Community Participation in Washington County Transition Planning Process
Final Report to the Board of County Commissioners

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DRAFT
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I. Introduction

In the fall of 2014, the Oregon State University Extension Service decided that it would no longer administer Washington County’s community participation program, effective by mid-2016. The Board of County Commissioners appointed a 13-member Transition Planning Team to “explore a broad range of public participation models and strategies” and to “develop options for Board consideration so that a transition can be implemented in early 2016.” The Transition Team was appointed in the spring of 2015 and includes a broad spectrum of viewpoints. See Attachment 1 for a roster of members.

The County engaged Solid Ground Consulting to facilitate the process and to submit a report to the Board upon completion. This report summarizes the work of the Transition Team, including its deliberations, suggestions to the Board, options for the Board to consider, and issues to be addressed in a future implementation phase.

All opinions are those of Solid Ground and consultants Joe Hertzberg and Holly Van Houten. Individual commentaries of Transition Team members are in Section XIII.

II. Basic Principles of Community Participation

The Transition Team began its process in July 2015, and members shared their visions and philosophies of community participation. Over the course of several meetings, the Transition Team crafted several statements that form the foundation of its suggested program design.

Aspirational Vision

Washington County provides opportunities for all residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to meaningfully engage in collaborative, dynamic processes of open and responsive government. People from all walks of life have direct access to information and services, have a voice in decisions that affect their lives, and lend their knowledge, perspective, and creativity to building community resiliency and solving community problems. County officials value their input and take it into account in decision-making. The County partners with other jurisdictions and community-based organizations. Members of the public have opportunities for civic education and leadership training.

Underlying Philosophy

1. Active engagement is the engine of democracy. Everyone should have the opportunity to speak up and help shape decisions that affect their lives.
2. Broad participation of diverse community members leads to better decisions and more effective solutions to problems. Community members offer important perspectives, good ideas, and expertise in matters that affect their lives.
3. Public officials demonstrate that they appreciate community participation through a welcoming, receptive attitude, real two-way dialogue, and clear explanations of how community input helps to shape their decision-making.
4. Trust develops when people feel that their government is transparent, cares, listens, and responds to them. This leads people to volunteer their time, to vote, and to support efforts initiated by the County.
5. Participation strengthens the sense of community. People who choose to live here share the responsibility to use their knowledge, skills, and experience to help make the community better. This applies to everyone, not just “citizens.”

6. Community education and awareness help people to participate effectively and articulate sound, informed opinions.

**Building Blocks of a Community Participation Program**

Before getting into the details of the County’s community participation program, the Team identified the building blocks that should comprise it.

1. Maintain engagement vehicles based on geography.
   - Geographic boundaries should be small enough to reflect a real sense of community.
   - Geographic associations should roll up into a larger structure.
   - Land use is an important place-based topic and will always be a core component of a geography-based program. Oregon State Land Use Planning Goal 1 (Citizen Participation) requirements must be met.
   - Topics that focus on shared interests to help unite residents and support positive interactions (e.g., quality of life, disaster preparedness) should also be included.

2. Add engagement vehicles based on communities of interest and identity.

3. Provide opportunities to address issues that are relevant across the county (e.g., juvenile justice, public health).

4. Look for opportunities to partner across jurisdictions. Don’t duplicate community engagement programs of cities.

5. Do not place unreasonable expectations of workload or skillsets on volunteers.

6. Include strong civic education and leadership training components.

7. Provide a variety of mechanisms to engage with government and with one another that go beyond face-to-face meetings.

8. Provide a common point of entry / ombudsman / information and referral to help people navigate County government.

9. Actively reach out and market the program to encourage greater participation.

**A Word about Words**

Early on, the Transition Team discussed the term “Citizen,” which is currently part of the engagement program. For many people, “citizen” evokes the highest level of “civic engagement” and “civic responsibility.” However, members of the Transition Team recognize that “citizen” also refers to one’s immigration status and may imply that only citizens of the United States may participate in the life of the community.

Consequently, the Transition Team agreed not to use the term “citizen.” Instead, “community” or “public” was paired with “engagement,” “participation,” and “involvement.” As a placeholder in this report, we have consistently adopted the term “community participation.” In outreach to the public, the terms “community engagement” and “community participation” were most favored.
III. Background

The County contracted with Solid Ground Consulting to assist in the transition planning process by gathering insights and perspectives from key stakeholders, facilitating the Transition Team process, and submitting a written report to the Board of Commissioners. In addition, researchers from Portland State University were engaged to identify best practices from around the country.

