



## AD HOC OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

City of Snohomish Open Government Committee  
--Final Draft Recommendations --  
June 27, 2016

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## **Introduction and Overview**

In late 2015, the City of Snohomish appointed a nine-member Ad Hoc Open Government Committee. The committee was formed in response to citizen concerns about the City's government. The purpose of the committee was to address these concerns by providing recommendations on the ways in which the City can improve its existing communication and engagement program, as well as additional strategies and techniques the City might employ to make the maximum effort to ensure that all residents and business owners within Snohomish are as fully informed as possible, and able to be involved in City decision-making. The Committee will make its recommendations directly to the Snohomish City Council. Committee members included:

- Carroll Brown
- Mary Dessen
- Colleen Dunlap
- Adrian Duran
- Gary Ferguson
- Meagan Gray
- Tom Merrill
- Paulette Norman
- Braden Sigua

In conducting its work, the group reviewed existing communication procedures in place at the city, examined public engagement techniques used elsewhere, and discussed the issues likely to be of most importance to Snohomish citizens. Committee members were also informed about the results of a research effort designed to measure citizen perceptions about, knowledge of, and interest in, Snohomish City Government.

## **Public Communication and Engagement Goals**

As a first order of business, the committee developed and endorsed a series of eight goals. The goals were meant to serve as guiding parameters for the group's recommendations. All of the recommendations can be directly linked back to one or more of the goals. Committee members recognize that Snohomish City Government has established a solid program for citizen information and engagement. Committee recommendations are intended to build on, and expand, this existing effort. Goals for the future of public information and engagement in the City of Snohomish include:

### **1) Open and Welcoming**

The city will welcome public input. City leaders will actively seek the involvement of citizens and invite public participation in city decision-making. The City will have a well-defined decision making process and clearly identified stages where the public can participate and provide feedback.

### **2) Free of Barriers**

The program will include a strong education component that informs the public about the most effective ways to engage in decision-making, the types of issues, projects, and programs most likely to include public engagement, a menu of public involvement techniques, and ideas for how citizens can best avail themselves of those techniques. Every effort will be made to ease the way for citizen participation.

### 3) Proactive

Notification about upcoming issues and projects will be provided in a manner that allows ample time for citizens to a) learn about the project; b) understand how they can be involved in decision-making; c) participate in forums designed to gather their feedback and advice; d) create opportunities for dialogue to encourage creative solutions and avoid misunderstandings.

### 4) Accessible to the Broadest Possible Audience

Public information and engagement techniques will be made available to the broadest possible spectrum of Snohomish citizens to include “reach out” methods that put information in clear view where people frequent, allowing them to decide whether or not they are interested, and “reach in” methods that put information in places for individuals to seek out and access more in-depth information via a variety of technologies and media in order to create a bridge between the social, ethnic, and age differences of all Snohomish citizens and their government. A variety of technologies, messages, and media are used. The public engagement program creates a bridge between the social, ethnic, and age differences of all Snohomish citizens.

### 5) Consistent

Public information and engagement will be consistently applied across all city departments. Techniques depend on the type of project under consideration, Citizens will know what to expect in terms of their involvement. Likewise, Snohomish citizens will be encouraged to actively learn about and participate in civic engagement.

### 6) Accountable and Responsive

The city will provide feedback to citizens describing the way in which their ideas and comments have been used in decision making. Citizen influence in decisions will be clearly delineated.

### 7) Actively Monitored and Continually Improved

The city will actively monitor and measure each communication techniques to determine that technique's effectiveness. Only those techniques that are accessed and utilized most frequently are retained. The *quality* of the technique and the degree to which it is effective in informing and engaging citizen interests has precedence over the *quantity* of techniques employed by the City.

### 8) Focused on Building Trust and Civic Engagement

The bottom line success measure for the city's communication and engagement program is the degree to which the program improves citizens' access to information, active involvement in City processes/projects, and builds trust in the City's elected and appointed leadership.

