



CITY OF
West Linn

COMMISSION FOR CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

Minutes of September 21, 2011

Members present: Chair Robert Martin, Vice Chair Michael Babbitt,
Gail Holmes and Christine Steel
Members absent: Holly Miller, Laura Horsey, and Dean Wood
Council Liaison: Teri Cummings
Staff present: John Sonnen, Planning Director; and Chris Kerr, Senior Planner;

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Martin called the meeting to order in the Council Chambers of City Hall at 6:45 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA (None)

WORK SESSION

Improving public outreach – Trails Master Plan public involvement evaluation

The staff had distributed “Summary of public outreach during the development of the 2011 West Linn Trails Plan.” Chair Martin opened the meeting and explained the Commissioners wanted to look at what had gone wrong in the trails planning process and how to fix it. The work session was not intended to address the plan itself. Commissioner Steel recalled that Chair Martin had served on the trails technical committee. She asked if the committee believed the plan was ready when it was heard by the Planning Commission. Chair Martin offered to give his perspective after the public comment session.

Public Comments

Troy Buzalsky, 1228 14th St., advised the CCI to determine how key, affected-property-owner stakeholders had been left out of the loop. His was the first property on the trail along the Tualatin River. Before he purchased it in 1998 he talked to Ken Worcester about the potential for a trail there. Mr. Worcester had told him it was a plan that would never happen in his lifetime. Even though it was not a formal trail, people used it to access his back yard and used it like a park. They played, swam, put up lawn chairs and let their dogs run loose. He noted he had to be notified if neighbors wanted to install a pool, but the City seemed to be inclined to work on the trails plan under the cloak of secrecy. The City had not notified him about an Eagle Scout trailhead project in his back yard. But he had helped the scout anyway. There was a PGE easement in his back yard. They let him know when they came to work there.

During the questioning period the Commissioners asked Mr. Buzalsky what he would suggest as a low-cost way for the City to contact everybody. They asked if he had received any notices, read any newspaper articles, or if anything else had made him aware of the trails planning process. They wanted to know if he would have supported the trails plan if the City had made an initial effort to contact stakeholders. Buzalsky related that when he conducted fire inspections he knocked on the door to ask if it was a good time. He held the City knew who the key players were to contact. The trails process had been low on his radar screen because of what Worcester had told him 14 years ago. But he had testified against a trails plan in 2007. He found out about the recent process when concerned neighbors told him. He estimated it would only cost the City a few thousand dollars to network with people and get them involved. He contrasted that expense with the large projected cost of the trails system. He explained that people were able to walk through his backyard because he had removed brush in order to maximize his view of the river. But his neighbor did not do that. He added that he had seen one map that showed a dotted trail line through his backyard. He did not know how that happened. He did not support a trail there because he did not want his property to be a "staging area" or a "community park." If the City involved the stakeholders he would be "at the table."

Gwen Sieben, 4950 Mapleton Dr., concurred with Mr. Buzalsky's comments. She explained neighborhood association meetings did not always work the way they were supposed to. At the Robinwood meetings regarding the trails plan there had been much dissention and heated discussions. She felt the voices of those who were against it had been ignored. She suggested the City "Go back to square one and involve the stakeholders." During the questioning period, Ms. Sieben related that even though almost 80 Robinwood residents had complained about the trails plan, those who were passionate about trails prevailed. They did not necessarily represent the entire association. It was likely that the City heard from people who disapproved later - after it affected them personally. Those at the neighborhood meeting who were opposed to trails were opposed to having them go through their back yards. That affected their privacy. The trail would not be policed. But that input had been ignored. She recalled hearing cars parking and other noise in the night at the end of Mapleton. She advised that the people on the trail in the wee hours of the morning were "the ones you don't want there." She clarified that there was nothing wrong with a trail on a sidewalk. When Chair Martin asked her how the process should be changed so input would not be ignored, she advised the City to inform all the people of the plan well in advance. Don't assume everyone knows about it. She agreed with Commissioner Holmes that a positive step would be to start the process by listening to the pros and cons (related to things like privacy, safety and individual rights) and then working things out.