Stakeholder Insights

Between April and June, 2015, Joe Hertzberg and Holly Van Houten of Solid Ground Consulting interviewed 20 key stakeholders and submitted a report to the BOCC on June 23 (included in Attachment 2). Following were the major findings:

- Community participation can serve multiple purposes. It is important to clarify which of these the County is interested in for this project.
- Virtually all public-sector community engagement efforts struggle to attract broad participation, not just CPOs and not just Washington County.
- The strengths and weaknesses of the current CPO system are widely recognized.
- Cities, urban unincorporated communities, and rural areas pose different challenges. One size will not fit all.
- Large and growing segments of the population are underrepresented, including communities of color, young people, and the business community.
- Some respondents question how much the County values community participation.
- Everyone recognizes the importance of “21st Century” digital tools, but cautioned that these tools do not replace one-on-one relationships or face-to-face meetings.
- Community education and training are invaluable, both to build awareness of basic concepts of local government and to build skills in leadership and effectiveness.
- Some stakeholders strongly feel that CPOs must continue to be staffed by professionals who are not County employees. Others made equally strong arguments for County staffing.

Best Practices Research

At the same time, researchers from Portland State University were contracted to identify best practices to potentially draw from in creating a community participation program for Washington County. Their report, “Promising Practices for Long-Term Community Engagement” was prepared by Meg Merrick, Andree Tremoulet, and Tina Dippert and was released in August 2015. A summary was presented to the BOCC on June 23 and findings shared and discussed with the Team at their July and August meetings.

Although several promising approaches were profiled in this report, the researchers were not able to point to the "'perfect model' for Washington County's community participation program.” This report helped to frame a series of choices to be made in designing a community engagement program, an approach that was then
incorporated into the Transition Team process. A copy of the report is available online at: http://www.co.washington.or.us/CPO/upload/Promising-Practices-Report-8-11-2015.pdf

**Ongoing Community Participation**

The PSU report and transition planning process focused on one aspect of the broader practice of community participation: long-term programs and structures that facilitate dialogue and collaboration among local government and communities on a broad range of issues. The following figure situates these programs within the range of community participation efforts in which local government efforts engage. The CPO program falls within the box outlined in red.

![Community Participation Diagram]

**Communities of Geography, Interest, and Identity**

The PSU research also pointed to the importance of building a community participation program around the needs of the specific constituencies, or types of communities, it serves. In looking at a structure for long-term community engagement, there is an opportunity to look at populations not fully involved currently, such as younger households, communities of color, new populations, rural populations, and small businesses.
These may be considered communities of identity or interest, in addition to being part of a community of geography.

**Purpose of Participation**

The purpose of a community participation program is its driving force, influencing the structure, activities, and kinds of support required. The best practices report examined the origins and evolution of the CPO program, and the purposes of the program. Topics of interest can include land use and transportation, issues related to the County, issues related to other public agencies, to all community issues.

**Who Initiates the Agenda?**

The report also examined programs on a spectrum based on who initiates or sets the agenda. Public participation programs provide means for community members to receive information about public issues and to consult with their government about plans, policies, and related actions. At the other end of the spectrum are opportunities for community members to identify problems, deliberate about possible solutions, marshal resources, and organize for action. The focus is on building social capital and developing community resources.

**Commission Charge to the Transition Team**

A work session was held with the Board on June 23 to present the highlights of the stakeholder interviews and the best practices research. During this presentation, the consulting team offered some framing choices and the Board adopted a charge to the Transition Planning Team:

- Address the full spectrum of the County’s ongoing community participation efforts, not limited to the CPO system.
- Community participation is not limited to issues raised by the County. Consider how the program might facilitate discussion and problem-solving regarding concerns initiated by the community, in addition to issues of land use, transportation, and other County matters.
- Because the concerns of community members do not neatly align with the division of responsibilities among the County and other jurisdictions, community participation should allow for a full range of issues, with a clear disclaimer when issues beyond the County’s domain are broached.
In addition to communities of geography, recognize that many residents identify with other kinds of communities of interest and identity.

- Explore opportunities to partner with other jurisdictions to coordinate efforts and pool resources.
- Work on a timeline that leads to implementation of the transition in early 2016.

The Board was also clear that while they welcomed recommendations, they were looking to the Transition Team primarily for options.