## Committee Process and Values

The Open Government Committee began meeting in February 2016. The group was assisted in its work by Margaret Norton-Arnold, an independent and neutral facilitator hired by the City. Margaret conducted telephone interviews with all members prior to the first meeting; these interviews resulted in a Committee Charter that was endorsed by the committee in February. At this first meeting, members spent time introducing themselves and describing their reasons for wanting to serve as a member of the group. City manager Larry Bauman and Mayor Karen Guzak also described their goals and aspirations for the committee. Members then brainstormed on possible goals for open government within the City of Snohomish.

Members exchanged email edits on the goals, which were ratified by the group during their second meeting in March. The second meeting was also used to brainstorm on potential committee recommendations. After this meeting, each member took the responsibility to write a description of one or more of the recommendations. These completed assignments were returned to Margaret, who developed a “first draft” of the recommendations with this work. Members provided comments and edits via email, and a second draft of these recommendations were developed in time for review and discussion at the committee’s April meeting.

A third draft of the recommendations was developed after the April 18 meeting. At this time Larry Bauman and other City staff members weighed in with their opinions on the draft recommendations, with the goal being to craft recommendations that were both affordable and implementable within the City. Larry provided his comments via email to the committee. Margaret crafted a “Getting to Yes” discussion guide that provided avenues for change and collaboration to produce a set of recommendations that could be endorsed by all parties.

“Getting to Yes” served as the focus for the group’s fourth meeting in May. Through discussion and collaboration, both the committee and City staff members were able to achieve significant agreement on most of the recommendations. These recommendations were compiled into another “working final draft” for the committee’s review and discussion at their fifth meeting on June 13. During that meeting, the committee engaged in a group editing process to work through a variety of edits on the document. At its sixth and final meeting the committee made one minor edit to the draft document, finalized edits, added a final summary, and discussed how the recommendations would be presented to Council.

In addition to the goals developed by the committee, a number of important values were articulated during the group’s proceedings. These values are reflected throughout the eight recommendations forwarded to the Snohomish City Council.

The City is treasured by its residents. People live in Snohomish because they appreciate its sense of small-town community and history. It is important to preserve these valuable qualities.

City government must consistently convey honesty and transparency. According to the information gathered from the focus group and previous experience of committee members and their constituents, the citizens of Snohomish want to trust that their government is communicating in an open and honest fashion, and that it is actively inviting citizen participation in government decision-making.

People want to be informed, listened to and involved. Although priority issues will vary widely from individual to individual, the community as a whole wants to make sure that they clearly

understand actions, alternatives, reasoning, decision procedures and timelines, and that they have the opportunity to be engaged in a variety of levels in the process of their City government.

Snohomish citizens seek a city government that is fully accountable. In addition to clear processes and timelines it is important to inform citizens about the way in which their comments have been used to shape and influence governmental decision-making.

### **Committee Recommendations**

Over the course of five months, the Open Government Citizens Advisory Committee developed nine recommendations, which have been grouped together under three categories. These recommendations include both “Reach In” and “Reach Out” programs to foster greater trust and participation on the part of residents, and to improve the sense of a true partnership with Snohomish government. Reach In communication requires users to find information where provided, such as the website, social media, and phone apps. Reach Out communication puts information boldly in plain sight, where people frequent, and it requires no effort on their part. Examples of this include signs and kiosks. The recommendations include:

#### **Category One: Enhance Levels of Transparency in City Operations and Decision-Making**

- 1) Clarify City Communications
- 2) Establish Consistent Visions and Missions for All Advisory Groups
- 3) Establish an Open Government Resource Board to Assist with Implementation of the Committee’s Recommendations.

#### **Category Two: Offer New Venues and Formats to Inform and Engage Greater Numbers of People**

- 4) Emphasize and Encourage Citizen Volunteers
- 5) Experiment with New Forums for Citizen Participation
- 6) Develop and Distribute a City Magazine
- 7) Continue to Use Signage and Additional Reach Out Methods of Communication for Key Projects

#### **Category Three: Broaden the City’s Internet Communication Program**

- 8) Improve the City’s Website
- 9) Incorporate Social Media into City communications

Each of the recommendations in this document is presented with a rationale – that is, how the recommendation came to be, and the problem it is trying to address. The rationales are based on committee member observations and deliberations, and are also reflective of the market research conducted to test public opinion regarding Snohomish City Government.

