingent on the relative success of other measures to increase communication and transparency in City government? Can we get to yes on this adjustment?***

**3) City staff have significant concerns about these five recommendations. What modifications might the committee be willing to make in response to those concerns. Or, are there other alternative methods that could be used to achieve similar results?**

- Identify and Address Hot Button Issues and Expand Notification Procedures
- Implement Consistent and Standard Information & Engagement Protocols
- Communicate the Key Issues and Why People Should Care About Them
- Adopt an Accountability Procedure for City Council Deliberations

Please do a careful read of the City’s response to these recommendations. There are concerns about best practices used elsewhere, the overlap between these recommendations, and existing protocols that may already address a number of the issues presented here.

***Committee members should review their initial goals and thoughts about what they wanted to achieve with these recommendations. Are there existing city procedures that can achieve the same desired ends? Would some of the relatively minor modifications suggested in the responses achieve the level of communication and transparency desired by the committee? Are there ways to combine these recommendations as suggested by the City? Are there other potential avenues that could attain the same goals?***

- Expand the Use of Volunteers

City staff are not in favor of this recommendation due to budgetary concerns and the lack of available staff to manage this expanded effort. In previous discussions some committee members have also expressed concerns about union opposition to volunteers performing work that would typically be done by paid staff members. The City notes that there is already a robust volunteer program in place.

***Given the concerns expressed, and in light of the existing volunteer program, is the committee willing to drop this recommendation?***

**4) The City has offered a new recommendation for consideration**

In addition to the changes proposed for the website (owners manual and open data portals), City staff are recommending the production of a new quarterly magazine designed the share information and elicit feedback from citizens. A presentation on this magazine will be provided to

committee members at 4:30 on May 9, a half hour before the regularly-scheduled committee meeting.

***Does the committee endorse the production of this new magazine? Does the committee want to reference the magazine in its set of recommendations?***

**5) Additional Considerations**

Larry has suggested any negative and subjective comments currently within the recommendation document be removed, and he will propose edits for this.

***Does the committee agree that these comments should be removed from the document?***