## IV. Program Architecture

The Transition Team created an “architecture” for community participation. While the two-dimensional graphic on the next page might appear rigid and static (like drawings for a house), it is meant to show how the various elements work together in an integrated and adaptable fashion (like the open architecture of a computer). The table following the diagram compares the purpose for each building block of the program.

This architecture does not imply that people have to go through this structure to access their government. The Transition Team fully recognizes that participation is the engine of democracy and the people – individually and in ongoing or ad hoc groups – can always go directly to elected and appointed officials to make their views known.

The next sections describe these elements in more detail.
## Community Participation “Architecture” Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Purpose/Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Participation Organizations <em>(current Citizen Participation Organizations)</em></td>
<td>Provide a venue for participation for communities of geography on topics including land use, transportation, and livability and help support community-based initiatives. Needs and structures differ from area to area, especially between rural and urban unincorporated areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic-based groups <em>(new)</em></td>
<td>Opportunity for community-initiated groups in smaller geographic areas to be recognized as part of the system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity-based groups <em>(new)</em></td>
<td>Opportunity for existing and newly created groups focused on communities of identity and/or interest to be recognized as part of the system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee for Community Involvement <em>(expanded role for current Committee for Citizen Involvement)</em></td>
<td>Composed of representatives from CPOs and identity- and interest-based groups. Provide advice to the Board of Commissioners, department staff, Advisory boards, and community organizations. Ensure two-way flow of communication between the County and recognized community participation groups. Help implement and coordinate community participation activities, including marketing and outreach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Participation Advisory Commission <em>(new)</em></td>
<td>Appointed by Commissioners (with some spots reserved for designated positions). Provide advice to the Board of Commissioners, department staff, and other Advisory Boards regarding policy, design, and oversight of the County’s community participation efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population-Specific Advisory Boards <em>(new)</em></td>
<td>Appointed by Commissioners. Provide advice to the Board of Commissioners, department staff, other Advisory Boards, and community organizations about outreach and ways to fully integrate voices of historically underrepresented communities. Diversity, youth, and business are the most frequently mentioned populations. Formal linkages should be established between these Advisory Boards, Community Participation Advisory Commission, and Community Participation Coordinating Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Boards and Commissions <em>(existing)</em></td>
<td>Appointed by Commissioners, existing Boards and Commissions will have two-way access to the expertise and advice of newly created Coordinating Committee and Advisory Boards to help strengthen their community participation efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities and Special Districts <em>(to be negotiated)</em></td>
<td>Because each City and Special District has separate authority over its own community involvement program, arrangements will be negotiated with each. Basic goal is to provide an efficient and integrated system that offers access to all relevant public jurisdictions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Committee for Citizen Involvement created a graphic that places these program elements in the broader context of other jurisdictions and institutions. This is shown in Attachment 3.
V. Engaging Communities of Interest and Identity

One of the most important changes suggested by the Team is to expand the County’s community participation program to recognize that the sense of community for many people is related to non-geographic dimensions of identity and/or interest. Examples include communities of color, faith-based organizations, bicycle activists, small businesses, farmers, etc. In some cases, existing organizations might want to associate with the County’s system; in other instances, groups might come together specifically for this purpose.

Many of these communities have been underrepresented in the past. It will be important not only to welcome their participation, but also to practice “assertive engagement” with them. Best practices in this regard are enumerated in Attachment 4.

An important implementation step is to establish standards and practices for recognizing community-initiated groups representing communities of identity and interest.

In addition, as noted above, the Transition Team suggests that new population-specific advisory boards be created to provide guidance and perspective to the Board of Commissioners, County staff, other advisory boards, and other community participation groups. The historically underrepresented populations that have consistently been cited for consideration are Diversity, Youth, and Business.

VI. Engaging Communities of Geography

Maintaining a strong, ongoing program based on geography is a high priority. The current CPO program has a long history in Washington County, and today many committed volunteers work together on behalf of their communities. This system should be broadened and strengthened by addressing its well-recognized weaknesses, including:

- Many boundaries combine populations that do not have significant common bonds.
- Participation is often sparse, except when local controversies arise. Some areas are inactive.
- Participants lack the diversity of the general populace.
- Participation depends on attending meetings, without the benefit of 21st century tools for communication and decision-making.
- The system depends on volunteers for marketing and outreach.

The Transition Team recommends that CPOs continue to address place-based issues – including but not limited to land use and transportation – and continue to help the County meet its Goal 1 requirements. As entities of the County charged with providing advice to the Board of County Commissioners advice, they will continue to be subject to the requirements of Oregon’s open meeting and public records requirements.

