



Community Gardens Oregon Solutions Team

Meeting Notes – March 19, 2010

The final meeting of the Team began shortly after nine am with round table introductions, followed by a report from Leslie Pohl-Kosbau on the recent opening of two new gardens, one at Vestal school and one at Madison high school. Commissioner Fish shared his thoughts about the importance of these gardens to the community and how inspirational it was to attend the openings.

The Commissioner went on to thank the Team for their hard work during the Oregon Solutions process and expressed his excitement about how the Declaration of Cooperation is coming together and the kinds of commitments that are being made. He asked the group to give a special “shout out” to the East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District for their pledge of \$50,000. He said he hopes to host some kind of a social gathering for the Team, perhaps around the signing ceremony for the Declaration.

In response to a question, the Commissioner explained his pledge in the Declaration of \$1,000,000 in capital funds to community gardens if the City decides to float a bond measure for Parks and Recreation. He said a decision has not yet been made about whether to go out for a bond measure, but if the city proceeds and if the bond passes, he is prepared to commit at least \$1,000,000 to expand the community gardens program.

Emily Hicks then reported on the first meeting of the city’s inter-bureau task force convened by Commissioner Fish to help reduce barriers and costs for community gardens. Several bureaus already have generated ideas and will make commitments in the Declaration of Cooperation. It was suggested that the inter-bureau task force make a commitment to meet at least three times a year. Jenny Holmes asked that they consider differential rates for non-profits for community gardens.

Emily showed the group a mock-up of a carrot in the style of a thermometer gauge to show garden plots as they are added to reach the city’s Climate Action Plan goal of 1000 new garden plots by 2010. The group then discussed what could and should be counted in addition to new plots in the city’s community gardens program. Emily said that gardens at individual homes would not “count” as community gardens but other gardens where communities of people come together can and should be counted.

This discussion segued into a presentation by Maren Murphy and Jason King summarizing the effort to map gardens and areas of need for gardens undertaken that was undertaken by the Demand Workgroup and will be handed off to the Bureau of Planning & Sustainability to maintain as a commitment in the Declaration of Cooperation.

Jason handed out a summary of demand for gardens and organizations trying to meet that demand that he compiled from information provided by Team members (summary is available on the Oregon Solutions Website). Deb Lippoldt commented that she would like to see Growing Gardens sites included in the mapping, even though they are not community gardens per se. Individual gardens are part of the growing food network. The group discussed the need to get better information on who is utilizing gardens in general, and the need for “common metrics” for organizations to talk about what they are doing.

Weston Miller reported on the status of the Regional Food Network workgroup. The group has met twice and has agreed to meet at least once more (on April 6). Multnomah County is providing staff to the group and meeting space. At the next meeting, the group will focus on defining its scope, mission and purpose.

Alix Eastman talked about the two phone banks conducted by the Immediate Needs Task Force to call through the waiting list for garden plots in the city’s program. Parks and Recreation (PPR) hosted the two phone banks and provided assistance in cleaning up the data base and creating an email list. The effort reduced the waiting list by 50% - from almost 1400 to just under 700. It was agreed that a call through of the list should happen every year. PPR and Friends of Community Gardens will make that commitment in the Declaration of Cooperation.

Nancy Stevens and Jill Kuehler summarized the work of the Resources workgroup which proposed a budget of \$625,000 to \$1,000,000 for the city’s community gardens program but recognizes that given budget constraints for the city and limited fundraising capacity of the Friends 501(c)(3), it is not realistic to expect a budget increase any time soon. It was suggested that the Declaration of Cooperation include a commitment by the city to provide that level of funding for the community gardens program when the city budget allows. Commissioner Fish said he has had one conversation with the Parks Foundation about helping build capacity of the Friends organization but the subsequent conversations likely won’t occur for a couple of months since the Parks Foundation is itself in transition.

The rest of the meeting was devoted to walking through a Draft of the Declaration of Cooperation. Several changes and additions were suggested and a new draft will be provided to the Team by Oregon Solutions staff the week of March 29. No further meetings are planned until the signing ceremony for the Declaration of Cooperation which is anticipated to be in May 2010.

The meeting adjourned a little before noon.