



To: Collette Jamison

From: Kenneth E. Bell

Date: January 29, 2008

Re: Rental Registration

The Rental Registration Task Force has had three public meetings to date. Each Meeting has been well publicized in various formats, including but not limited to: City Hall Calendar, public meeting notices, newspaper articles, television news stories (prior to January 28th), web page, city access channel, and post card notices.

Most of the work of the Task Force is done via electronic mail and meetings. The workgroup is not formed in a committee style, so input can be garnered from the public. The process has been progressing, but there has been little input from different interests. As such, our office sent mailers to various groups to solicit input at the public meetings – those notified are attached.

The group operates under a consensus format and was sent the attached document to solidify the approach.

The objective of the group is to continue at least three more public meetings and submit a proposed ordinance for council review in a workshop setting. At that point, if directed, we would continue submittal for council action at a regular posted meeting.

To date, the process has been very open and advertised as directed. We continue to build notification groups and secured a large e-mail list at our January 28th meeting. This will be helpful with updates and communicating to interested parties.

Attendance of the group is as follows:

	December 10, 2007	January 7, 2008	January 28,2008
Rick Tarr	Present	Present	Present
Vance Elliot	Absent	Absent	Absent
Jim LaSage	Absent	Present	Absent
Michael Flowers	Present	Absent	Absent
Jason Aleem	Absent	Present	Present
Robert Hernandez	Present	Present	Present
Tom Wassenich	Present	Present	Present

What is a Consensus Process?

A consensus process is an effort in which government agencies and other affected parties seek to reach agreement on a course of action to address an issue or set of related issues. For example, task forces may use consensus to develop recommendations. Stakeholder groups convened by an agency may use consensus to develop legislative recommendations on regulations, or intra-government work groups involving multiple agencies may use consensus to reach agreement.

In a consensus process, representatives of all the necessary interests with a stake in an issue work together to find a mutually acceptable solution. Each process differs because in each case the parties design it to fit their circumstances. However, successful consensus processes follow several guiding principles:

Consensus decision-making -- participants make decisions by agreement rather than by majority vote.

Inclusiveness -- All necessary interests are represented or, at a minimum, approve of the discussions.

Accountability --Participants usually represent stakeholder groups or interests. They are accountable both to their constituents and to the process.

Facilitation -- An impartial facilitator accountable to all participants manages the process, ensures that ground rules are followed, and helps maintain a productive climate for communication and problem solving.

Flexibility -- Participants design a process and address the issues in a manner they determine most suitable to the situation.

Shared control -- Participants share responsibility for setting the ground rules for a process and for creating outcomes.

Commitment to implementation -- The sponsor and all stakeholder groups commit to carrying out their agreement.

Stages of a Consensus Process

A consensus process moves through three stages, each with its own set of activities.

Before -- Assess whether or not to initiate a consensus process and how to bring diverse interests to the table, then work with the facilitator to plan and organize the process, and write ground rules.

During -- Engage in the problem-solving discussions: exchange information, frame issues, conduct the discussions, generate and evaluate options, develop mutually acceptable solutions, and secure the endorsement of all constituents and authorized decision makers.

After -- Implement the agreement: formalize the decision, carry it out, and monitor the results.

How consensus processes differ from consultation

The most significant differences between consultation and consensus processes are how decisions are made and what happens to the product of the discussions. In a consensus process, the parties share decision making about both process and outcome. By contrast, in a consultative process the sponsoring agency decides whether to initiate a process and how it will be organized. In a consensus process, the product of the discussion gets translated into official decisions, while in a consultative process the agency formulates the decisions. In both approaches, the agency retains final decision making authority, but in a consensus process the agency puts the product of a consensus process out for official review as the proposed decision. In consultation, the agency receives input from the participants, and then staff members formulate the proposed decisions.

Sometimes because of legal requirements, sponsoring agencies refer to a process as "consultative" or "advisory", even when the intent is to agree with stakeholders on an outcome. Federal agencies that sponsor regulatory negotiations must charter the process as an advisory committee under the provisions of the federal Advisory Communications Act. A legislature or administrative policy making body that authorizes a consensus process may designate the group as advisory in order to make it clear that the formal decision will still be made by government officials.

Again, the most important distinctions among these processes are how decisions are made and what happens to the outcome. If a sponsoring agency treats the committee's final agreement as advice and picks and chooses parts to include in the official decision, the process is consultative. If it participates along with other parties in formulating the agreement, then accepts it as a package consisting of trade-offs that cannot be detached (and is committed to implementing the package), then the process is consensual. According to the authors of Building Consensus for a Sustainable Future, who first pointed out this distinction, "Consultation is designed to inform decision makers who will ultimately make the decision. Consensus involves the participants as decision makers... . In a consensus process, the participants must address and persuade one another and find solutions acceptable to all."

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