Livability issues are also within the purview of CPOs. Many team members feel that broadening the topics addressed by CPOs would help to broaden participation. Team members appointed to represent diverse communities indicated that many of their constituents have issues they want to see addressed locally. CPOs were also encouraged to work on topics that promote positive feelings of connection, such as working on community projects like libraries, gardens, emergency preparedness, or community events.
Rolling up to Larger Areas

The PSU report indicated that a best practice for organizing geographically is to make boundaries small enough to reflect a real sense of community and to feel welcoming to individuals from historically underrepresented populations.

CPO 4K – King City and its vicinity - was repeatedly cited as a successful example because its smaller area contributes to attracting larger numbers to regularly attend meetings and identify shared concerns.

The Transition Team considered creating a structure that “rolled up” from smaller neighborhood-level groups to a district or regional level and then to a countywide organization. Team members felt that while this kind of structure might help welcome more people, it would place too much burden on volunteers to attend multiple meetings at multiple levels. Smaller groups would also be infeasible to support through the current array of staffing.

One Countywide Engagement Program

Some Team members articulated a vision of moving away from a County-centric program toward a model that serves all of Washington County regardless of residence or jurisdiction. This approach was envisioned as similar to cooperative efforts underway for emergency management where the County, cities, and special districts would create a single, seamless engagement program. Most people do not understand or care about the differences among jurisdictions or know how to effectively engage in government decision-making. Creating a seamless, cooperative, countywide engagement program was seen as the most empowering approach. While the Team recognized this as a long-term vision, it is not feasible to seriously consider at this time.

What Happens in Cities?

The Team wrestled with how the County’s program should operate within cities. A few principles were discussed, but never formally adopted:

- All Washington County residents and stakeholders should have the opportunity to weigh in on County issues, whether they live in a city or an unincorporated area.
- Do not duplicate existing city programs.
- The CPO system should be available to cities.
- Ideally, a single point of entry would allow a person to access whatever jurisdiction is responsible for an issue of concern, whether it is the County, a city, or a special district.

One critical question is whether CPO boundaries should overlap with cities. Two different models were discussed:

- Create a countywide system of CPOs that covers rural, unincorporated, and incorporated areas unless – by agreement with the County – a city opts out.
- Create a countywide system of CPOs for rural and urban unincorporated areas and allow cities – by agreement with the County – to opt into the system.
The Team adopted a statement regarding the working relationship with cities:

Because of the varying types of community engagement programs at each city, it is critical to collaborate with each to take full advantage of, and not duplicate, existing systems. For smaller cities it may work well to have a County-organized group act as their community engagement organization.

For cities that have existing participation processes, the best approach for enabling effective community participation is to connect people to those programs. Issues of countywide importance could be provided through the existing city-lead processes based on cooperative agreements between the County and those cities.

Special Service Districts

Many special districts (including school districts) currently use CPOs as one avenue of outreach. In this way CPOs can serve as a “one stop shop” for jurisdictions that want to engage with residents in a particular area, allowing interested residents to learn about a variety of projects and topics without having to attend numerous meetings. At the same time, districts have many other tools of engagement that could be of value to the County. The Team adopted a statement regarding the working relationship with special districts:

Because of the varying types of community engagement programs at each special service district, it is critical to partner with each to take full advantage of, and not duplicate, existing systems.

Issues of countywide significance could be provided through existing special service district processes based on cooperative agreements between the County and those service districts.

Boundaries

It is beyond the scope of the Team to discuss CPO boundaries. Nonetheless, the topic came up repeatedly. The Team agreed that it is desirable for boundaries to reflect a real sense of community and that some current CPO boundaries do not.

This question should be on the agenda in the future, perhaps assigned to the Community Participation Advisory Commission. At that time, several options and principles might be considered:

- Tie CPO boundaries to community boundaries established by others, such as community plan areas or school attendance areas.
- Tie CPO boundaries to County Commission districts to ensure that each has an equal percentage of the population and to strengthen ties between CPOs and their commissioners. This would result in large geographic areas and might require creating a roll-up structure.
- Distinguish rural from urban unincorporated areas in establishing CPOs. Issues, conditions, attitudes, and distances are different. Team members diverge in their perception of the importance of these differences.

VII. Education and Training

Education and training are critical components of effective engagement.

- General public: Many residents would benefit from “Local Government 101,” describing which jurisdictions provide which services, explaining the role of the people in the decision-making process, and suggesting how people can get involved and be effective. This might be especially valuable for immigrant
communities who come from cultures where it is often risky to speak out and prudent to avoid active engagement.

