



## **AD HOC OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE**

### **MEETING AGENDA**

**March 7, 2016**

**Snohomish Senior Center**

**5:00-7:00 pm.**

#### **Meeting Goals**

- Endorse overarching goals for committee recommendations.
- Learn about current city public engagement and communication programs.
- Continue brainstorming on potential recommendations.

#### **5:00 Welcome and Meeting Overview**

*Margaret Norton-Arnold, Committee Facilitator*

#### **5:05 Endorsement of Committee Goals: Looking for a Thumbs Up**

*Margaret with Committee Members*

#### **5:15 Current Public Engagement and Communication Programs**

*Larry Bauman, Snohomish City Manager*

*Debbie Emge, Economic Development Director*

#### **5:30 Committee Questions and Responses to Current Programs**

*Margaret with Committee Members*

#### **5:45 Continued Brainstorming on Potential Recommendations**

*Margaret with Committee Members*

#### **6:45 Wrap-Up: Expectations Regarding Member Involvement**

*Margaret*

#### **6:50 Public Comment**

#### **7:00 Adjourn**

#### **Meeting Discussion Guide**

Welcome to the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Open Government Committee for the City of Snohomish.

Seven out of the nine committee members have indicated their approval of the guiding parameters/goals that the group has been working on since February 8. We'll look for a group endorsement of these goals at this meeting. We aren't "voting" as a part of our committee process, but you can indicate your support by providing a thumbs up. We can go back and wordsmith/modify the goals once we have developed more recommendations, but we'll keep them in place for now and use them as a guide point for our recommendations.

In response to member requests from our first meeting, Larry Bauman and Debbie Emge have compiled information and data on current citywide efforts to inform and engage the public. They will review these as a group and you will have time to ask questions. Please log on and try out the city's website and other communication tools, and be prepared to respond with thoughts and subsequent recommendations related to your experiences.

The bulk of our meeting time will be spent on continued brainstorming of potential recommendations. Margaret will bring a draft format for how the recommendations might be laid out; we will discuss this and then dive into your ideas for the ways in which the city might modify and improve its public communication and engagement program.

After this meeting, Margaret will consolidate and summarize your recommendations into a draft form for your review, comment, and editing over the next month.

A tentative schedule for the remainder of our meetings includes:

**April 11**

Review focus group results. Continue work on recommendations; may need to engage in a prioritization exercise if we have been overwhelmed with ideas.

**May 9**

Review draft of recommendations and goals. Engage in discussion with city representatives about potential modifications.

**June 13**

Review package that will be submitted to the City Council. Adjust as necessary.

***Looking forward to another productive meeting on March 7!***



# CITY OF SNOHOMISH

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## OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

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Snohomish Senior Center  
506 Fourth Street

**February 1, 2016**  
**5:00 p.m.**

**Members Present:**

Carrol Brown  
Tom Merrill  
Paulette Norman  
Gary Ferguson  
Mary Dessein  
Adrian Duran  
Braden Sigua  
Meagan Gray  
Margaret Norton-Arnold, Facilitator

**Staff Present:**

Larry Bauman, City Manager  
Karen Guzak, Mayor  
Owen Dennison, Planning Director  
Jennifer Olson, Finance Director  
Debbie Emge, Economic Development Dir.  
Steve Schuller, Public Works Director  
Denise Johns, Project Manager  
Mike Johnson, Public Works Manager  
Angela Evans, Office Assistant II

**Citizens Present:** There were 3 citizens present

**Welcome and Meeting Overview:**

The first of five scheduled meetings of the ad hoc Open Government Committee began at 5:01 p.m. Facilitator Margaret Norton-Arnold began the meeting by introducing herself and explained that the committee meetings will be held once a month on either the first or second Monday of the month.

**Member Self-Introductions/Staff Introductions:**

The members of the newly created ad hoc Open Government Committee introduced themselves and spoke of their relationship to the City and why they wanted to be involved in this process.

City staff then introduced themselves to the Committee.

There were no public comments at the meeting.

