Board Feedback
August 17, 18 & 21 2017

1. Open Houses

- Busy schedule – hard to find time to always attend
- Miscommunications with one on one. Presentation on each board to group then gather feedback. Better direction to public.
- Best way for non-outspoken people to express opinions.
- Suitable for a defined subject. Information package of attendance and results given to Council.
- Inviting and comfortable for many people. People can gather information at own pace and ask questions as needed. Many opportunities to provide feedback in spoken and written form. A personal and democratic approach to public engagement. Time efficient for the public. Appeals to a variety of learning and participation styles. MORE FUN!
- Give time for planning. Not a 1 week notice.
- The open house makes sense. Easy to follow. Easy to speak and listen.
- Issues with segmentation – missing related cross topic dialogue. Not a good format for public to feel fully engaged/participate.
- I have found the ability to get valuable background information – detailed explanations from staff members very helpful in this format. Sometimes there is not enough room to move around the boards if the location isn't big enough to accommodate # of people attending.
- Good format for one on one discussion with stakeholders. Similar to this format – usually not too well attend so for those of us who do attend, it's a great chance to give input.
- So far this is the only method I like as I can hear what's going on.
- Open houses need to be more evenly spaced throughout the city. The Events Centre open houses were balanced more toward downtown and south end. North Nanaimo seemed an afterthought.
- Appeals to many as people can gather information at their own pace and in a variety of ways. Visual information can easily be incorporated. Individual questions can be answered by staff members.
- Time of day: some non-evening.
- Needs good process to get feedback actively used.
- Someone has to monitor single issue self-interest groups. Don't monopolize the discussion and meeting.
- Results largely ignored if against officials' agendas; used as ammo if for agenda. Seems propaganda-ish.

- One sided information normal – fails with two sides opposed.
- Open houses tend to be one-way. Canned information handed out with no dialogue.
- Sociable, more casual, way of engaging public. Non-intimidating. Public input can easily and efficiently be documented via "stickies" and surveys.
- I like open houses if well run.
- It's not always feasible for working families to take part in open houses.
- Yes! Participated in park and neighbourhood open houses. Ideal preceding a town hall to explain concepts and issues. Ideal before World Café.
- Challenge – often only one side presented but these pros and cons are great. I like the neutrality involved in sharing opinions – everyone can be heard.
- Again, provide feedback to participants.
- Great start. Important to get info and feedback before decisions are made.
- Open house as good as are resources. People – can be good (?)
- We did this to give our thoughts on the redevelopment of the city waterfront. Now these thoughts and decisions are not being used. I consider this a waste of time.
- Useful for many types of projects. Can be combined with more formal presentations and surveys to capture input (eg. dot democracy)

2. **Town Hall Meetings**
- Needs a good moderator – strong, capable, impartial, logical, fair.
- An old idea which can be intimidating for some.
- If well-led, town hall meetings are great. You need a strong chair. Don't see a lot of difference from open house. Perhaps just in size?
- Regular meets good.
- Audience can lose interest as topic proceeds. Topic may not reach a conclusion without having all heard. Parts good. Potential part of hybrid.
- The worst model for promoting public engagement. Officials presented as "experts". Authoritarian approach. Very limited opportunity for giving input. Lengthy and inefficient.
- Establish strong rules.
- Roberts Rules of Order. Decorum!
- Too formal. Get the message out through Chek News.
- Often dominated by a few who try to monopolize the meeting. Could be intimidating to many to express their views in front of a large group.

- Not always easy for working families to attend. How about online forums? Sometimes these feel like a process to check a consultation box as "done".
- Old school idea. How can we move this onto the net?
- Town Hall Mtg can be a good exchange of ideas.
- Town Halls! Love it! Have citizens pick the questions, not city staff. Post questions as they come in! Have some meetings focused, some open!
- I get concerned with town hall meetings as they are easily sidelined. Tough to focus on issues.
- Loose format. Who chooses topic for townhall? Public/Council? Depends on topic for suitability.
- I like to hear 'sides' clearly stated with people who have some 'facts'.
- Very difficult to stay on track, keep timely. Requires strong, neutral facilitator/moderator. Good for presentations to provide info. Excellent for introducing new concepts.
- Much better in a forum than at a Council mtg. Don't worry about emotions.
- Can be useful before interests are strongly set – eg – early phase of strategic plan / priority setting. Requires a strong presenter who is respected.
- Strong moderator! Provide public background before meeting and then have meeting.
- Could be a good opportunity for certain topics and get people/public involved on input at the beginning of a project.
- Has potential to get the public more involved in projects and/or better understanding.
- Should host town hall type meetings every two months so people feel heard from.
- The more people have the ability to engage the more they will trust the process, but it is important that the information be treated respectably and acted on and feedback given.
- Strong moderator required; USA example during their town hall meetings can be seen on YouTube. Need sheriffs!
- Need good facilitator – able and encourage discussion and shut people up when needed.
- Like them for debates and if well defined by chairperson and if fair. Needs agenda.

