

## Tacoma Billboard Community Working Group

### Meeting 1

Monday, September 22, 2014, 4:00-6:00 P.M

Center for Urban Waters, 326 East D Street

#### DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

<b>Working Group Members Attending:</b>					
Andy Mordhorst	X	Ray Velkers	X	Rusty George	X
Doug Schafer	X	Steve Wamback	X	Pete Grignon	X
Tricia DeOme	X	Pam Guinn	X	Eric Jackson	X
Nick Fedaiay	X	Mike Luinstra	X	Rose Mednick	X
Jill Jensen	x	Dale Reed	x		
Sharon Winters	X	Evette Mason	X		
<b>Working Group Member Alternates Attending (audience):</b>					
<i>John Thurlow</i>	X	<i>Jon Ketler</i>	X	<i>Tony Powell</i>	X
<i>Peter Wangoe</i>	X	<i>Al Mednick</i>	X		
<b>City Representatives, Staff, &amp; Support Team Attending:</b>					
Marty Campbell	X	Peter Huffman	X	John Harrington	X
T. C. Broadnax	X	Brian Boudet	X	Michelle Regan	X
Karen Reed	X				

Facilitator Karen Reed introduced herself and thanked the members for agreeing to be part of this process. She explained her role is to be an independent, neutral party. She encouraged the group to listen carefully to the City presenters today and to consider whether each of the Community Working Group member feels they are willing and able to engage with the mission as presented.

City Manager T. C. Broadnax spoke to the group and thanked them for their presence and willingness to work on the issues. He stated that the City is seeking a better or different situation than what currently exists. *[did anyone take more notes of what TC said? It's important.]* He stated that the City does not have resources for a legal battle. He acknowledged that at the end of the process, the City will have billboards and the group needs to develop alternatives for where they are the most appropriate and to mitigate negative impacts. He said he hopes that the group comes up with alternatives that are meaningful and good for the community.

Council Member Campbell welcomed the group and thanked them for serving. He said that he likes the makeup of the group. He recounted some of the recent City history around billboards, and emphasized that this discussion is about the future of Tacoma. He said that the City had developed a digital option, but neighborhood residents did not want to see them from their homes. He said that he had worked with Councilmember Boe on the last amendment, addressing scope/scale and design of billboards. He encouraged the group to come up with alternatives that reflect Tacoma and that generations will be effected on the outcome of the billboard regulations.

Planning and Development Services Director Peter Huffman introduced himself and asked the group to consider how to help make a better Tacoma. He stated his hope for an open and collaborative process that would result in recommendations to send forward to the City Council and Planning Commission.

All attendees in the room, in turn, then introduced themselves to the group. Ms. Reed directed attention to the Mission Statement and explained the charge to the group: develop at least two viable alternative regulatory approaches for billboards, different from current code.

Ms. Reed invited the Working Group members to go around the table and express a question and a hope for the process.

**Mike Luinstra** stated the hope for an efficient process and he is looking for members to compromise to arrive at a solution. He lives in Tacoma and would like some finality around this issue: “get it off the front page of the paper.”

**Pete Grignon** hopes the group will listen to each other and be able to reach common ground.

**Tricia DeOme** hopes for a compromise that will reduce the number of billboards. She would like to see the valuation of the billboards that currently are in place.

**Jill Jensen** hopes that billboards will not be located in scenic areas. She would like to know who is responsible for maintaining billboards. What does it cost the City to work around or move billboards when required for road maintenance, and so forth? How much will it cost to compensate for billboard removal?

**Eric Jackson** asked who are the stakeholders? Clear Channel? Citizens?

**Doug Schafer** mentioned that he was very involved three years ago vis-à-vis digital billboards. He is shocked and puzzled about the number of billboards in the City. How long has each billboard been in an illegal nonconforming grandfathered status? He hopes whatever the group comes up with will be palatable to the general population. He hopes Tacoma can find a solution like more upscale cities such as Bellevue and Seattle which have banned billboards.

Karen noted that there are billboards in Seattle and that a complete ban on billboards is not within the scope of the mission the group has been given.

**Ray Velkers** hopes for open minds around the table. He has questions about the financial impact of billboards—what kinds of taxes are generated? What does the billboard business mean financially for the citizens of Tacoma? He hopes that the group can be open-minded and not combative.

**Evette Mason** asked if Clear Channel and Reed/Ketler are the only billboard companies in the City? (There is one other.) The Port is a property owner and has two sites with billboards. Are there other property owners who would be adversely affected by a billboard ban? Her hope is that the group will be responsive to both neighbors and businesses and have open minds.

