

**Coalition of Gresham Neighborhood Associations
August 13, 2024 – Remotely Held (Zoom)
Meeting Minutes**

NEIGHBORHOOD	ATTENDEES	NEIGHBORHOOD	ATTENDEES
Centennial		North Central	INACTIVE
Central City	INACTIVE	Northeast	INACTIVE
Gresham Butte	Stephen Estes, Theresa Tschirky, Jim Buck	North Gresham	INACTIVE
Gresham Pleasant Valley		Northwest	Kat Todd, John Bildsoe
Historic Southeast	INACTIVE	Powell Valley	Stella Butler
Hogan Cedars	INACTIVE	Rockwood	Catherine Nicewood, Kim Richardson
Hollybrook	INACTIVE	Southwest	Kathy Gardenhire
Kelly Creek	Carol Rulla	Wilkes-East	
Staff & Guests	Alex Logue, Community Engagement; Susan Foster; Janet Unruh		

The meeting opened at 7:05 p.m., Carol Rulla, Coalition Co-President, presiding.

1. The meeting minutes for July 9, 2024, were approved as written.
2. No public comment presented.
3. Coalition Discussion: Residents' Role in City Decision-Making and Strategies to Make Involvement More Viable for More People.

a. Carol Rulla gave some examples where city decisions were made without residents' involvement and asked for input about what coalition members felt goes well or not so well in the decision process by the city council or staff including what kind of decisions should include more public involvement.

b. Discussion:

Catherine Nicewood: Several disabled individuals have expressed that they would like to attend council meetings but that they are unable to do so at night. The city manager was contacted with a request to have the city council meetings in the mornings (or maybe afternoons) to help accommodate these people. No response received.

Stephen Estes suggested that including a short tutorial on zoom with the meeting zoom link may help people attend who otherwise would not know how to use zoom.

Carol Rulla: Council meetings are held by zoom webinar, not a zoom meeting. Zoom webinar attendees only watch and do not have the zoom meeting features to interact. Attendees are not allowed to speak unless approved in advance.

Alex Logue: The city's website just launched or will launch in the next week, a "Get Involved" page with a link to our volunteer platform, a link to the council agenda, a link to the neighborhoods, etc., so everything is on one landing page for people that want to get involved.

Jim Buck: City staff members and their email addresses are no longer listed on the city's website. Only contact for a staff liaison is listed.

Alex Logue: This is mainly because of turnover or people frequently moving to different roles. Multiple people are managing those liaison email inboxes which helps the teams better

tackle the correspondence and be more responsive. Otherwise, you have a website that has inaccurate contact information.

Kat Todd: Another gap is Michael Gonzales missing. He was always able to help find the person/department and contact information that was needed.

Jim Buck: One issue is access to city hall and meeting space; it seems that the coalition could have been asked if this was an issue instead of just closing it for an extended period. A second issue is the city council heard from a staff report on how they could increase the number of street trees. Council referred this issue to staff and never discussed it or asked for input from the Urban Forestry Subcommittee. It seems like there is no linkage with the council, the subcommittees and the people that brought the issue to council initially. If we want people to be involved, there needs to be respect for relationships. Some feedback should be shared with those individuals that are involved.

Carol Rulla: When there is a code change, there is a process in place to go to the advisory committees, the coalition and do public outreach. On things other than code changes, there is often no process for involving the advisory committees or doing public outreach. If the public or advisory committees have raised an issue and council has chosen to work on that issue, then the entity that raised the issue should have a chance for input before staff brings a potential solution back to council. We should bring this issue to council and the city manager that we see this as a problem.

Alex Logue: There is the issue of the speed of production and trying to get things done. This probably has caused some of the most missteps. The ability to pause and put in the time to really do the engagement work that needs to be done is a culture shift for the organization.

Alex Logue: One idea that would be a huge shift and will probably need city manager and council support, is instead of being transactional and project focused with all the engagement, take the conversation up to ongoing dialog that is more thematic. Having a conversation around safety, around transportation, around green space, etc., --continually. It's about a relationship with the community and using that pulse of the community on those topics to have a better sense of the community thoughts and priorities so it is not necessary to engage on every project. This would allow more time to be spent on working through some of the details or ramifications of certain decisions on those projects. It's a different way of thinking by providing more of a relationship engagement than project specific engagement.

Carol Rulla: Most likely, you would have a focus group that continues over time which would mean you would have more limited voices. It would be like an advisory committee where people know what is going on, enough to be able to have a conversation or you would have people jumping in and out which would cause a lot of repetitiveness. It would be a challenge though I think it is a really good idea. Hearing from different people on different things won't give you that thematic/holistic conversation.