- People who are already active: Specific training in topics of interest like Land Use, Transportation, Human Services, and Equity.
- People in leadership positions: Leadership tools and tips: Examples of topics include running effective meetings, active listening, leadership styles, how to testify, and public meetings.

The County already provides training and materials in English and Spanish in a number of areas, including Land Use, Building Services, and Development Review.

OSU Extension has also been actively engaged in training for CPO leaders, including Basics of Community Leadership and the CPO Handbook.

Cities and special districts also provide training, and this area offers perfect opportunities for collaboration.

**VIII. Toolkit for Communication, Collaboration, Meetings, and Decision-Making**

No electronic tool can ever replace the face-to-face meeting. But no tool is right for every job, and every tool is more effective when it is in a full array that allows the right tool to be used for the right job.

The Team agreed that the best way to provide each group in the system with the tools they need is to create a toolbox that could be accessed by all levels of the program.

**What’s in the Toolkit?**

**Traditional Tools**

- Open houses, town halls, panel discussions, presentations, neighborhood coffees, community meetings, and other face-to-face community events convened by the County
- Presentations to community groups, organizations, and associations upon request
- Translation and interpretation
- Participation at community gathering places and events such as parks, schools, and fairs
- Flyers, newsletters, brochures, information sheets, and project overviews
- Printed surveys, intercept surveys, and statistically valid random-sample surveys
- Keypad polling (also evolving to use mobile devices)
- Community Access Cable Television

**Online, Internet, and Web-Based Tools**

- Websites
- E-subscriptions
- Email and e-newsletters
- Online surveys and opinion polls
- Social media
- Online videos

Electronic tools are evolving rapidly. This is both exciting and challenging. For use at the County, tools must be compatible with County’s systems and would be used by many staff in different divisions and departments as part of the full range of the County’s engagement efforts. This is challenging. Special districts also use a variety of tools, but it is even more challenging to consider integration across jurisdictions and platforms.

Possible new tools being reviewed now include:
- Ability to specify different geographic areas (such as defined neighborhoods, service districts, and other types of boundaries)
- Maps with opportunities to pinpoint an area and identify an issue or aspiration
- Ability for interactive dialogue among community members and with County officials
- Generation of community-initiated issues and topics
- Integration of native language translation (versus Google Translates where intended meanings and nuances can be off target)
- Survey and visual preference options
- Integration with additional types of social media

**IX. Information, Referral, and Troubleshooting**

Effective participation begins with access to accurate and timely information. The Team agreed that one of the “building blocks” of a community participation program is, “Provide a common point of entry / ombudsman / information and referral to help people navigate County government.”

Unfortunately, the Team did not have the time to address this element in depth, though the topic came up repeatedly. When it did come up, three alternatives clearly emerged. Because people who need information often have no idea which unit of government is responsible for the issue at hand, all of these models would be strengthened by close collaboration between Washington County and other jurisdictions.

1. **Single point of contact**: Create a centralized Information & Referral function to connect an inquirer with the appropriate staff person. This system is only as good as its centralized data base and the information and training available to the person taking the initial contact. Note that this approach is staff intensive. The joint City of Portland / Multnomah County Information & Referral has a staff of six who answer phones and provide reception at major facilities.

2. **“No wrong door.”** Assure that staff throughout the organization are trained and oriented to assist inquirers to identify appropriate County staff. In the assertive version of this model, the staff member remains involved with the caller until a successful hand-off is made.
3. **Ombudsperson**: A designated staff person advocates to get answers to questions and resolutions to problems. In the strict interpretation of the role, the ombudsperson has the authority to investigate, report, and address complaints.

### X. Staffing

Many people have strong opinions – in both directions – about whether the community participation program should be supported by County staff or outside contractors. In the PSU report (pages 40-43) and discussions of the Transition Team, a number of strengths were cited for County staffing:

- Accountability; requires commissioners to take ownership
- Continuity, long-term stability
- People have direct access to their government
- Closer ties and better integration with programs and projects
- County will pay more attention if the system is staffed by County employees

Strengths cited for external staffing of all or part of the program included:

- Independent, neutral, impartial, unbiased
- Specialized skills or expertise, including marketing and outreach to specific populations
- Demonstrated effectiveness through the decades
- Fixed cost

Candidates for external staffing included:

- PSU (mentioned most frequently by far)
- Pacific University
- Community-based organizations such as Centro Cultural, Center for Intercultural Organizing, and Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon
- Vision Action Network
- Rural Development Initiative
- New nonprofit organization modeled on VAN
- Private consulting firm

