



Community Gardens Organizational Structure Workgroup

Meeting Notes – November 20, 2009

Attendees: Weston Miller, Chair; Deb Lippoldt, Kathy Dang, Will Newman, Kat West, Tammy VanderWoude, Alix Eastman, Amy Ruiz, David Beller, Mary Bedard, Ron Paul, Steve Cohen, Lisa Turpel, Beth Cohen

Facilitator: Stephanie Hallock, Oregon Solutions

The meeting began at noon with roundtable introductions and a recap of the discussion at the full Oregon Solutions Team meeting on November 13. Kat West mentioned that the Multnomah Food Initiative is also looking at organizational structure and hopes the Oregon Solutions process can integrate efforts and avoid duplication. They will be hosting a Food Summit in late March 2010 and are developing a 15-year strategic plan that looks at addressing the entire food system. Kat provided a handout which will be posted on the Oregon Solutions Community Gardens website. Kat will be talking with the city about how to coordinate efforts.

Weston provided a handout summarizing his thoughts about using a “Logic Model” to tackle two problems: providing immediate support for the city’s community gardens program, and, developing a long-term vision and direction for the organizational structure of community garden(s) in Portland. The group talked through Weston’s handout and ultimately decided to focus on the long-term vision (see notes below), more broad than just the city’s program.

Weston then shared his idea for completing a matrix of commitments made by each member of the Oregon Solutions Team to community gardens. The matrix would include:

Organization Cash Land In-kind Other support

The group agreed that completing the matrix is a good first step in identifying commitments Team members are willing/able to make now, recognizing there may be more or different commitments as the long-term plan evolves.

Stephanie will send the matrix electronically to the entire Community Solutions Team to complete and discuss potential commitments with their Boards and Commissions prior to the January 22 Team meeting, e.g. Weston stated that his organization could commit to provide \$500-\$1000, perhaps on some kind of regular basis.

Amy said that the city's budget process for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2010 is about to kick off. Deb asked whether the city has emergency funds available prior to July 1 to direct to the community gardens program, or staff that can be shifted from other activities. Lisa Turpel from Parks and Rec said there are no emergency dollars, but it is possible to shift staff.

As noted above, the group discussed whether its mission should be to address short-term, immediate needs, e.g. resource needs of the city's community gardens program and reducing the backlog of people waiting for a community gardens plot, or should the group focus on developing a longer-term vision for making it easier to grow food in Portland. Amy asked what it would take to achieve the goal in the Climate Action Plan of providing 1000 new garden plots by 2012. Stephanie stated that the Resources workgroup has been focused on budget options for the city's community gardens program and so far has not included what other organizations could contribute to reduce the burden on the city program.

The group agreed that it should focus on defining a longer-term, visionary organizational structure, and that a separate task force or "triage team" made up of representatives from the three workgroups be assigned to develop a plan to meet the city program short-term needs and reduce the waiting list, recognizing that providing a community garden plot through the city's program may not be the only answer to meet the current need..

The group also discussed the need and role for a strong 501(c)(3). Mary Bedard shared the current status of Friends of Portland Community Gardens, and said that it needs to be "repurposed" as a more sophisticated non-profit board. If it were, it could potentially raise money more broadly than just for the city's community gardens program. The group talked a bit about the pros and cons of strengthening "Friends" v. building a new 501(c)(3) from scratch but reached no conclusion or recommendation.

The group then began to define its "perfect vision." It reviewed the model and list of objectives developed by Jason King and the "Demand" workgroup. (Handed out at the November 13 full Team meeting and posted on the website), and added to it:

- Plenty of space to grow
- Access to opportunities related to growing (knowledge & skills)
- Powerful constituency/effective advocacy
- Growing food is "the norm"
- Capacity to address "silent" demand and increasing demand
- Provide healthy and healthful food
- Able to evaluate and show benefit of urban food growing
- Collaborative network of organizations
- Model/vision that is sustainable and can be enhanced

- Fiscally solvent
- Tied to other planning initiatives
- Considered an essential service
- Value of agricultural land is recognized

The discussion then segued to a list of concepts for the “perfect organization”:

- Jason’s model is a good starting place
- Exchange and coordinate information among organizations (clearinghouse)
- Coalition building
- Advocacy and creating opportunities
- Gathering resources useful to all, e.g. research
- Supportive of “informal networks”
- Ensuring an equal voice for all
- Provide fiscal sponsorship
- Provide fundraising and marketing
- Ensure gardens are managed (but does not directly manage gardens)
- RACC model (RACC does directly manage public art program)
- Possibly hold land in perpetuity
- Ability to do strategic planning
- A physical, showcase, demonstration space
- Flexibility to meet demand and respond to opportunities

Weston stated that he hoped the workgroup could complete a working model for a food growing network and a transition plan for him to take to the January meeting of the workgroup chairs. He assigned homework for each member to bring to the next workgroup meeting an example of an organization that could be a good model – does not have to be a food growing organization. The meeting adjourned at 2:30.

Next Meeting: Monday, January 4, 2010 from 11 to 1 at Multnomah County, Oak Room on the 4th floor

Homework Assignments: Each workgroup member is to bring to the next workgroup meeting an example of an organization that could be a good model; **Weston** will email the “commitment matrix” to Stephanie to send to the entire Team; **Kat** will email the Multnomah Food Initiative handout to Stephanie to post on the website.