Don Kingsborough, PO Box 148, West Linn, a resident of Nixon Avenue, spoke as an individual, not a member of the Parks Board. He related that the Board had initially discussed how to advertise the master planning process and make it known to the public. What it could do had been limited by the \$50,000 budget. MIG had been hired to help. Three public meetings had been held at three local schools. Director Worcester's staff had told him the *Tidings* would not publish the information without being paid. Mr. Kingsborough felt the newspaper had let the City down. It was one of the best citizen communication methods in the community. He

related that he had personally passed out over 200 cards that announced the West Linn Master Trails planning effort and its website. The website had been up for about six months. He believed the internet might be one of the best means of communicating with citizens. The City could find ways to use it for interactive communication. But he did not know how to get people interested enough to sign up for that. He had read that the Council had given police the authority to enforce Parks and Recreation rules. That might address the problems related to late-night revelers.

During the questioning period, Mr. Kingsborough acknowledged that the results showed that his group had tried - but failed - to get the word out. But he advised citizens needed to take more active interest in what was going on. He noted that not many had come to the work session and only a few typically came to Council meetings. He acknowledged that he did not know how to get people excited about it. He believed there had been so many people at the hearing because the West Linn Riverfront Association had told them what was happening and people saw the trails map and got excited. He wondered where they had been six months prior to that. During the process he had alerted the WLRA via emails that they needed to be aware of it, but had not received any response. He had assumed people were just not that interested until it all blew up at the hearing.

Commissioner Holmes recalled hearing that people attending a neighborhood meeting felt threatened and intimidated by trail proponents. Perhaps part of the answer was to utilize a better trained consultant at public meetings to ensure the meetings were civil and people listened to one another. Mr. Kingsborough recalled the meeting at the Presbyterian Church three or four years ago had gotten "hot." But he did not believe anyone had been intimidated at the MIG-led meeting at Cedar Oaks School. The consultant had divided attendees into small groups to work on the plan. He believed it was a successful meeting. But he noted there were only about 20 citizens there to represent 7,000 or 8,000 citizens. The other 10 participants were City staff or technical group members.

Chair Martin observed quite a few more people had entered the room and limited the time for testimony to five minutes each. He advised them to focus on how to improve the process.

Robert Jester, 3475 Riverknoll Way, had signed the Sign-In Sheet, but did not offer oral comments.

Sarah Brown, 25565 Katherine, indicated the outreach that had been outlined in the calendar of events was good outreach. She had attended the meeting at Willamette Primary School and commented on the map. But she felt she had not been listened to. She recalled the hearing notice had only been advertised for a short time. When she found out about it she told neighbors. She had gotten the word to many people whose property was being impacted in just a few hours. She asked the City to directly involve people being impacted. She asked what the purpose of the current meeting was and if the City was planning on conducting another outreach. She was concerned that Parks had not gotten the answer it wanted and planned to conduct another campaign in the hope it would get the answer it wanted. She said the

community had made it clear what its concerns were in the meetings they had held. Chair Martin explained it was a CCI meeting to examine ways to improve citizen involvement in land use decisions. In spite of a most ambitious outreach program, involving consultants, a website and public meetings, a tremendous number of people had come to the Planning Commission hearing and indicated their concerns had not been heard. The CCI wanted to know what the City was doing wrong and how it could do things better. Chair Martin observed that Director Worcester, who had not been able to attend the CCI meeting, had taken a positive step and created a stakeholders' committee comprised of people who had voiced opposition to the proposed plan. But the CCI meeting was not about the trails plan. It was considering how to have a process that brought people together to create a plan. Ms. Brown wanted to know if there was a public record of how the stakeholders' committee had been selected; what the process was to be; and what meeting records were available to her if she requested them. Chair Martin suggested she contact Worcester to find out.

Mary Swanson, 2071 Fields Dr., related that her company, Swanson Partners, recommended planning and involvement strategies. She agreed to provide a written copy of her comments and advice. She advised the process should make it clear to people where they could get and give information. The public should have the opportunity to verify that their comments at a facilitated meeting were translated correctly before the results of that meeting were made part of the record. She advised the letter she had received was not clear enough regarding whether the subject to be discussed that night was public involvement or the parks plan. She explained there was a difference between hearings - where the testimony had to be on the record - and other kinds of meetings in which people would feel freer to participate and offer ideas if there was anonymity. The process should be clear about what level of input it was seeking. She advised the staff who formulated park rules should not issue biased and opinionated statements to the media. She had observed that some meeting invitations and plan invitations seemed biased.