Alex Logue: Other jurisdictions have moved to this model. There needs to be a mechanism built in to support a multitude of layers of engagement. You would have a community liaison program with community members and champions that are communicating within their networks and working in tandem with the city. They would have the background and knowledge to be able to educate and share information about the city and its projects. If you have a diverse set of structures and community organizations in place, you get a more holistic picture of what issues are being raised versus only hearing from one particular entity. This helps with equity, feedback and continual communication.

Jim Buck: With voter support, the safety levy was passed. It seems that the Police Chief could ask the neighborhoods/coalition about what are their priorities and concerns. Communication with the neighborhood folks with good ideas and people who are managing the programs on this and other issues may help solve some of the problems and issues. One example was a change of traffic light programming that caused long waits for one direction.

Carol Rulla: The city hosts a monthly meeting with developers. Maybe we should pursue having the city host a neighborhood meeting so they can hear our issues and concerns.

Alex Logue: The police department just launched its own monthly newsletter. It can be found at <https://www.greshamoregon.gov/news/police-news/>

Theresa Tschirky: Just wanted to point out that the safety levy has a requirement to have a citizen oversight committee of some kind—options for the oversight committee are to have it done by the finance committee, by a hybrid of the finance committee and other people or by a completely separate group of people.

Carol Rulla: Janet Unruh added a comment in the chat about having open budget and participatory budgeting for Gresham. This is something that some members of council and other members of the community have pushed for but so far no decision has been made on the process.

Stephen Estes: If the coalition is having a meeting with a very interesting speaker, we could publicize that and have the neighborhoods join the coalition meetings.

c. Carol Rulla: What do we want to do with the items discussed here? Do we want to do something to give official feedback to the city?

Alex Logue: I am trying to look at neighborhoods holistically. It is part of the City Strategic Plan to promote connections within the city for community members, both social and physical, to meet everyone's needs, regardless of physical ability, language, digital access, etc. This is the goal we want to achieve. One of the things is looking at improvements through the neighborhood association program to increase community involvement and building stronger neighborhood and community relationships. I want to look at different structures, different things that we could implement to get more participation/more diverse participation within the neighborhood structure so that we are reducing barriers so more people can participate. I would like the coalition voices in that and your thoughts and if there is willingness to make changes. I would like this group to brainstorm or just let me know if there is any interest to really start the conversation.

Coalition members indicated an interest in being part of the conversation.

Carol Rulla: We have never had a discussion of the data Michael Gonzales collected on neighborhood associations. It would be good to look at that data as part of the discussion.

Alex Logue: Next spring would be a good time to have more discussion about this topic including the data previously collected.

4. Decision and Planning: Candidate Forum for City Council Candidates

a. Carol Rulla confirmed that the coalition members were in favor of holding a candidate forum.

b. It will be the end of August before the candidates are known. If there are a large number of candidates, the forum may have to be held on 2 days. Zoom will be used for the forum since city hall is not available for an in-person meeting. Questions will need to be submitted in advance and the coalition will need to establish a group of 3 to 4 people to vet the questions, create the wording for the questions and determine which question will go to which candidate. The group will also create a number of "high level" questions that will go to all candidates. These "high level" questions will be provided to the candidates in advance. A flyer will need to be created to publicize the forum. The date range for the forum would be anytime between October 2nd to October 16th, but not on October 8th (coalition meeting date) or October 3rd (Rockwood CDC candidate forum date). There may be an opportunity to partner with Rockwood CDC for the forum. Carol Rulla will make contact to check. The Chamber of Commerce also normally has a candidate forum luncheon in October.

c. In the past, on two occasions, a candidate had to drop out at the last minute and someone else read the candidate's response to the questions that were provided in advance. Carol Rulla asked if coalition members want to again allow this practice in this forum or to only publish the candidate's answers and not allow someone else to read the candidate's answers. Consensus was to have no substitutes. Stephen Estes dissenting.

5. Neighborhoods and City News and Reports.

a. Neighborhood Services Division Report: Alex Logue wanted to let us know that she will be going on maternity leave around the end of September and is due to be back from leave in February. Lina Sizman will be the main point of contact for everything neighborhoods. Elizabeth Coffey will be stepping into the Engagement Manager role.

b. Co-President Report.

1) Carol Rulla:

(a) Cook Plaza on Stark Street has been used as a warming and cooling shelter. The use is being changed to a day center and 25 pods. A meeting with Rockwood Neighborhood Association and the coalition to discuss the change is scheduled for August 28th. No time or place for the meeting has been designated so far.

(b) Metro is offering refresh grants for cleaning up litter, bulky waste collections and murals. Shannon Martin, Gresham Solid Waste and Sustainability Manager, has asked if coalition members are interested in this information and applying for a grant, potentially \$5,000.00. Coalition members asked that the grant information be emailed. Mr. Martin also asked if we could suggest any mural artists for the city to apply for a grant for a mural.

c. NA Reports and Concerns: No reports.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Dana Duval – Coalition Secretary-Treasurer

Next meeting: Tuesday, September 10th
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