**Overview of the Committee's Role –Expectations from the City Council**

Mayor Guzak welcomed the committee and expressed her excitement and gratitude for this process. The City Council and City Manager are hopeful that this committee will help develop recommendations on the most effective ways of engaging citizens. Although Mayor Guzak feels

it makes good decisions, Council would like to know what they can do to engage citizens more effectively, both inside and outside of Council chambers. Unless there is a “hot button” issue, only a handful of citizens show up at the twice-a-month held City Council meetings.

Some ideas provided by the Mayor and Council to further citizen engagement are:

- *Mornings with the Mayor*
- Discussions regarding City issues
- Neighborhood meetings/small group discussions
- Citywide book club that discusses civic interest, history, environment
- More social media postings

Some questions posed by the Mayor for the Committee were:

- What is the right mix of communication tools?
- What benefits we can expect from committee recommendations?
- Who will we be reaching that we don’t currently reach?
- How do we measure the effectiveness of the implemented recommendations?
- What can we reasonably expect from citizens and how they are willing to communicate?
- How can citizens engage; even if they have no recommendations.
- How can citizens feel welcome in the process of their City government and decision making processes?

Mayor Guzak reminded the Committee that the main goal is to serve the citizens of Snohomish. She realizes that outcomes will not be perfect and “one size does not fit all.” She again thanked the Committee on behalf of Council and City staff.

Ms. Dunlap asked the Mayor how reasonable it was to expect that the committee’s recommendations will be followed, especially considering council and staff’s time and the possible costs. Ms. Guzak acknowledged that time and cost are issues, but it is important to her, Council, and City staff that this process occur. Ms. Norton-Arnold reminded the Committee that they will be discussing goals, while considering costs, and sending streamlined recommendations to the Council.

A question regarding the cost of this process was posed to the Mayor who deferred to the City Manager, Larry Bauman.

A member of the committee asked Mayor Guzak what type of social media presence the City currently has. Ms. Guzak said the City uses Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Ms. Norton-Arnold advised the committee that these details will be discussed in more depth at a later time.

City Manager Larry Bauman then addressed the committee. In response to Ms. Dunlap’s question regarding the cost of this committee process, the City is spending \$12,000 on facilitation and \$14,000 to \$16,000 on focus group research.

Mr. Bauman further stated that when citizens recently contacted the City with concerns, primarily around the proposal to erect a cell tower on the Averill Field complex, it led to a discussion regarding the City's engagement with citizens when it came to informing of projects, programs, ideas and City policies. As a result, Mr. Bauman suggested an ad hoc committee to Council. Staff and Council feel this is a great opportunity to step back and see what can be done to improve citizen communications.

Mr. Bauman requested that the committee look at what the City is already doing and give feedback on how the City can be more effective, keeping in mind the complexities, staff time, cost, and that communication is a two-way process. In order to be the most effective, the City needs feedback, engagement and response from its citizens.

Mr. Ferguson inquired how the City can afford this process. Mr. Bauman stated the City Clerk retired and the HR Manager decided to take on the Clerk's duties, as well as her own, saving the City approximately \$120,000 a year. The City is taking a small portion of these savings and investing it into this process.

### **Current City Policies and Programs for Citizen Engagement**

Mr. Bauman presented a brief overview of what the City currently does in order to communicate with citizens:

- City management staff and Councilmembers do their best to make themselves available by phone, email, or in-person to answer questions, address ideas, or concerns/complaints.
- Weekly Friday Newsletter. Currently there are approximately 130 people signed up to receive this newsletter.
- City website - there are some interactive modes on the website, for example "Imagine Snohomish" which provides survey questions to the general public. Input is needed on what kind of questions citizens should be asked on the website.
- Social Media – Facebook, Twitter. Ms. Emge confirmed that 6-10 postings are made per week.
- Cable television channel 21 –Input would be appreciated on whether or not this tool should be more utilized.
- The City of Snohomish mobile app – This is a way for citizens to report pot holes, traffic lights, vandalism, etc. The City is looking into re-vamping the mobile application or going with a different provider.
- Public news media - the Herald and Tribune. This is a very good way to reach a much larger audience and highlighting items important to the City.
- Development application notices based on types of permits, public notice signs, publications in the newspaper, mail notices to surrounding property owners and the *Notify Me* section of the City website.
- Direct mail –Separately addressed communications are sent to the public as well as inserts into the utility bills.

