

Oregon Consensus Program



Stafford Hamlet Town Hall
Meeting

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Portland State
UNIVERSITY

The Consensus Process

- ◆ **A cooperative process**
 - Each party's interest is carefully considered
 - Good faith effort to address each party's concerns
 - Parties agree to a decision in the group's best interest

- ◆ **A process of discovery**
 - Positions – What parties do/do not want
 - Interests – Why parties want things
 - ◆ Individual interests
 - ◆ Shared interests

The Consensus Process

- ◆ **A participatory process**

- Actual participation, not just the appearance of participation
- Decision combines the collective wisdom of all parties

- ◆ **Consensus is achieved when parties say**

- This is the best decision for the group
- I will help put this decision into action

Four Beliefs that Guide Consensus

◆ **Cooperative search for solutions**

- Collaborative search for common ground
- Not a competitive effort to convince others
- Individual positions are not the “only right solutions”

◆ **Disagreement is a positive force**

- Encourages constructive, respectful disagreement
- Creative solutions arise from working through differences

Four Beliefs that Guide Consensus

◆ **Every voice matters**

- Consensus seeks to balance power
- Everyone's concerns and ideas are expressed and considered

◆ **Decisions are in the interest of the group**

- Decision makers put aside personal preferences to support the group's purpose, values and goals
- Decisions serve collective interests

Alternatives to Consensus

- ◆ **Unanimous voting**
 - Every party's individual preferences are met
- ◆ **Majority voting**
 - Whatever most parties want is the decision
- ◆ **Compromise**
 - Each party gives up an important interest
 - Decision partially meets everyone's needs
- ◆ **Defer decision to an individual leader or expert**

Concerns About Consensus

- ◆ **Consensus takes too much time**
 - Reaching decisions may take longer
 - Implementing decisions is often faster
- ◆ **Solutions will become watered down**
 - Establish group goals and criteria for decisions
 - Test solutions against group goals and criteria

Concerns About Consensus

- ◆ **Individuals will hijack the process**
 - Establish ground rules
 - Use a neutral third-party facilitator
- ◆ **Leaders will lose their authority**
 - Define decision-making roles and responsibilities
 - Include leaders in the decision group

Developing a Consensus-Based Concept Plan

- ◆ **Broad community input**
- ◆ **Workgroup(s)**
 - Represent all community perspectives
 - Make recommendations to the decision-making body
- ◆ **Decision-making body**
 - Represents all community perspectives
 - Decisions are referred to the community
- ◆ **Community vote**
 - Required by Stafford Hamlet bylaws

Advantages of a Consensus-Based Concept Plan

- ◆ Carries more weight than competing proposals from interest groups
- ◆ Takes all community perspectives into account
- ◆ Can build trust in the community

The Role of the Oregon Consensus Program

◆ **Assessment**

- Is a consensus process a good fit?
- Who needs to be involved in what level of decisions?
- What is the current decision-making scope and authority?

◆ **Develop agreement on process**

- Ground rules
- Decision-making
- Communications
- Work plan and timelines

The Role of the Oregon Consensus Program

- ◆ **Identify resources to support the process**
- ◆ **Help select a facilitator**
 - Criteria
 - Selection process

The Role of the Oregon Consensus Program

- ◆ Assess whether a consensus process is a good fit
- ◆ Assess who needs to be involved in what level of decision
- ◆ Assess and recommend the scope and authority of various decision-making groups

The Role of the Oregon Consensus Program

- ◆ Develop agreement on:
 - The decision-making process
 - The process for communicating
 - Work plan and timelines
- ◆ Work with a selection committee to select facilitator(s)

Communication Skills for Building Consensus

◆ **Active listening**

- Pay attention to what the other party is saying
- Ask clarifying questions
- Repeat what you've heard to show understanding

◆ **Speak directly to the other party**

Communication Skills for Building Consensus

◆ **Speak about yourself**

- “I” statements describe your feelings and perceptions
- “You” statements criticize or blame the other party

◆ **Speak respectfully**

- Disagree without being disagreeable

Communication Skills for Building Consensus

◆ **Speak for a purpose**

- Think about why you want to communicate
- Think about what you want to communicate
- Think about how to communicate clearly

Contact OCP



By phone at:
503-725-9070



By e-mail at
consensus@pdx.edu



On the web
www.orconsensus.pdx.edu