The Team’s discussion made it clear that the answer to staffing is likely to be “some of both.” Based on the arguments summarized above, some functions may be more appropriate for County staff and others may lend themselves to contracting out. The following table is a very rough cut at how the assignment of functions might break down. Cost is clearly one consideration, and there has no comparative analysis. The Team suggested that a cost-benefit study would be useful.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More appropriate for County staff</th>
<th>More appropriate for Contractor</th>
<th>Either / Depends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain contact lists</td>
<td>Support and coach leaders</td>
<td>Handle meeting arrangements and logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain public records</td>
<td>Train leaders and members</td>
<td>Implement outreach and marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide point of contact for the public</td>
<td>Develop plans for outreach and marketing</td>
<td>Identify emerging issues of potential interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide point of contact for community leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td>Produce print and online newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain website</td>
<td></td>
<td>Manage recruitment/appointment process for BOCC-appointed positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain electronic communication tools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report to BOCC on program accomplishments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain financial records</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### XI. Defining Success for Community Engagement

The following items were suggested by the Transition Team as outcomes and metrics of success.

#### Outcomes

- Anyone who wants can easily become aware of issues that might be of interest to them.
- Anyone interested in an issue can easily obtain information and learn how to become involved.
- Public officials welcome public input and use it to craft better decisions.
- Individuals and groups have opportunities to proactively raise their own issues of concern.
- There is a strong sense of two-way connection between the people and their government.
- People have a strong sense of community.
- The community is stronger and more resilient.

#### Metrics of Success

1. Number of participants in various engagement activities, including attendance at public events, testimony at Board of County Commissioner meetings, and written communication.
2. Similarity between demographics of the population and demographics of the engaged community.
3. Satisfaction of engaged community members, including trust in public officials.
4. Satisfaction of unengaged community members, including trust in public officials.
5. Demonstrated impact of public involvement on the opinions of decision-makers
6. Demonstrated understanding among the public about the actions taken by decision-makers.
7. Positive outcomes of community-initiated efforts.
8. Increased voter turnout.
9. Public support of County actions, including ballot measures. The goal of measuring success is to ensure a positive return on Washington County’s investment in ongoing community participation. The Community Participation Advisory Commission should report annually to the Board of County Commissioners, and everyone in the system should be committed to continuous improvement.

XII. Suggestions and Options

These suggestions to the Board arose in the Transition Team process:

1. Retain the current geography-based CPO system. Establish standards and practices to recognize existing and newly formed organizations representing smaller areas.
2. Establish standards and practices to recognize existing and newly formed organizations representing communities of interest and identity.
3. Rename the current Committee for Citizen Involvement. Expand the responsibilities of the Committee for Community Involvement to encompass organizations in both communities of geography and communities of identity and interest.
4. Establish a Community Participation Advisory Commission
5. Establish one or more Population-Specific Advisory Boards for Diversity, Youth, and/or Business communities.
6. Negotiate with each city to determine how their residents will be included. This may range from County participation in the city’s existing system (e.g., Beaverton’s NACs) to the city’s participation in the CPO system, with a spectrum of possibilities in between.
7. Negotiate with each special service district to agree on the most effective and efficient forms of collaboration.
8. Discontinue use of the word “citizen” in reference to this program.
9. Create a kit of digital tools available to all elements of the program.
10. Collaborate with cities and special districts to create comprehensive education and training opportunities.

These options for Board consideration arose in the Transition Team process:

**Staffing**
- Identify tasks that should be assigned to County staff.
- Identify tasks that should be assigned to external contractors.

**Information, Referral, and Troubleshooting**
- Single point of contact
- “No wrong door”
- Ombudsperson
These issues remain to address in an implementation planning phase in 2016:

- How should the different elements of community participation be sequenced to be introduced?
- How should representatives of communities of identity and interest be selected to serve on the CCI?
- How should Population-Specific Advisory Boards be connected to the Community Participation Advisory Commission and the Community Participation Coordinating Committee? Possibilities include joint appointments, liaisons, or “subcommittee” relationships.
- How should members of the Community Participation Advisory Commission be appointed? The Team leans toward some appointed by Commissioners, some by the CCI, and some (members or liaisons) designated by other Advisory Boards.
- Initiate negotiations with cities.
- Initiate negotiations with special districts.
- Establish guidelines for CPO boundaries where rural geographies are largely kept as they are, urban unincorporated geographies are potentially divided into smaller CPOs, and city geographies are recognized as negotiated with city governments.
- Develop a budget for the new program. Conduct a cost-benefit analysis to help determine budget and assignment of staffing.
- Consider standards and practices for acknowledging community-initiated groups (whether existing or newly formed) representing communities of geography and communities of identity and interest. Determine what their rights and responsibilities should be in the overall community participation system.
XIII. Commentary of Transition Team Members