As noted previously, the committee’s first task was to create a set of overarching goals for their recommendations. Each of the recommendations is linked back to one or more of these goals. A chart demonstrating the linkages between recommendations and goals is included at the end of this report.

The recommendations also include a series of implementations steps that provide detail on how each of them could be carried out, along with estimated completion dates for these steps. While these may change over time, the implementation steps and proposed dates offer a starting point for discussion with City staff. At regular intervals, an assembly of the City’s citizen-based boards and commissions will review the progress of the recommendations, propose adjustments as necessary, and generally ensure that the recommendations are working as intended.

## **Category One: Enhance the Levels of Transparency in City Operations and Decision-Making**

### **1) Clarify City Communications**

The principles of “Plain Language” should be adopted for all written communications. “Plain Language” refers to a set of guidelines developed to clarify and simplify government and legal communications. The guidelines are in use, or promoted for use, by many Federal, State, and provincial governments in North America. A single page summary issued by the State of Oregon is included in the appendix to this report. A very comprehensive discussion and set of guidelines is available at: <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/index.cfm>

Every City communication conveys a sense of the City of Snohomish values and the city’s connection to the citizens – it is the voice of the City. How citizens perceive that voice determined levels of trust and likeability. And audience is more likely to trust clear and readily understood material and view the author as open and transparent. The material is more likely to get read and elicit a positive response.

**Link to Committee Goals:** This recommendation is linked to goals 1,2,4,7, and 8.

#### **Implementation Steps**

1) Clear communication is the responsibility of everyone issuing information to the public. The best implementation plan is for city leadership to include clarity as core value to manage to. Talk about it, review communication with an eye to it, demand it, add it as a performance review item. Take ownership of it. Conduct writing classes if necessary. Review the Oregon guidelines for “Plain Language” with all staff. Review material intended for public use with the guidelines in mind. Use technology to help. Microsoft Word has grammar tools and complexity measurement tools that can help evaluate clarity and Readability. *Estimated date of completion:* Emphasis should be placed on this program beginning in August 2016 and should continue on an ongoing basis.

2) All communication intended for general public information, direction, advice, signage, etc., should be tested by the author for reading level and complexity before final release. *Estimated date of completion:* This can be initiated by August 2016 and then ongoing.

3) Legal, technically complex, and regulatory documents generally include a review by city government members and often undergo a public review period. Incorporate into this review: a complexity and reading review (by the author), an added step to the review instructions to comment on understandability, and a request for opinion on whether to include a summary. *Estimated date of completion:* Ongoing.

#### **Measures of Success**

- Citizen feedback on website instructions shows improvement in customer satisfaction.
- Perceived openness and transparency improvements are noted.
- “How to” questions (where the information is available on the website or other publications) are reduced.
- The average document or webpage issued by the city rates 50 or better on the Flesch-Kincaid rating scale.

## 2) Establish Consistent Visions and Missions for All Advisory Groups

The City should compile all of the vision statements for every citizen advisory committee and commission into a single document. These should be based on the City council's Values Statement and reviewed for consistency with the City's Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan, with the goal of making sure that all committees are "pulling in the same direction" for the City.

**Link to Committee Goals:** This recommendation is linked to goals 5, 7, and 8.

### **Implementation Steps**

1. The Snohomish City Council developed a set of core values during its recent strategic planning process. A new goal, "To maintain Open Government and Citizen Engagement," should be added to these core values. These core values should be compared to the mission statements for all citizen advisory committees currently at work. How do they compare, or not? Is everyone working toward the same vision for the City of Snohomish? A City staff member will be responsible for compiling all of the mission/vision statements into a single document. *Estimated date of completion:* September 30, 2016.
2. Representatives from every Snohomish Committee and Board will meet jointly on an annual basis to review their work in comparison to one another. Are all groups working toward common goals and visions for Snohomish? If not, where are their conflicts and how might those be resolved? *Estimated date for completion:* Ongoing, with the joint meeting to be held every year.

### **Measures of Success**

- Snohomish citizens have greater clarity and confidence that all advisory groups working for the City are working toward similar goals and visions.