**Pam Guinn** wants a collaborative, transparent process with a compromise solution. She would rather collaborate than litigate. She committed to reviewing the scenic areas in connection with Clear Channel’s assets with the goal of coming up with a good workable solution. She wants to preserve her business and stay relevant in Tacoma. She said that Clear Channel was in 450 markets.

**Rose Mednick** hopes to get more informed and that the group can compromise. She has a business that is related to signs and banners. She wonders whether signs and banners would be the next to be further regulated.

**Nick Fediay** wants to be part of the solution. He has a Clear Channel billboard on his property.

**Sharon Winters** was involved 3 years ago. She is intrigued by the process and hopes to find common ground.

**Rusty George** has worked with Clear Channel to design billboard contents. His firm makes no profit from billboard advertisements. He would like to maintain neutral ground and objectivity. He would like to ensure local businesses can continue to have access to advertising. Do the billboard companies have to pay B&O taxes?

**Steve Wamback** noted he serves on the City Planning Commission. In his job at the County, he and his staff work with regulation of signs and billboards. They receive no complaints about billboards in the County. He hopes to find a solution that reflect the vision of the citizens consistent with the City's comprehensive plan. We want the best policy that reflects both neighborhood and business interests, and to be respectful to small, medium and large businesses. He does not want a proposed solution to favor large businesses over small ones. Finally, he hopes the final result is consistent citywide and that requirements for the billboards is consistent with other signage in the city.

**Andy Mordhurst** mentioned that south Tacoma generates two-thirds of the revenue for the City. He is concerned about impact of eventual regulations on South Tacoma. He was hit by a driver who he believes was looking at a digital billboard. He does not want billboards to adversely impact safety. He stated that what is done about this issue will affect future generations.

**Dale Reed** asked how many property owners are currently leasing space out for billboard structures. He hopes that people who have billboards on their property are fairly represented.

Karen Reed reviewed the proposed ground rules with the group. She also distributed "red herring" cards for the Members' use if needed to call attention to off-topic discussions, and so forth. She also went over future meeting dates. *The Working Group agreed to the ground rules as presented.*

Ms. Reed then walked the group through the draft Charter. This discussion is for review, to identify proposed changes. The group will be asked to approve the Charter at the second meeting.

Regarding item 1.A, Mr. Wamback asked if perhaps "review current code" is too strong and "become familiar with current code" may be better. Regarding item 1.G, it may be good not to be disbanded to provide an opportunity for the group to formally champion the recommendations. City Manager Broadnax agreed that the group can remain intact after their recommendations are put forward if they so desire.

Mr. Schafer weighed in on item 1.A and would like to strike the word "recent." He wants to go back to when the City first concerned itself with billboards.

Ms. Reed responded to the concern about representation from Scenic Tacoma stating that an effort would be made to recruit a second member from them, since one of the two members are not able to participate. She emphasized that this group around the table is representative of a wide variety of "stakeholders" and we need to solidify the membership soon: this is the group that will be working together.

Mr. Schafer expressed the desire to have some City Council representatives from back in 1997 who put the moratorium in place come forward as stakeholders. Ms. Reed responded that they may be invited to share their thoughts if the schedule permits but would not be added as group members.

Ms. Reed continued to review the draft charter. She recommends the group elect co-chairs, and that this occur at Meeting 2. She reviewed the voting process recommended, with a “consensus” recommendation representing votes of at least 80% of those present and voting, and a “recommendation” representing votes of at least 60% of those present and voting.

Mr. Velkers mentioned, in relation to the composition of the group, that there appear to already be “sides” or positions in place. Brian Boudet responded that may be true; it is hoped that there are more than two sides, many perspectives.

Mr. Luinstra asked how much detail the City Council and Planning Commission will get about the Working Group deliberations. Ms. Reed responded that they will get meeting summaries and a final report which could include a record of votes, consensus decisions, etc.

Dale Reed asked how it was established that the group would meet ten times? In response it was noted that the Working Group will have decision points and there will be some flexibility. There may be less than ten meetings if that is what the Working Group decides.

Ms. Reed will incorporate the requested changes into the Charter and will bring it back to the Working Group for action at Meeting 2.

John Harrington presented a PowerPoint with some images and facts about billboards in Tacoma. Group members requested a copy of the presentation. They also asked that the age of billboards be displayed on the interactive map at the website. They would also like to know the elements causing any billboard to become nonconforming. The PowerPoint and other materials will be placed on the Working Group’s website, and a copy will be provided at Meeting 2.

Ms. Reed presented the homework assignment which seeks Working Group input on their values and interests. Ms. Reed will share the results without attribution at Meeting 2.

The meeting ended at 6:01 P.M.