3. **Revolving Conversations**
- Better way to get good dialogue but maintain order, especially compared to Town Hall Meetings.

- Larger chance of soap-boxing. "small" voices not heard as well. Debate/conflict prevalent.
- If everyone is seated, tempers are less likely to flare. I can see this format getting out of hand if it's not moderated.
- I see total confusion if open to the public.
- Only one person from each group in inner circle. Moderator a must.
- Let's try it.
- I think it's a good idea would work well with active transportation in Nanaimo, walking cycling infrastructures.
- Circle conversations can bring many view to participants in a respectful way. Needs some kind of (time) limits to avoid the circle process. How the initial inner circle gets set up and movement in/out of circle occurs is important. Like the idea of the silent components.
- Needs really good note taking
- Would probably require a facilitator (keep on topic, time limits). Perhaps try with less controversial topics.
- Rotation of inner circle. Agenda/survey.
- Not enough public input – will be monopolized by people with an agenda.
- Not time-efficient. 1 or 2 people could monopolize the conversation. Seems to have no recording of viewpoints or opinions. Could be intimidating for many.
- Who decides who sits in the inner circle?
- Conversation can easily be influenced and sidetracked.
- Have only used this once in a training session. It can easily be dominated by strong opinions. Success would depend of skill of organizer and explanation of process.
- Can potentially be dominated by one person.
- Never seen this in action – sceptical of its value.
- Very good IF speaker has a time limit or has to leave circle after speaking.
- Needs good facilitator.
- Unappealing to those who could feel intimidated by talking in the circle – or who are visual not auditory learners. Lengthy and tedious. Are individual views documented in any way?

Feedback from Revolving Conversation board attendant
Participant #1
- Has participated in several Samoan Circles
- Says they are more suited for small groups of no more than 20 people
- Difficult with many Type A personality participants
- Good for forcing people to actively listen

Participant #2
- Feels strongly that public meetings need active moderation, similar to how a university class discussions are run
- Wants meeting style not easily hijacked/derailed by loudest voices

Participant #3
- Doesn't particularly care about which meeting style is utilized
- Cares about how the topics are selected

Participant #4
- Need to prevent public from sitting in the inner circle

Participant #5
- Has participated in many Samoan circles
- Always used the method where the people in the outer circle get to choose who they replace in the inner circle
- Says they work very well, likes them very much
- Believes using a combination of meeting types would be best
- Always allow for anonymous input

4. **Open Space Meetings**
- Great way to brainstorm. Need someone to write info in each room.
- Sounds potentially chaotic and frustrating for participants. Could be difficult to gather information about issues. Difficult to record individual viewpoints.
- Good way to see summary of discussions in a variety of break out groups. Needs good leadership to identify topics of interest to participants. Not just agenda of the most vocal.
- Provide stickies, have one person stand at each breakout table to gather/continue. Do it similar to this! Sticky boards, table beside. Parts good for potential hybrid.
- Open houses are great. Online forums eg. Facebook Live are also good. Feedback is recorded
- Great way to get wide variety of ideas from public.
- Networking

- If open house sessions are recorded and remarks are respectful, accurate reporting of results should be attainable!
- Discussion highlights to be published for Council, website and public.
- Need rooms for noise issues.
- Good idea. Use conference centre.
- Does not give citizens enough time to consider and formulate opinions.
- Sounds like "organized chaos". Inefficient way of sharing information and reporting public feedback. Could easily lead to feelings of frustration.
- I like this most. Discuss what people want to at that time.
- List of topics being discussed?
- 1) easily sidetracked. 2) pointless if popular direction achieved but not endorsed by local government.
- Seems very disorganized. Will there be a process to move this info forward, move to resolution?
- Participants determine the agenda. Can cover different topics.
- I find them too open-ended & vague. Prefer the more structured world café approach.
- Good for seeding of initial ideas.
- Might be helpful to collect topics before open space meetings.
- Open to domination by stronger personalities.
- CitizenLab – online / accessible / granularity.
- Chaos – most things get lost.
- Can easily escalate into an argument.