*** placeholder for Transition Team comments up to one page each, to be received by January 4, 2016 for inclusion in report to the BOCC ***

Bruce Bartlett

Eduardo Corona

Jim Long

Mary Manseau

Luis Nava

Liz Newton

Pablo Nieves-Valenzuela

Victoria Saager

Kathy Stallkamp

Bill Steele

Sheri Wantland

Bob Wayt

Corinne Weiss
## Attachment 1: Transition Planning Team Roster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCI Nominees</td>
<td>Bruce Bartlett</td>
<td>CPO 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jim Long</td>
<td>CPO 4M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kathy Stallkamp</td>
<td>CPO 4K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At-Large: Under-Represented</td>
<td>Eduardo Corona</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pablo Nieves-Valenzuela</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practitioner</td>
<td>Sheri Wantland</td>
<td>Clean Water Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>City/Special District</td>
<td>Liz Newton</td>
<td>City of Tigard</td>
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<td>Corinne Weiss</td>
<td>City of Hillsboro</td>
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<td>Bob Wayt</td>
<td>Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District</td>
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<td>County Staff</td>
<td>Victoria Saager</td>
<td>Washington County, Land Use &amp; Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bill Steele</td>
<td>Washington County, Sheriff's Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>At-Large: General</td>
<td>Mary Manseau</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luis Nava</td>
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</table>
Attachment 2: Stakeholder Interviews and Insights

TO: Washington County Board of Commissioners
FROM: Joe Hertzberg and Holly Van Houten
DATE: June 23, 2015
SUBJECT: Stakeholder perspectives on Community Participation Transition Planning

We conducted in-person interviews with 20 stakeholders identified by the CAO’s office to represent a broad range of perspectives. A list appears at the end of this summary. We also met with Washington County Managers as a group. Following are the most important themes and insights we gleaned from these conversations.

Community participation can serve multiple purposes. It is important to clarify which of these the County is interested in for this project.

- Public Participation: Disseminate information on issues of importance, gather input from residents on those issues, and provide a forum for discussion and problem-solving.
- Community-Building: Cultivate authentic relationships with all segments of the community, based on mutual trust and respect. Make the County’s presence felt.
- Civic Education and Leadership Development: Educate residents about Washington County government and offer training in effective participation and leadership.

Virtually all public-sector community engagement efforts struggle to attract broad participation, not just CPOs and not just Washington County.

- It is a huge challenge to attract a representative cross-section of the public.
- Attendance is often driven by hot topics and is difficult to sustain interest over time.
- A regular meeting schedule and format does not fit into the busy lifestyles of many people.
- Associations are often dominated by a few individuals.

The strengths and weaknesses of the current CPO system are widely recognized.

- The system provides a venue for a small group of dedicated residents to engage with the County, especially with regard to place-based issues.
- Discussions are often spirited, and can sometimes help forge compromises or resolve issues.
- The CPO model is better suited to geographically focused issues than to county-wide issues.
- Most residents do not clearly distinguish the County’s responsibilities from those of other units of government. CPOs can provide a forum for issues beyond the County’s domain.
- CPOs have been a training ground for community leaders, including some elected officials.
- Long-time CPO members expressed a desire to build more productive relationships with Commissioners and County staff. Many stakeholders who have not been active in the CPOs system consider it to be “a tool for the few” that has taken a lot of the County’s attention.
- CPOs depend on intensive staff support. CPO leaders put in countless hours and could use additional support, such as marketing, training, and clerical assistance.

**Cities, urban unincorporated communities, and rural areas pose different challenges. One size will not fit all.**

- CPOs are especially active in urban unincorporated areas working to address place-based issues. Residents of these areas have few other civic opportunities to come together.
- City managers and some CPO members felt it confusing and duplicative to have CPOs within cities.
- Engagement is especially challenging in rural areas due to where distance and limited access to electronic communications.