Ray Kinelley, 5240 Windsor Terr., related that he had served on the trails task force and helped lay out the trails. He also chaired the Utility Advisory Board (UAB). He recalled the initially proposed trails utilized utility rights-of-way. He reported that during their meetings the information that had been provided to the community showed up late. The draft plan, for example, got to them so late they did not have time to review it. It had a lot of new information in it, including information related to trail design and cost. A primary trail would cost \$1 million per mile. That was controversial. The task force had spent most of its time on the system and trail locations and very little time on cost and the final program. He had raised issues - including the issue of putting primary trails along the river - but even at the committee level some people were not being heard. He had called the staff two or three times to ask why the draft plan was not posted on the website. He believed it had been posted two weeks before the hearing. He did not think that was not enough time to learn about the nuts and bolts of cost and actual wording. The staff seemed to have an agenda to have the plan and put trails in specific spots no matter what the input was. In spite of the fact that Mr. Kinelley had advised the committee it needed more input from affected property owners about the legal impact, the committee continued to plan to put trails along the river. Some explained the plan

was aspirational and had no legal teeth. But Zack Pelz had advised that the fact land there was reserved for a trail would affect transfers of ownership and land use actions. Kinelle said it was disingenuous for the City to say it was not going to condemn property while it was putting a planning document in place that had the force and effect of condemnation if the property were upgraded or transferred. The owners had to preserve a strip of land for the trail. He agreed with the previous commenters that there may have been discussion of concerns, but people were not really listening. During the questioning period Kinelle clarified that he did not know if the intent of posting the draft plan for two weeks before the final plan was made available prior to the hearing was to solicit feedback. He just did not think it was posted long enough to allow people to understand the specifics of it. He observed the \$60 million cost and legal implementation details were huge issues.

Andy Rocchia, 957 Willamette Falls Dr., related that he had been a member of the Parks Board at the time it worked on the first comprehensive parks plan. At that time people were interested in short trails around town to help bicyclists get around. The proposal for a trails plan had been initiated by staff. It had elicited a small, negative, response - mainly from owners of riverfront property. He discussed how to improve communication and involvement. The current version of the plan was what Parks and certain Planning staff thought it should be. There should have been early and ongoing, regular, public input about how the plan would address private property and ongoing maintenance. He recalled the example of Fields Bridge Park. The system had been manipulated by certain City staffers and some Parks Board members in order to overlay an intensive use ball park scheme over a natural area. Mr. Rocchia acknowledged the democratic process could be messy and it required compromises. People had to respect others' opinions even if they were different. They were entitled to a fair hearing at neighborhood association meetings. But that was not always the case. He explained that it was frustrating to try to get through the chain of influence to get City staff to understand your point of view. Some staff made promises they could not keep. Some responded to questions with glib remarks, and sometimes even outright lies. During the questioning period, Rocchia confirmed that what he described had been going on for almost 26 years. He submitted a written copy of his comments.

Vicki Handy, 960 Rancho Lobo, related that she was a new member of the Parks Board and a professional facilitator. She had attended some of the school meetings and two Planning Commission meetings. She felt the trails planning process had been publicized enough. The issue to be addressed was the process for community input. She had some recommendations. She agreed to submit them in writing after the meeting. Her recommendations included having a standard process for community input about a project. The process could be to form a committee (of staff and citizens) to seek input from stakeholders, then prepare the product, post it on the website, and hold a public meeting. The City should publish a timeline showing a series of meetings and next steps on specific dates at specific locations so anyone could look at the timeline and know where and when to go and later learn what the results were. Facilitation should be unbiased. Her criticism of the trails process was that there was biased facilitation: people were cut off; their comments were distorted; and they were not listened to. Participants in each meeting should be asked to complete a meeting evaluation at the end of

the meeting that would indicate whether or not they felt they were listened to. The results of each meeting should be published on the timeline. The website should be a project planning tool for anyone to access at any point. The plan itself should be a quality document. A little bit more work might be necessary to make it a quality document.