5. **World Cafes**
   - Haven't participated in one of these yet. I like the idea of moving from table to table for small group discussion/information and coming to a common response to each issue. Should prevent "Gallery" influence on meetings. Brings in a variety of new views.
   - Don't move people. Move topics. People usually get more comfortable with the same people.
   - A lengthy and tedious process. Individual views of an issue may not be reported/recorded at the end. Not effective for people who are visual learners.
   - Attended something similar at Beban Park/Seniors Connects. So much noise from each table could not hear my own group talk so I left.
   - I agree. Move the topic not the participants. People form a sense of community at the tables.

- World cafes need a defined topic to succeed.
- May restrict dialogue via time/stronger voices. Line items on board may reduce response repetiveness. Parts good for potential hybrid.
- Relies solely on oral communication. No visual or other methods of sharing information. Difficult for some ESL participants to engage in this.
- Reporting results/opinions is difficult. Individual feedback often lost. Intimidating for many to participate in this process, especially with strangers.
- Good idea.
- Can be manipulated by a stronger speaker.
- Can encourage lots of good discussion.
- Information before hand for reasoning on questions.
- Sounds fun. Good to hear other perspectives.
- Lets do this! Subject: how to make Nanaimo a liveable city.
- Will meetings start with a specific question?
- Worked great at SDWI. Yes, some people tried to dominate and persuade but some tables resisted and did well.
- The school board did this and the facilitators at some tables attempted (failed) to "persuade" people towards an agenda.
- Like if well facilitated.
- It can work really well – needs a lot of pre-work & training. Good for OCP, new projects, visioning, etc.
- Time limits to move participants along.
- Needs good synthesis at end of sessions.
- Each table had a convenor and that convenor dominated the conversation and manipulated it in the direction they wanted.
- Will require extensive training to ensure all voices heard – challenge when all strangers come together, often one strong voice dominates. Facilitator must be neutral, not biased.

6. **Additional Ideas**
   - Messaging Board-type systems – community forums.
   - Data collection gives opportunity to state problems in timely manner.
   - Online forums.
   - Online forums – issues, pros + cons, moderating, fee based stops inappropriateness.
   - Debate good. Let's do it.

- I prefer data collection s/w. But, why reinvent the wheel? Just use Facebook Live or any online forum does all the data entry for you!
- Data collection software – allows participation on going time for busy people. at leisure. can think through responses.
- Survey/online – I've never seen these work for anyone but the very engaged and the very outraged. General public doesn't connect to (?) well.
- Formal Debate – can be useful under certain circumstances but requires a lot of prep, a respected moderator and talented debators.
- Ensure there is a common social media platform (FB group?) for those who cannot travel to meetings.
- Feedback to the Community after these experiences: "This is what we heard".
- Only as good as speaker and voting on it is needed.
- How is the conversation started? Who decides on what is discussed?
- Is this all just window dressing to make us feel engaged while things continue on in the same old way?
- As development is booking, traffic and speed may be an issue in certain areas, especially where contractors are involved. Which incentives(?) could solve that issue?
- Have McKay & Kipp in a televised boxing match! A la Trudeau and the P.C. Senator!
- Some of us are single parents and work, etc. and have little time to appear even though interest is high.
- Some of us have a lot of time and can have too much influence
- Tell public which councillors did or did not sign code of conduct and why.
- We need a thorough review of city operations and staffing levels.
- Tell public how City Manager is hired and evaluated.
- Let public know how council will deal with continual "scandals"

7. Topics to discuss

- Recycle Depot should be city-sponsored. They are important and necessary and should not have to struggle to get their new building.
- City budget for public engagement. City staff on facebook groups.
- Ward system.
- Online connection to Council?
- After at least ½ hour being here and speaking with staff I realized the purpose of this session is to determine by what method communication would work. Because of recent events at council meetings I was thinking that is what the engagement would be about. A council that seems out of control.