## 3) Establish an Open Government Resource Board to Assist with Implementation of the Committee's Recommendations.

As noted throughout this document, City staff will begin implementing the recommendations of the Open Government Committee in late 2016, with additional implementation activities to take place in 2017 and beyond. The committee recommends that an "Open Government Resource Board" be created to assist with the implementation of these recommendations. At regular intervals, this Board will meet to review the progress of the recommendations, and to provide feedback and advice on the manner in which those recommendations are being carried out.

Review implementation activities that have been completed, as well as those anticipated for the months ahead. Is implementation on track, and, if not, what adjustments could be made to ensure implementation?

Offer comments and advice to City staff on the degree to which the recommendations have been successful. What is working particularly well and should be continued? What might be changed or improved?

The Sounding Board will meet in December of 2016, then again in April, August, and December of 2017. At that time the Sounding Board will determine the most appropriate action for the future, i.e. if the Sounding Board should continue, another group take its place, or other implementation strategies be enacted.

***Link to Committee Goals:*** This recommendation is linked to goals 7 and 8.

***Implementation Steps:***

City staff and elected officials will determine the size and composition of the Sounding Board, as well as the way in which members should be recruited. The Sounding Board will be appointed and ready to begin work in December 2016. The group will meet four times between December 2016 and December 2017.

***Measures of Success:***

- Board members are able to provide tangible advice on the implementation of recommendations.
- The community is reassured that the recommendations are being implemented as effectively as possible.

## **Category Two: Offer New Venues and Formats to Inform and Engage Greater Numbers of People**

### **4) Emphasize and Encourage Citizen Volunteers**

The City of Snohomish should actively promote its volunteer program. Volunteering fosters a sense of community in which everyone is valued and welcomed. Volunteering benefits citizens by helping them to feel more informed, engaged, and appreciated. Although volunteers should not be used to undermine the work of City staff members, there are numerous opportunities for citizen volunteers to assist staff, serve on boards and commissions, and moderate public forums and other informal gatherings. One-time events, such as “Clean-Up Days” in the spring are a great way to encourage volunteerism and build community.

***Link to Committee Goals: This recommendation relates to goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8.***

#### ***Implementation Steps***

**1) Strengthen Volunteer Opportunities:**

The City will expand consider the use of volunteers whenever appropriate on various projects. City departments will compile a list of volunteer positions that would save the city time and money.

**2) Enhance the Volunteer Page on the City’s Website**

As part of the current redevelopment of the City’s website, a Volunteer Page will be created. The website should be organized into easily-identifiable groups. Examples of these include:

- Boards, Commissions, Committees
- Hosting public meetings
- Assisting in City departments
- Parks and Recreation, Adopt-a-Park
- Historical Society and Visitor Center
- Historic Downtown Snohomish and Recreation Department
- Police and Fire Department

Volunteer opportunities should also be advertised via kiosks, City magazine, and schools and other community groups. For each volunteer position, City staff will estimate time, skill, and age-appropriate tasks. Volunteer applications will be made available for the various positions. The Volunteer Page on the website, kiosks and other reach out platforms will include information postings about completed projects as well as volunteer recognition and appreciation. *Estimated date of completion:* Some of this work is tied to the redevelopment of the City’s website, which will take place during the latter part of 2016. Staff could begin right away, however, to identify potential volunteer opportunities and begin to create a master list for eventual incorporation into the website.

#### ***Measures of Success:***

- New volunteer positions have been filled in at least three new departments.
- The City is benefiting from completed projects made possible by additional volunteers.
- Volunteers are fulfilling their commitments.
- The number of volunteers continues to increase.

## 5) Experiment with New Formats That Actively Encourage Greater Citizen Participation

The City should initiate a tradition of community building based on outreach, community gatherings and a more natural interaction between the city and the its residents. Remove the barriers of formality when seeking public input. When possible, conduct meetings in comfortable and familiar locations. Conduct meetings with the least formal procedure possible. Schedule meetings at a wide variety of times to accommodate different lifestyles.

Informal gatherings that include residents, City Council members, city officials and staff will create common experiences, humanize government, and build community. Reach Out education and conversation in casual settings create opportunities to educate, hear residents' opinions and increase approachability. Physical barriers between residents and City representatives are to be avoided (podiums, tables).