Mr. Ferguson asked about *Next Door Downtown Snohomish*. Staff confirmed that it is a citizen-driven, neighborhood/geographically based platform that is not affiliated with the City.

Mr. Bauman explained that the *Notify Me* feature on the City's website is for citizens to be kept informed on specific City programs, such as land use decisions/actions and meeting agendas. Citizens can receive the notice by email or text. Ms. Emge will find out how many *Notify Me* subscribers the City has and bring the information back to the next meeting.

Ms. Gray asked Mr. Bauman if City Council meetings were recorded, as she felt this would be helpful for people who could not attend meetings but wanted to be a part of the process. She suggested the use of a webcam. Mr. Bauman confirmed that meetings are not currently recorded due to the facility being used, but it is a good idea.

Ms. Norman asked if stats could be provided to the committee regarding the effectiveness of current forms of City communication. Mr. Bauman will provide those stats that are available, however some stats are not available without doing surveys.

Mr. Merrill asked for clarification on the goal of this committee. Is it for the City to meet concerns regarding citizen involvement, communication and transparency, or more about citizen participation. Mr. Bauman feels that it is both. The City wants to understand what issues people want engagement about and how can the City reach out to citizens to make sure they understand what opportunities they have to get involved. The City needs to both understand what people are most passionate about and how they can get involved to express that passion to the leaders of their community.

Mr. Bauman provided a handout and summarized engagement opportunities and decision making processes. At all City Council, advisory board and ad hoc committee meetings, citizens have the opportunity to speak about items not on the agenda, as well as on all action, discussion and public hearing items. As an example, the City created a special committee to discuss the repurposing of the Hal Moe Pool and citizens are encouraged to participate in these meetings.

In addition, the Planning Commission, which is an advisory to the City Council on land use issues, also allows citizen comments for items not on the agenda, discussion topics, hearings and action items.

There are also quasi-judicial public hearings such as the one regarding the cell tower at Averill Field. A third party hearing examiner conducts hearings and receives public input about specific projects. At this meeting in particular, a number of people spoke of their opposition to the cell tower at Averill Field and Verizon withdrew their application after hearing the depth of citizens' concerns. The City feels it is important for citizens to have this kind of impact.

The City's Design Review Board, Economic Development Committee, Parks and Recreation Board, and Public Safety Commission are also advisory to staff and City Council. These boards and committees are always advertised and open to public comment.

Ms. Dunlap asked Mr. Bauman about volunteer opportunities within the City and how the City makes use of resident expertise. Mr. Bauman stated the City has diverse and active volunteer opportunities, such as groups that volunteer labor for park improvements and police volunteers

that do vacation checks. Mr. Bauman agreed with making use of resident expertise and appreciated the input.

Mayor Guzak reminded the Committee that all advisory board positions are volunteer and applicants and members are encouraged to bring their expertise to these advisory boards.

### **Committee Brainstorming: Goals for an Open Government**

After discussion, the Committee created the following goals and milestones for this ad hoc Open Government committee:

- Ensure that all strategies, and programs are accessible to as many people as possible. For example filming the City Council meetings.
- Ensure that every single technique or strategy is clear and accessible.
- Have continuous measurement (stats and demographics).
- Centralize by focusing on what has proven to work and allocate funds towards improving these forms of communication and engagement.
- Make City Council meetings available via video recording (channel 21); remove obstacles.
- Educate people in order to reduce intimidation; teach people how to participate at public meetings and how to get information and/or documents.
- Friday Newsletter – this is a great tool that needs to be highlighted.
- Assess current programs – evaluate each program and get stats (Debbie).
- Members of the Committee should go online and try to access the tools referenced tonight.
- Website Design – use best practices (high visual, low text).
- Diversity – consider different ethnicities and age groups. Offer the website in other languages.
- Outreach – perhaps to government studies at the high school, Chamber of Commerce, and other groups.
- Reach-out instead of making citizens reach-in.
- Engage neighborhood committees.
- Creating the need to know and then appeal to peoples’ need to know.
- Create citizen empowerment.
- Create a “hook.”
- Tailor approaches to different groups – “one size does not fit all.”
- Go to where the people are – i.e. Farmers Market.
- Create programs and projects that engage diversity.
- Make information accessible to all groups, even groups that may not be able to make it to meetings.
- Have final products show citizen “fingerprints.”
- Make the City’s values and guiding principles available and visible to citizens.
- Build more trust.
- Transparency – make in-depth information available as early as possible.