- Painfully insufficient bus service. Reduce wear and tear on infrastructure by improving bus service (schedule and coverage) to make roads last longer.
- Rules and regulations on staff and council participation online.
- OCP – starting points. Waterfront Development & access. Strategic priorities.
- Learn about placemaking. Watch the Tedtalk on YouTube: The Human Scale. Also watch the documentary "The Human Scale".
- Linley Valley
- Making certain we (the citizens) have the opportunity to preserve and extend physical and visual access to the waterfront.
- Moving forward on plans already defined for use of waterfront.
- Need to limit high rise buildings in/along waterfront areas. Put limits on development where infrastructure is not in place. Important to have public input.
- Improve transit service.
- Cruise ship terminal and/or ship yards over by Dep. Bay ferry or turn into Granville island type market.
- Close off street by Modern Café or Commercial and have more of a sidewalk café setting.
- Better parking downtown. More 30min-2hr spots.
- Ward system?
- The governance model needs a major and total revamp step by step.
- Cycling/commuting is on the rise but people (cyclists) refrain from cycling to work because of traffic and speed. How could we share the road and make it safe for all users?
- How are city services being affected by the resignation of 20+ managers?

8. **Existing Methods of Engagement**
- Why not meetings with break-out sessions where people discuss at "their table" and one person reports summary to the whole meeting. Everything is documented through the summaries. Facilitates one-on-one through to the entire group.
- Shaw Cable broadcast council meetings.
- It is very hard to know what is going on when Council minutes are released so late. Would like to see them online and current.
- The City needs structured input from citizens. Currently too difuse for us by the City or the public.
- Online input works

- Do not like e-town halls – would like face to face. Responses to email questions to Council are a problem. Would like a more respectful response.
- 1) In person – sometimes public gets carried away and off topic. Limits to appearances? 2) Question period AFTER a vote is unfortunate. People should have Q's answered before council votes.
- Online fails to reach everyone. Great amount of time needed to be kept informed.
- Most mailings and inserts are not read by the recipients.
- Question period ✓. Why not calls from people at home? Some of us have kids!
- Limit mail outs or add in something already being printed. Ie: NCHS newsletter, AG Guide. Use Social Media. Online surveys
- The facilitator is key to any group feedback sessions. I've attended many and for the most part did not feel they were worthwhile.
- All the techniques are good. The value depends on timing and openness to use input.
- All good efforts and all important. New web site looks great.
- Citizen lab is an online software program which can allow the conversation to start.
- Hard to drill down this website to get info about this committee?
- Improve SARC audio & video during C.O.W.; Record in-camera meeting and release with minutes; record Finance & Audit Committee meetings
- The bottom line is no matter what the engagement method, does anyone listen, look at the comments or address the problems raised & discussed?
- Citizens CTEE(?) receive procedural training and "mine" the knowledge bank from general public. Promote meeting subjects on website pre-meeting 2-3 weeks ahead.

9. **Committee Mission Statement**
   - Looks good. Resident focussed. Also needs to work for Council and staff around end result.
   - I do not believe that any of the 5 chosen [methods] are the complete answer. Everything, including issues chosen need to come from the general public.
   - Yes! Improving engagement is critical. This City needs to engage citizens more!
   - Yes I support the mission statement.
   - Waste of money doing this each time. Just vary the engagement methods and no one can complain.
   - Right on!!

- Good idea
- What about having people do a brief personal survey in front of places like Walmart, Thrifty's, Costco, etc. Quick, short questions and the interviewer notes down responses.
- Works for me.
- I do support the Committee's statement. Thank you for the opportunity.
- Need for Public Committee to be City Wide with geographical balance.
- Very pleased with the way things are going.
- Yes to mission statement, given City's history of limiting minutes produced. I would want to know there are rules about transparency, publication
- Public & City hold open houses for brainstorming
- Committee to continue to end of 4 sessions.
- The committee needs to develop and have posted the 6 common principles of public participation
- Public & City to bring top topics included in Public/City open house and present them in town hall format. Be sure to leave open input for other topics brought forward if consensus indicates the need.