**Link to Committee Goals:** This recommendation is linked to goals 1, 2, 3, and 8.

Examples of New Formats and Venues (see appendix for additional information):

**Conversation Cafés:** Monthly or weekly conversational gatherings which are held in a popular public setting like a bakery, restaurant, coffee shop or bookstore, where anyone is welcome to join. A simple format helps people feel at ease and gives everyone who wants to a chance to speak.

**Neighbor Hosting Neighbor:** A small neighborhood meeting, hosted by a resident in their home.

**Community Forums: Specific Subject:** Specific subject semi-informal gatherings could be co-hosted by the City and community leaders from diverse backgrounds. The use of local experts whenever possible when presenting complex, specialized information may be helpful to gain credibility and show transparency. This would also build a closer community. Single subject focus allows time for education before QA.

**Town Hall Meetings: Open Subject:** Open subject semi-formal community meetings could be hosted by the City and volunteers. Open subject, dialogue sessions allow residents to introduce anything on their minds and get answers rather than stew and imagine the worst.

**Pre-Council Forums:** Begin a recurring, informal, public fact exchange and forum to precede Council Meetings. These forums should address the items on the Council's agenda for the evening. Council and Staff will answer questions and discuss issues and alternative solutions.

**Printed *Impact Comparison Handouts*:** These should be available for complex issues. Provide scratch paper and pencils to help people order their thoughts for public record comments.

**Transparency Table:** An across the table question, answer, dialog between City department and protest leaders. After receiving the *Impact Comparison Handout* and links to the *Information File* in advance, the protest group leaders submit additional information requests and questions in writing. Times for Transparency Tables are flexible and can be set for the convenience of the protest leaders and the City.

**Study Circle:** When a decision will affect one demographic group more than another or may cause conflict between groups, citizen stakeholders and a City representative gather in a City hosted study group to discuss the topic and learn about their different perspectives.

**Community Picnic:** *Looking backward to move forward: Based on Snohomish History:* Traditional public celebrations embrace all residents by offering activities for everyone. Education and dialog enable many unheard residents to be heard and build trust.

**Multi-type Question Survey:** Use open questions which allow public opinion to be expressed freely as well as closed questions like multiple choice or Y/N which are easy to tabulate; never use leading questions.

### ***Implementation Steps***

City staff will review all of the possibilities that have been suggested for these new formats, and will experiment with them, based on the situation and the appropriate “fit” of the format. Likely possibilities include community forums and town hall meetings. *Estimated date for completion:* Mid-2017.

A community picnic could also be organized for Kla Ha Ya Days to honor the history of the Snohomish community. *Estimated date for completion:* Mid-2017.

Each of these experiments will be evaluated to determine if they should continue over the long-term. On average, the format should be tried 3-4 times before a complete evaluation on its effectiveness has been completed. New formats could be introduced as applicable and warranted. *Estimated date for completion:* Ongoing.

### ***Measure of Success***

- Attendance at these new opportunities is substantial, and increases over time once people understand how fun, relaxing, and beneficial they are.
- Citizen misunderstandings and complaints are reduced.
- Trust in City government increases because opportunities for communication are more inclusive.

## **6) Develop and Distribute a New Citywide Magazine**

Snohomish City government is in the process of contracting with a company that will provide and distribute a quarterly magazine to all Snohomish citizens. The concept is to focus on key policy, program or project areas. At least twice a year, these themes will be linked to a tear-out centerfold, mail-back survey that will ask citizens to respond to relevant questions concerning these same projects, programs and policies. Community forums will also be held following the publication and survey results on these same topics. Articles for each quarter will include a combination of freshly-written material on key issues, as well as republication of news releases and articles from previous Friday Newsletters.

The Open Government Committee supports the magazine.

***Link to Committee Goals:*** This recommendation is linked to Goals 3, 4, and 8.

***Implementation Steps:*** Estimated date of completion: early 2017.

## 7) Continue to Use Signage and Additional Methods of Reach Out Communication for Key Projects

The City has in place the elements needed for an effective signage program to ensure citizens are informed. The Open Government Committee applauds the use of these signs and recommends that the City continue with a robust signage program.

