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Community Gardens Organizational Structure Workgroup

Meeting Notes - October 27, 2009

Attendees: Weston Miller, Chair, OSU Extension; Steve Cohen, Bureau of Planning & Sustainability(BPS); Mary Bedard, Friends of Community Gardens; Jon Stubenvol, Oregon Food Bank; Amy Ruiz, Mayor Adam's Office; Lisa Turpel, Portland Parks & Recreation (PPR); Kathy Dang, Oregon Tilth; Alix Eastman, Growing Gardens; Dick Springer, West Multnomah SWCD.

Members absent: Debra Lippolt, Growing Gardens; Will Newman II, OSALT; David Beller, Mercy Corps.

Facilitator: Stephanie Hallock, Oregon Solutions

The meeting began with roundtable introductions and a statement by each member of their organization's connection to community gardens. The group then reviewed the vision statement provided by City Commissioner Nick Fish and expressed appreciation for his enthusiasm and willingness to think bigger about the program than just the Parks Department and the City. Weston said that the term "governance" for the workgroup's effort sounded too much like "government" and too narrow in focus and suggested that the group use the term "organizational structure" to describe what it is striving to address.

The group discussed the various potential organizational models referred to in Commissioner Fish's vision statement: P-Patch Trust in Seattle; the Regional Arts and Culture Council; Philadelphia Green; and, Denver Urban Gardens. Kathy Dang is very familiar with Seattle Tilth and P-Patch. She offered to bring information about P-Patch to the group's next meeting and to call Laura Raymond at P-Patch (206.615.1787) about attending a work group meeting or connecting by conference phone.

During this discussion, the group agreed that someone from METRO should be involved in this effort, and the name Carl Grimm was mentioned. The group also agreed that Ron Paul (503.407.8768) from the Public Market ought to be invited to join the group. Stephanie will call discuss METRO membership with

Commissioner Fish's office and will contact Ron Paul.

The group next reviewed the current organizational structure for the community gardens program within Parks & Recreation, and the budget for community gardens for 08/09 and 09/10. Lisa Turpel diagramed the structure and handed out a summary of the budget. The General Fund budget for PPR is about \$60 million. The community gardens 09/10 budget is about \$255,000 most of which is general fund. None of the \$255,000 is for property acquisition.

Mary Bedard summarized the intersection between PPR and Friends of Community Gardens. Friends has been providing \$12,000 to \$20,000 to fund the children's program and some funds for garden development and improvements (but not property acquisition). Friends is struggling with internal sustainability; the Board has capacity for 15 but currently only has 8. Current circumstances make it difficult for Friends to provide as much support to community gardens as they would like to.

The group then moved into a discussion of "needs." They agreed that there is no lack of passion among the various groups and individuals interested in community gardens but that there are serious gaps in delivering a successful program. The needs for a strong organization that were identified included: Capacity to raise money (grant writing, fundraising, acquisitions, "heavy hitters" on boards, etc.); Adequate staff to manage program operations (allocations, maintenance, volunteers, etc.); Mission alignment among city, county and NGOs to build relationships and ensure strong public/private partnerships.

The "needs" discussion segued into a discussion about "mission alignment" and the group reviewed the current community gardens mission statement and the P-Patch mission statement, then went around the table so each organization could discuss the "nexus" between its mission and the mission of community gardens.

Those at the table agreed that all partners seem to have pieces of all parts of the community gardens program, e.g. education, and hope that a new organizational structure will build capacity and minimize redundancy. The group requested a matrix of organizations and what they do. Steve Cohen said there is an old one and he would find it for the group. Steve also described the website the city hopes to have ready in spring 2010 that will help direct people to community gardens resources and organizations. The groups at the table agreed to help get the word out about the website when it is available.

During the "nexus" discussion, several groups expressed desire to be sure that low income parts of the community have access to community gardens. They also discussed the need to be able to bring together people who have land but no resources to develop gardens with people who have resources to develop gardens but no land. The question of "liability" came up and whether the city

could somehow "broker" arrangements and cover liability. It was agreed that the group would probably need to hear from the city attorney in the future about liability issues.

Oregon Tilth expressed a desire to find Portland partners for a garden similar to the one they run in Lake Oswego.

Weston said he would look into setting up a social networking site for the group to exchange information on NING.

Stephanie gave the group a homework assignment for the next meeting; each group member is to write down what they think would be an optimal organizational structure for a community gardens program and bring copies to share and discuss.

The group gave Weston a round of applause for his preparation and leadership, and the meeting adjourned a little before noon.

Next Meeting: Friday, November 6, 2 to 5 pm, WMSWCD conference room 450 at Montgomery Park on NW Vaughn.

Summary of followup assignments:

- Kathy Dang will follow up with P-Patch and Laura Raymond
- Stephanie will call Ron Paul and will check on membership on the group from METRO
- Steve Cohen will find the matrix of organizations and provide it to the group
- Weston will look into setting up a social networking site for the group
- Group homework to develop ideal organizational model