Michael Ragan, 4981 Mapleton Dr., observed that there was typically an effort to have citizen involvement. Decision makers would say they were listening, but they did not take what they heard into account during decision making. They just did what they set out to do. That was how the City ended up with “disasters” like the trails plan. During the questioning period, he clarified that when differing citizens wanted opposite things the City had to mediate or negotiate (in a transparent format) and reconcile opposing views. Otherwise people would be upset by the lack of transparency of the process as well as the outcome.

Lynn Fox, PO Box 236, Marylhurst, Oregon 97036, advised against relying too much on the internet. A lot of residents in her neighborhood did not use computers. She questioned the statement in the Summary of public outreach document that the staff had met with residents “at a number of public meetings.” She could only find one meeting in the record. Her neighborhood had not met during the trails planning process. Those citizens would have had no way of learning about the process unless they had access to the internet. Chair Martin suggested the Summary could be referring to the three outreach meetings. Ms. Fox expressed her concern that the CCI was redundant. She wanted to know if the Council was supposed to listen to the neighborhood associations that were impacted or to the CCI, which met once a year. That might discourage citizens. She heard them say over and over again, “Why bother?” (Mostly referring to City staff). The Commissioners related that the CCI was now meeting quarterly. Chair Martin asked if her experience helped her think of anything to change that would help citizens believe there was a reason to bother. Fox related that she had submitted online comments but never received any acknowledgment that they had been received. Citizens should know their comments had been received. She said there had not been enough public notice, public meetings and public participation. All the meetings that had been held were in communities and neighborhood associations adjacent to Highway 43. The other neighborhood associations had essentially been ignored. She explained that staff tended to go “back to the well” to find people they were comfortable with. She advocated broader representation on City boards. She noted that an employee of OTAK sat on the Parks board and an employee of the Tigard Water Bureau served on the Utility Advisory Board. She indicated another problem was that staff – particularly Parks and Recreation staff – used City resources to benefit some members of the community over others. She related that the City refused to maintain property adjacent to hers and she had to spend more than \$20,000 to clean it up herself. That showed a kind of problematic relationship between a City department and the citizens. When Ms. Fox asked how citizens could convey information or concerns to the CCI the Commissioners suggested they could either send it to the Planning Director, who would put it on the agenda, or they could come to any Planning Commission meeting and express concerns during the regular “Items of Interest Pertaining to the Commission for Citizen Involvement” segment. Fox said that was good to know because a lot of neighborhood associations were not functioning very well.

Francis Hanna, 3500 River Knoll Way., related that not only did the solar meeting notice she got in summer 2009 not specify it was about a solar "trail," but she found none of the 50 neighbors she talked to had received it. The area was adjacent to her back yard. Since then more people had become involved and they had held many meetings. They had asked for, but never received information regarding the exact location of the trail or the related EPA study. She had just learned about the WRA Advisory Committee and was concerned the City was using it to make changes it wanted in the EPA area. She was concerned the City might be hiding something from residents. Chair Martin explained the WRA committee had been formed to fix the code to ensure the environment was protected from the City as well as from developers. Ms. Hanna noted she was also concerned about fire danger in the area.

Ron Brown, 25565 Katherine, said his property was along the river and he was a "stakeholder." There was a notification process and objection period whenever someone wanted to get a permit to cut a tree, but he was never notified in writing about a trail. He wondered who the "stakeholders" were that Parks was talking to. He saw a need to oversee the proponents because he recalled the Parks and Recreation Department sometimes "back-door'd" things if it wanted something done. He related the outreach program was good. However, people had been asked to indicate where they wanted to see a pathway on a map that did not show private property lines. That was kind of a "shady thing to do."

George Schmeltzer, 4055 Calaroga Dr., related that he and his wife had found out about the meetings from neighbors and got involved in them. They wanted to curtail the grandiose trails program. They had come to the CCI meeting because they were worried about what its purpose was. His experience in private business made him question how effective it was to spend so much money to hire a consultant. The process momentum tended to feed itself and consultants focused on perpetuating their own employment. He described his own neighborhood. It was made up of an older age group who were unlikely to attend a meeting. There had been no dialogue with them. They believed their narrow, slow, sparsely used road was a "jogger's paradise." There was no reason to put a trail along the river. He suggested sending notices in water bills and using electronic media for questionnaires. He observed the City was broke and should be following an austerity program. It should spend the money for police or Highway 43. He indicated he appreciated getting the letter from the CCI. The Commissioners explained it had been sent to all who had testified at the hearing. The CCI then took a short break and reconvened at 9:10 p.m.