The City has recently been making adequate use of signage. Examples are the sign in place announcing planning for renovation of the former Hal Moe Pool, construction of the round-about on Avenue D, Maple Street Construction projects, and Citywide cleanup day. The signage in these examples is good and should be continued.

Signs, kiosks, banners, posters and handouts placed where people frequent should be used to support the Reach Out method of communication with the public. Some, but not all, ideal locations include the library entrance, Aquatic Center, Centennial Trail, outside City Hall, by agreement with local retailers, existing First Street kiosks, the Farmers' Market, Kla Ha Ya Park on the trail, City meetings, public celebrations, and events.

In linking with Recommendation #1, to Clarify City Communication, the Committee recommends that clear, highly visible wording be used on all signs to quickly communicate project parameters, timelines, and additional resources for more information and opportunities to comment, if applicable.

**Link to Committee Goals:** This recommendation is linked to goals 3, 4, and 8.

### **Implementation Steps**

- 1) The City will establish one staff member who will be trained in the latest trends related to signage: language, word placement, graphic design. This expertise will then be relied on as new signs are developed. *Estimated date for completion:* September 2016.
- 2) Work with all City department heads to emphasize the importance of strong signage. Develop procedures requiring all departments to use signage whenever and wherever appropriate. *Estimated date for completion:* September 2016.
- 3) Consistently employ signage as needed, evaluating effectiveness and moderating the program over time as changes become necessary. *Estimated date for completion:* Ongoing.
- 4) Maintain kiosks, posters, and handouts at suggested locations to provide up-to-date information to the public. When possible, use volunteers to post announcements to save staff time. *Estimated date for completion:* Ongoing.

### **Measures of Success**

- Citizens indicate that they feel more informed about potential plans and projects.
- The number and intensity of public protests are reduced.

## **Category Three: Broaden the City's Internet Communication Program**

### **8) Improve the City's Website**

City staff are currently in the process of updating the City's website. The Open Government Committee strongly endorses and recommends ongoing updates and improvements to the site. An inviting, easy to use, informative, and maintained website invites citizen usage and engagement. Thoughtfulness in design and usability demonstrates caring, responsiveness to needs, and trustworthiness. Consistency across departments shows a city pulling together as a team. Discussion boards encourage engagement in review and comment. Reminders of comment periods, design reviews, upcoming events and initiatives demonstrate openness and, again, encourage engagement.

The City of Snohomish should improve its website to ensure that the site:

- Incorporates a design philosophy that puts the user first. A design that prioritizes accessibility (for all users and abilities) and mobility. A design that provides an easily followed path to the intended information while avoiding the user's feelings of being overwhelmed by returning more information than is wanted.
- Incorporates an overall design guide for presentation, navigation, relevance, and currency that produces and maintains consistency of user experience across all city departments.
- Features a prominent and maintained area for posting announcements and alerts when actions of interest are under consideration. Schedules, progress, and times for citizen input on initiatives are posted and maintained.
- Uses analytics and monitoring to identify areas of current interest, and addresses those interests with an area for 'trending topics'.
- Provides for an online discussion technology as a means for citizen review, comment, discussion, and input on various issues. Separate discussion boards on each issue will keep the comments on topic, and technology can be employed to alert staff when a new comment has arrived, alleviating the need to re-read comments. Staff will respond to comments in an informative manner that continues to engage the individual in details about the issue under consideration.

Specific Documents and Highlights recommended by the Committee included:

An "Owners' Manual for City Government" that provides a single source of basic information (with website links) to provide citizens with an overview of what their city government does and does not do, as well as helpful resources concerning where citizens can get necessary information and assistance. This section will also include information on opportunities, procedures, and timelines for public engagement. The section will provide detailed information about the Snohomish City Council, including Council rules and procedures, the way in which agenda items are determined, and the role of citizens in Council deliberations. The section will also provide links to various city department on key topics, for example permitting regulations.

A "Hot Topics" section that quickly highlights key topics and issues currently under consideration by City government. This will be updated on a weekly basis so that the information remains as fresh and timely as possible.