**Large and growing segments of the population are underrepresented, including communities of color, young people, and the business community.**

- Many respondents stressed the importance of building long-term, personal relationships of mutual trust and respect, especially in communities that have not been involved historically. This requires going to them and understanding their hopes, needs, and concerns.
- An advisory council like Beaverton’s Diversity Advisory Board could help the County reach out to underrepresented communities. This might also apply to the business community.
- The County could partner with community-based organizations to help build connections in their communities. Again, this might also apply to the business community.

**Some respondents question how much the County values community participation.**

- A number of people with different perspectives doubted the commitment of Commissioners to listen to voices from the community.
- Beaverton was cited as a jurisdiction that has achieved some success through demonstrated commitment of leadership and resources.

**Everyone recognizes the importance of “21st Century” digital tools, but cautioned that these tools do not replace one-on-one relationships or face-to-face meetings**

- Some stakeholders commended the County for its efforts in this area. They pointed out room to improve in making communications more attractive and engaging.
- The universe of possibilities is ever-expanding, and numerous examples were offered.

**Community education and training are invaluable, both to build awareness of basic concepts of local government and to build skills in leadership and effectiveness.**

- This is relevant in different ways for those who are least informed and involved – including immigrants from countries with political cultures very different from ours – all the way through those who are most involved and seek to be as effective as they can be.

**Some stakeholders strongly feel that CPOs must continue to be staffed by professionals who are not County employees. Others made equally strong arguments for County staffing.**
Stakeholders Interviewed

Shahriar Ahmed  Bilal Mosque
Don Bohn  Washington County, Assistant CAO
Virginia Bruce  CPO member
Melissa DeLyser  Washington County Land Use & Transportation
Matthew Eagan  Calvary Lutheran Church
Paolo Esteban  Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)
Stan Houseman  Committee for Citizen’s Involvement and CPO member
Kayse Jama  Center for Intercultural Organizing
Kathie Koellmann  Committee for Citizen’s Involvement and CPO member
Mee Seon Kwon  Center for Intercultural Organizing
Mary Manseau  CPO member
Rob Massar  Washington County, Assistant CAO
Carolyn McCormick  Washington County Visitors Association
Maria Rubio  Centro Cultural
Dan Schauer  OSU Extension (CPO Outreach Coordinator)
Beth St. Amand  OSU Extension (CPO Outreach Coordinator)
Stephen Roberts  Washington County Land Use & Transportation
Andrew Singelakis  Washington County Land Use & Transportation
Pam Treece  Westside Economic Alliance
Maureen Wheeler  Beaverton School District

Washington County City and Special District Managers
Attachment 4: Recommendations for Assertive Engagement

It is well known that public participation has become more challenging across the country in the past two decades. A set of best practices has emerged that apply to all civic involvement, and particularly to traditionally underrepresented communities, including ethnic minorities, young people, rural residents, and small business. These have been cited in our national research and in interviews with Transition Team members and Washington County stakeholders. They fit nicely under a rubric used in human services: “assertive engagement.”

- Seek to form real relationships.
- “Go to them” and “speak their language.”
  - Connect at times, in places, in language, and in styles that are familiar and comfortable to the specific community.
  - Identify issues of concern to the specific group, and address those issues.
  - Identify venues where they congregate, and strive to become a welcome guest.
  - Ask specific questions that stimulate dialogue, rather than either broad, abstract questions or “yes or no” questions that don’t invite conversation.
- Identify natural networks and community leaders.
- Ask for advice, endorsement, and assistance from credible individuals and organizations in the community.
- Some populations have had negative experiences of engagement with government. This is notable in some refugee communities, but it is also true of many people born in the USA. It is often best to approach them through trusted intermediaries in comfortable settings.
- Be especially mindful to focus on issues they care about. Eventually, it is important to show them how government is relevant to their lives, but it is best to start where they are.
- Encourage people to tell their stories, and join them in discovering how their stories connect with issues of common concern.
- Recognize we all share most of the same aspirations (safety, livability, better lives for our children) and problems (congestion, pollution). Don’t focus exclusively on differences. Keep in mind that we all choose to live, work, and play in Washington County.
- Understand the history of institutional prejudice. Acknowledge the experience of marginalization and oppression of many groups. Recognize that all of us have unconscious biases and that we are all ignorant of different cultures. Don’t generalize from experiences with any culture; each is unique.
- Translating materials is not enough. Content and tone of materials must also be tailored to the audience.
- Create advisory group(s) to focus on the special concerns, needs, and assets of different types of communities (e.g., ethnic diversity, generational cohorts, small business).
- Collaborate with other jurisdictions that have built relationships with specific communities.