### **Upcoming Focus Groups**

The City has hired Strategies 360 to assist in conducting focus groups regarding citizen engagement. There will be two groups, one including ages 20-45 and the other for ages 46-74.

The focus groups will be conducted one night for two hours at a facility in Kirkland that is specially designed for this kind of use. Mr. Bauman clarified that the focus groups were selected randomly by telephone and advertising. The participants will be paid a \$150 stipend for their time and travel. There will be 8-10 Snohomish citizens in each group. The consultant will prepare a report on what they learned from these groups and make it available to this committee. Mr. Bauman provided a hand out to the Committee showing the following proposed focus group questions, and asked for feedback:

1. How can City leadership best solicit and receive feedback directly from people in Snohomish?
2. How can the City communicate most effectively back to its residents?
3. How can Snohomish residents be better engaged to participate in policymaking?

Although the questions are good, Mr. Merrill felt that they are a bit too passive and suggested they be revised to be more personal.

Ms. Dessen suggested asking the citizens if they trust their City Government, and if not, how can that trust be facilitated.

Ms. Dunlap felt that sometimes it is easier to brainstorm off a problem and suggested that it would be useful to know where the citizens feel the City is failing?

Mr. Duran suggested simply asking if people felt that their vote counts or matters.

Mr. Bauman agreed that it is about citizens' voices and not just the polls. The day-to-day and whether or not voices are heard is of most importance.

**Public Comment** – none

**Final Questions and Comments – Next Steps – March Meeting**

Ms. Norton-Arnold will be taking the language given tonight and work on draft goals statements. She will be emailing committee members to clarify goals, share ideas and come back to the next meeting with a document for approval. In the meantime, she encouraged committee members to attend meetings and try out the tools that the City already uses.

Ms. Emge will compile statistics and share them with the committee at the next meeting.

Mr. Brown would be interested in seeing the value statements of commissions and boards, if they exist.

Mayor Guzak closed the meeting by congratulating and thanking the committee and she agreed it is important to be grounded in guiding principles. Council has list of values that she, and the other members of Council, hold very dear. In addition, the City's Strategic Plan also guides City functions.

Adjourn at 7:00 p.m.

**--Third Draft for Committee Endorsement--**

**Goals for Public Communication and Engagement  
City of Snohomish Open Government Committee  
For Committee Endorsement on March 7, 2016**

At their first meeting on February 1 2016, open government committee members brainstormed on some possibilities for overarching goals, or guiding parameters, for the recommendations they will eventually make to the Snohomish City Council. Members then reviewed a draft of these goals and offered comments and edits. A second draft of the goals was sent to members on February 21, and additional comments/edits provided by February 29.

Seven out of the nine committee members have indicated their approval of these goals. The committee will endorse them as a group at their March 7, 2016 meeting. These goals will be supported by specific recommendations that detail the ways in which the goals will be implemented.

**Public Communication and Engagement Goals**

*The public communication and civic engagement program carried out by the City of Snohomish will strive to meet the following parameters:*

**1) Open and Welcoming.**

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

**2) Free of Barriers**

The program includes 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 is made to reduce intimidation and ease the way for citizen participation.

**3) Proactive**

Notification about upcoming issues and projects is 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 are made available to the broadest possible spectrum of Snohomish citizens and 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 additional or more in-depth information. One size does not fit all for our community. 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 is consistently applied across all city departments. Techniques depend on the type of project under consideration, Citizens know what to expect in terms of their involvement. Likewise, the citizens of Snohomish have an obligation to actively learn about, and participate in, the civic engagement program.

### **6) 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 its communication techniques to determine their 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 involvement program is the degree to which the program achieves citizen engagement and builds citizen trust in the city's elected and appointed leadership.