David Rittenhouse, 2101 Greene St., related that he had served on the technical group. They had not initially planned to do as much outreach. But they increased outreach after they decided the proposal should be vetted because it might be controversial. The outreach budget was increased for that reason. But it was not enough. He recalled the Dollar Street controversy and stressed it was important to go out and ask the hard questions and listen to the answers, even for an aspirational plan. He said it was a huge mistake not to have directly contacted the individuals who lived along the river. If the City revisited the process it should follow the example of the 10th Street Task Force. The meetings were open, videotaped, and members

walked away believing they had accomplished something. At the end of the technical group work the participants did not agree. Things were not settled. There was no vote – no one asked them to vote. He heard excuses for late information. He recommended the CCI needed broader representation. It should include representatives from entities such as neighborhood associations, the Chamber and the School District. Currently the Commissioners were just evaluating themselves.

During the questioning period, Commissioner Steel asked Mr. Rittenhouse if he felt the final plan was a finished plan and ready to be presented to the public. He indicated he did not. If the meetings had been televised perhaps there would have been much more feedback. He advised the process should be as transparent as possible so people would not think the outcome was predetermined. Some people just assumed that the City was hiding things. They should feel they had some representation. Chair Martin recalled that it was Director Worcester himself who had suggested that the plan should guarantee that condemnation would not be used and who had suggested having stakeholder meetings. But those things did not materialize. Rittenhouse advised the meetings should not have stopped as long as there were unsettled matters. The process should have been broader and wider from the get-go. The Council had handpicked the 10th Street Task Force so it would represent a broad range of interests. But the trails task force was selected by staff. At the end there was no consensus or vote. If it had done more work and addressed key issues that might have prevented problems. When asked, Rittenhouse clarified that he had not attended the open public meetings. Commissioner Holmes asked if the issues related to safety, habitat and financial concerns had been brought up at the technical committee meetings. Rittenhouse said that was not his expertise. He had been brought in because of his transportation related knowledge. He did not attend meetings where environmental aspects were discussed. Some flip charts had been created, but he had not seen them. However, they could be good resources. Chair Martin then invited people who had already commented to come back to offer additional comments.

Mary Swanson advised staff role was very important. Her experience was that it had been hard to get information from the City – either through the staff or on the website. She had asked to be notified about an ordinance, but only learned about that hearing because she happened to be at City Hall. She sometimes found the video of a meeting was not on the web. She related that the City's internet vendor had told her the City did not pay for certain services that would have made it easier for her to search on the web. She advised that multimedia was important. She related that in her role in a highly visible public process she always kept a list of those who wanted to be involved. She notified "everybody in the know and in the care." That was a "push" action by staff.

Gwen Sieben talked about impediments to communication and involvement. One was restrictions that made it hard to place monthly neighborhood association meeting signs. She noted residents were getting billed a monthly fee for parks even though they voted against a parks bond years ago. That was a prime example of not listening to the citizens. It generated distrust.

Laura Hecht related that she owned property in another jurisdiction which mailed a card to owners to alert them their property might be impacted. It told them which website to go to and gave a telephone number to call for more information. She advised that being notified that your property, your rights and your money might be impacted got peoples' attention. She related the problem that parks projects did not turn out as originally projected. Parks and Recreation would propose a plan but the end result would not be the same as the plan. It would cost more. It would have additional features. For example, Robinwood Park was supposed to be a wilderness park. Although it was seldom used, Parks and Recreation had added a splash pool, skate park, and restrooms and was about to build a bridge there. She noted the Boat Landing was always a mess. She said the trails plan was too vague. No one was quite sure exactly where the trails would be. She suggested the City could improve the process by sending a card to owners of property that may be impacted telling them it may be impacted; where to go to find out exactly what it would look like; and how much it would cost. The City should compile a list of everyone's email address. Then send the notice out to all of them. It just had to push a button to notify people. The cost was small. She advised her experience getting people to attend neighborhood association meetings taught her that the best way was to alert them "this may impact your property, your rights and your money."

