

CEG Meeting Minutes—October 27, 2017

Joan Conlon, facilitator for this session, opened the meeting at 4:04 p.m.

COMMENTS ON THE PAST MONTH

Port Commission Position 4 Forum: Joan Conlon opened the session with a request for comments on our last forum, Port Commission Position 4, with candidates Preeti Shridhar and Peter Steinbrueck. The initial comment, which has been heard with respect to our other forums, is that we have difficult choices because we have strong competing candidates.

Other comments: The questions were good—kudos to the committees who developed and refined the questions; we learned a lot about the Port of Seattle; and thanks to all who participated.

General Comments on the Forums: In a more general discussion of the forums, comments were positive and included the following:

- Although the forums sometimes seemed too lengthy, the consensus was that the ninety-minute time frame was probably appropriate. The candidates appeared to generally like this approach because it gave more time for responses.
- Candidates were often confused by the format of answering two questions in turn; perhaps they should be given a chance to pause and reflect. (It was also mentioned that elected officials need to be able to use this format, and adding pauses would cut down on the list of questions.)
- Many felt that the focus on Housing and Homelessness was somewhat excessive for the City Council forums. This is an issue to review for future forums—we should not get caught up on the “issue du jour” or even one or two primary issues to the exclusion of other areas of concern. One area specifically noted was the need for more questions regarding transportation.
- Moderators did a great job. We should consider in advance how candidates wish to leave. Some exited via 8th Avenue, which avoided impromptu delays from residents in the lobby who wanted to talk with them.
- How were the forum questions selected? The questions used were thought to be competitive and likely to get good participation from the candidates. (We did have doubts about whether the Mayoral candidates would attend.) Perhaps we should have included School Board and City Attorney races this time, regardless of the level of competition, because they raise compelling issues.

A Look Back: Jim Sanders gave a short summary of what we've done this past year as a lead-in to the discussion of the planning meeting to be held November 10th. A more detailed account is attached as an addendum to these notes.

COMING EVENTS

October 30th Skyline Soapbox II—3:00 p.m., Mount Baker Room*

We will have a Soapbox session on Monday, October 30th. Frank Conlon will moderate the session. Sonia Baker will serve as the timer, and Mary Jane Francis and Joan Horner will be microphone runners.

**Note:* This session occurred before the notes were sent out, but an advance notice was sent to CEG members via the email distribution system on Saturday, October 28th.

November 10th CEG Planning Meeting

We will have a final year-end CEG Meeting on November 10th. Our focus will be on what we want to identify for issues and activities in 2018. Rick Baugh will lead us in a “dots” exercise to allow attendees to identify their areas of particular interest.

***Note:* You are encouraged to send your suggestions for areas of activity to Jim Sanders. These suggestions will form the basis of our choices for 2018 activities. They can be specific events, areas of activity, etc.**

Send suggestions to: jimsanders1947@gmail.com (or drop them in Skybox 202) by Election Day, November 7th, so we have time to do the setup for Friday's meeting on November 10th.

Some suggested ideas to date include: 1) Develop efforts to bring First Hill concerns to the Mayor, and 2) hold a forum on the safe injection site initiative, which may be included on a February ballot. We will send out a list of ideas later this week for your advance consideration.

The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Next Meeting: Friday, November 10th, 4:00 p.m., Mt. Baker Room

Thanks to Joan Conlon for serving as our facilitator; Mary Ann Hagan and Lilyan Snow for taking notes; Lilyan Snow and Wendy Schoen for editing and formatting this document; and to all of you who participated.

Finally, thanks to all of you who have participated in our various events this year—marches, demonstrations, letter writing, forums, meetings, etc.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT GROUP ONE YEAR IN—MORE OR LESS

Origins: This group emerged from a dinner conversation, followed by a meeting to which an initial group of twenty or so residents were invited. We knew we wanted to do something, but not necessarily what we wanted to do. We've tried some things that worked and some things that didn't work. We've established a presence at Skyline, and have somewhat of an identity. We have come together to foster and promote civic engagement. To do this, we have attempted to undertake three principal efforts:

1. To generate written material that is factual, logical, and respectful on issues and events of public concern, and
2. To share that information among ourselves, and more broadly with our friends, colleagues, and families throughout the nation, so that we and they might communicate those concerns to our federal, state, and local officials, and
3. To find ways to share our concerns in a respectful and effective way within our community among individuals with differing perspectives.

Some of the things we've done include encouraging residents to participate in the political process—be it voting, campaigning, demonstrating, or simply sharing concerns with elected officials. We've also worked to educate ourselves on issues and concerns. Finally, we hope we have had some positive impact on the substance and tone of discourse on political issues throughout the community. Here are a few of the things we've done this year.

External Participation: Encouraged residents to participate in public activities such as the Womxns March, the March for Science, Indivisible Rallies at the Federal Building; supported the new shelter at the First Presbyterian Church; supported the sale of Sound Transit First Hill Property for Low Income Housing; visited members of the State Legislature; and attended hearings.

Bringing Elected Officials to Skyline: In this past year, the following elected officials have joined us to talk about issues: Frank Chopp, Speaker of the State House of Representatives; Nicole Macri, 43rd District Representative; Joe McDermott, President of the King County Council; Congressman Adam Smith; Washington State Attorney General Robert Ferguson; King County Executive Dow Constantine; and Councilmember Tim Burgess.

Candidate Forums: With the direct involvement of many of you (as question contributors, review committees, greeters, moderators, timers, and M/Cs), we held five candidate forums this past month.

Other Talks and Events: Kate Starbird, U/W Professor, on Fake News; Lisa Manheim on Voter Suppression; Wayne Barnett, on Democracy Vouchers; Access for All (Arts) Presentation; and finally, Streaming of Town Hall and other Presentations (e.g., Presidential Power [U/W Law School]; Gaslighting in America [David Domke, et al.]; Healing the Intellectual Divide; Senator Al Franken; U/W Fake News Discussion with the *Seattle Times*).

Other things we've tried to encourage: Inviting residents to share their views on various topics with elected officials, ranging from federal cabinet appointments to major legislation; addressing local matters such as bus line rerouting; holding Soapboxes regarding candidates or issues you support; distributing League of Women Voter "They Work For You" pamphlets and voter registration forms to new residents.

Administrative things we've done: Developed an email distribution system for reminders, minutes, news, alerts, and other issues; established a presence on the 725 Blog, including general information, a useful websites listing, and a calendar of CEG suggested events.

We also have an administrative infrastructure with a working group (the folks who run this meeting, serve as a sounding board, etc.); an email distributor (Rick Baugh); a Blog Manager (Jim Tanner); editorial support from Lilyan Snow and Wendy Schoen; and a collection of intermittent note takers, including Mary Ann Hagan, Suzanne Hittman, Jane Sanders, and others.

There are also some things we think we've done, but are less clearly identifiable. One of our goals was to improve the nature of political discourse within the community. We can and should disagree, but we need to do it in a manner in which we can all live together respectfully. Our sense, from comments by residents and staff, is that we've had some success in this effort.

Finally, with respect to efforts to influence legislation, this area is the one in which we are least able to confirm results. One of our goals was to serve as a pebble in the pond—to identify our concerns, share them with our elected officials, and then to invite our friends, allies, and colleagues in other jurisdictions to do the same. If you have done this, bravo—if not, please consider it.