Open Data Portals that would be used to provide a graphical, easy-to-understand information on financial and budget data.

A Volunteer Section that will provide information about citizen volunteer opportunities.

Summaries and Links. Snohomish City Council documents will be formatted and linked in a manner that will make it easier for citizens to access specific information. For example, City Council meeting minutes will be formatted with a Table of Contents that clearly identifies the subjects under discussion, with links allowing the website user to select a single topic of most interest if desired.

Decision Processes. In addition to the “Hot Topics” section outlined above, the website will include information and links on a clear pathway to an eventual decision from the City’s elected officials. As appropriate, this information would also be provided as a printed document for public meetings and other events. Depending on the situation and the project under consideration, the types of information that could be included in this website section are: need for the action; how the action will solve the need; potential benefits and impacts to the city and neighborhood; financial impacts; existing research; alternatives under consideration; legal constraints.

Information Files. As projects and issues are being considered by the City, an information file could be made available on the website. This file could include documents such as: origin of the proposal; annotated calendar of all meetings, discussions, communications; historical and current reference documents; maps, diagrams, and images; applicable city codes; city research and sources; legal constraints. These files would be stored in the City archive to reopen if the proposal is reintroduced or information is needed in the future.

**Link to Committee Goals:** This recommendation is linked to goals 1, 3, 4, 5, and 8.

### **Implementation Steps**

Website redevelopment is currently underway through the work of a contractor team. A citizen volunteer focus group will be used to actively test and make recommendations on the new site. *Estimated date of completion:* January 2017.

The “Owners Manual” and other features such as the annotated City Council meeting minutes are likely to require a longer time for implementation, but City staff are working toward all of these core elements for the new website. *Estimated date of completion:* Early-Late 2017.

It is also important to more aggressively market, and expand, the current options for “Notify Me” sign up. The subject line of the emails should identify the topic so people do not need to open the email if they have no interest. *Estimated date of completion:* Late 2016-early 2017.

### **Measures of Success**

80% adherence to a selected web design standard, such as Powermapper (<http://try.powermapper.com/demo/ViewScan/28bf3c1a-7fd9-49ca-880f-11e7b6739e86>)

- Pass complete evaluation by W3C site accessibility checker. (<http://try.powermapper.com/demo/ViewScan/28bf3c1a-7fd9-49ca-880f-11e7b6739e86>)
- Increases in counted visits to linked pages from the home page.
- Increase in the time spent on linked pages.
- Increase in the number of citizen volunteers.
- Active use of discussion boards for comment and review
- Increase in informed public participation and attendance at City meetings.

## **9) Incorporate Social Media into City Communications**

The City of Snohomish should replace the “Experience Snohomish” app with one that is more focused on civic services and programs. This app will include City Council meetings and opportunities for comment, as well as the meeting schedules for various citizen committees. The app will also include information on the City’s elected and appointed officials.

A contest could be held – “Name That App” – to acquire a new name and further invite community participation.

***Link to Committee Goals:*** This recommendation is linked to goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7.

### ***Implementation Steps***

The same group of citizen volunteers who assist with the improved website should also monitor the development of a new city app. This panel will determine the best steps forward, for example, the City could widely advertise its need for app renovations and allow citizens time to provide their feedback on what they would like to see with the mobile app, and its relationship/influence with the use of the existing app and existing social media accounts.

*Estimated date of completion:* Variable depending on the work associated with the new website.

After careful considerations on the renovation of the app according to citizen input, the app should be re-launched. *Estimated date for completion:* No later than January 2017.

The city should consistently maintain and manage the mobile app while advertising it on existing media outlets. This will drive more downloads. *Estimated date of completion:* Ongoing.

### ***Measures of Success***

- By January 2018, one year after its re-launch, the app should have a significant number of downloads. There should enough review in the app store to enable the city to assess the success of the app along with any necessary repairs. This will also demonstrate the satisfaction among citizens.

## **Final Summary**

The ad hoc Open Government committee is pleased to offer these recommendations to the City of Snohomish. Our hope is the City, after due consideration, adopts these recommendations and moves forward with implementation plans. We further suggest the City develop and publish a metric to measure success and reports progress on them periodically.