Lynn Fox related examples of problems that caused her to distrust the City. Code enforcement staff removed the neighborhood association's meeting announcement signs. She had been asking the City for years to limb trees on an adjacent property. Then, a "widow maker" almost hit her husband. The City did not address invasive species on its land and they had spread onto her property and cost her money to clean up. She questioned why citizens should agree to give more property to the staff to maintain when the staff could not take care of what they had now. Residents had seen survey stakes, but when she asked him the Parks and Recreation director said there was no survey of the Palomino Loop Trail. When asked how the City could rebuild trust Ms. Fox suggested Parks and Recreation begin maintaining the land it was entrusted with and tell her why no survey had been done. She wanted to know what her rights and responsibilities were. She hoped the trails master plan would tell her where she was allowed to pull weeds. Code enforcement had told her they would arrest her for trespassing. She clarified the Parks director was not very accessible. She had to send him certified letters now.

City Councilor Teri Cummings, 2190 Valley Ct., thanked the Commissioners for their time and interest. The Council had not discussed the subject yet, but she anticipated they would want to have a summary of what was discussed. She talked about what she had heard. People wanted to know they had been heard and their comments were properly noted and taken into account. When information was published for public opinion people needed adequate time to look at it. It should be the full set of information. It seemed to Councilor Cummings that the trails process had not been fully gelled. There had been no consensus. It was not ready to go. There should be more certainty and not innuendos or things that caused undo angst. The fear that property might be condemned should have been addressed in writing so it came off the table. Serious issues like that should be addressed in writing. She recalled the question of who was pushing the project, the staff or the public. She had wondered that herself. She advised that

sometimes it was an outside entity. The state was pushing the concept of having an I-205 trail that connected to Vancouver. She recalled Ms. Handy had suggested using a consistent, standard, level process. Timelines helped people know what to expect but they should not be rigid so they could not be adjusted when necessary. Unbiased facilitation was important. The pros and cons of each possibility should be laid out without undue weight on one outcome over another. The Councilor liked the idea of asking participants evaluate meetings and publishing the results. That was part of having a transparent process. All of the information should be published timely. The process should avoid asking for public input in August or at times when the public was focused on holiday festivities. She noted one of the last meetings was December 19 at the time of the Holiday Parade. She was going to ask the Council to extend the process into January/February. She recalled Mr. Rittenhouse had advised the City to ask the "hard questions." That was sometimes hard to do. But the answers might be gentler than they would be if the hard questions were not asked and people got angry. She added that proper noticing was important.

Don Kingsborough emphasized it was important that public input be acknowledged so people were not left wondering whether their message was received. That would make them feel comfortable enough to do it again. He agreed sending a card to alert an owner that something might impact his/her property would get attention.

Michael Ragan stressed the City had to do everything to get citizen input, not just rely on a few methods of communication. The City had the names and addresses of every resident. It should send them all a postcard when there is an issue of citywide importance. It should send postcards to announce meetings. He said it was important to have a consistent process for public projects and avoid changing the venue and format. He cautioned against assuming neighborhood associations were functioning the way they were supposed to because they were not. Some were dysfunctional. A members' voice may or may not bubble up in the City process. He agreed the City should try to schedule meetings and ask for public feedback during times that would not interfere with holidays and vacations. He advised it had become imperative for all large organizations to use electronic media to communicate with their constituents. It was the most effective method of communication today. Most people looked at their email and if they saw something of importance to them they would respond. He reasoned that \$80,000 worth of outreach and 100 respondents was not enough when the City was considering a \$60 million plan. It needed statistically valid feedback from the population to know it was making the right decision. That might require 3,000 to 4,000 responses to proceed with a decision that would affect 30,000 people. He said whenever there was a meeting someone should run it and the minutes should be taken and published. Then people would know what was discussed, what was decided, and why. That was transparency and good citizen involvement. It resulted in better outcomes.

Chair Martin thanked everyone for coming. Each Commissioner talked about what he/she had heard.

Commissioner Steel recalled Councilor Cummings had great points. She saw the need for professional project management and good consultant contract management. She recalled that when she heard about the rushed nature of the project it occurred to her that what may have happened was that by about three-quarters of the way through the project the consultants had expended their staff time and contract amount and were less responsive when asked to do something. She was not sure it happened in this case, but it was so rushed at the end it may have been a factor. That should be explored or cautioned about. She recalled the points people had made about the agenda, summaries and timelines. Those were all elements of classic planning and Microsoft Project software. That should be standard in every project of this nature.

Commissioner Holmes indicated it was imperative to address the issue that although citizens were concerned about public safety, property rights, habitat and environment, those concerns had not been addressed in the process. It was important to have a better project management system. Perhaps technical/engineering-type people were not the right ones to be doing the public process because the communication failed. If the Commission was going to send something to the Council she did not want them to just send a one-paragraph resolution to the Council. It should be more of an analysis. The Commissioners could outline what they had heard up front and then go into more detail if they wanted to. They had heard very intense testimony about the issues and process and had come to some conclusions about why the process was failing that definitely needed to be addressed. They could not please everyone, but they did have to address public safety concerns like fire and bodily injury. The City was apparently not even keeping up the trails it had and that was very serious. She asked how it could financially handle those things if it did not have a better plan and system. It could not always depend on volunteers.

Vice Chair Babbitt concurred with Commissioners Steel and Holmes. The trails plan was the latest "hot" item, but he hoped the meeting would help them understand how master plans, task forces and the overall City could function better and have better communication in the future. What he had heard was there had been a lot of talking, but people were not being heard or getting any feedback. He advised it had to start from the top – from the City council. One of the things that had been bothering him for about the last six months was there was less "give and take" during testimony. When people testified they used to be asked questions and given feedback at that time. Then all the feedback was left to the end. Now the feedback was sent in a memo. He said distrust trickled down. If he talked, but no one listened to what he was saying, there was no feedback. The common theme at Council nowadays was, "Well, that is not exactly what we are talking about now, so let's move on." If one tried to get more background about something they said they were not really talking about the details now, just whether to move forward. They would take about the details later. Babbitt said sometimes you need to talk about the details to know if you want to move forward or not. So it had to start at the top and trickle down. He hoped what the Commissioners recommended was not just specific to the trails plan. He hoped the City Council took it to heart.

Chair Martin had heard ideas that night that were very basic and worthwhile things to pursue. One was to acknowledge what they heard. He liked the idea of sending an acknowledging email. Vice Chair Babbitt said that should happen whenever someone testified as well. Chair Martin liked the steps that had been suggested for any City project. First, identify and involve the stakeholders. It would take some work to figure out who they are. He liked the phrase, "Those in the know and those in the care." Forming the technical working group was a great step. Like the 10th Street Task Force, task forces, committees or working groups should have input, have eyes on the problem, and have people offer solutions from many perspectives. That should be an essential part of the process. Ironically, what was currently happening was all of that was falling on the staff to do the research and come up with solutions and come up with a way to appease everybody and then just hand it out. He said we are not really living up to our responsibility as citizens if given the opportunity we don't step in and help do that work. Staff would be facilitator, aggregator and integrator of information rather than the creator of the plan. In the next step the group should be required to reach a consensus. People involved in the process would deal with different points of view and tradeoffs and evaluate. They should know it was their job to reach a consensus. They were to find a way to solve the problem that everybody could live with. If those steps were part of the process a lot of issues would go away. A lot of the trust and transparency issues would be addressed by empowering the group. He suggested there might be an additional first step (a validation step) worth looking at to distinguish between projects that were initiated by the public and projects initiated by staff. Because before the City invested so much time and work in a project it should ensure there was public support for the project and it was not just one person's passion. If the support was not there the City should not move forward with it (unless it was a project that was mandated from outside the City). He recalled the advice that the process should be run by a facilitator who was focused on the quality of the process, not a particular outcome. He concurred regarding publishing the results. He volunteered to draft a summary of the comments and circulate it to the other Commissioners via email so they could refine it before the Commission sent it out to those who had participated in the meeting.

ITEMS OF INTEREST PERTAINING TO THE COMMISSION FOR CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

There were no additional items

ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

Commissioner Holmes announced a citywide meeting regarding Highway 43 planning would be held on September 29 at Rosemont Middle School. Citizen comments were invited. She confirmed the working group was fairly diverse and the process was entering the earliest stage of concept visioning. Director Sonnen reported that he had distributed a card that evening with the meeting time, date, place and subject on it.

ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM STAFF (None)

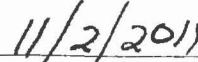
ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, Chair Martin adjourned the Planning Commission meeting at
____ p.m.

APPROVED:



Robert Martin, Chair



Date