

# Levy to Move Seattle Oversight Committee Retreat

[Levy Oversight Committee bylaws – adopted April 2017](#)

[Move Seattle Levy legislation, approved June 29, 2015\)](#)

**Date/Time:** Tuesday, December 3, 2019 / 5:30 – 7:30 PM

**Co-chairs:** Betty Spieth-Croll, Ron Posthuma

**Location:** Seattle City Hall, Room 370

**Members Present:** Ron Posthuma, Inga Manskopf, Joseph Laubach, Hester Serebrin, Betty Spieth-Croll, Samuel Ferrara, Rachel Ben-Shmuel, Nick Paranjpye, Hester Serebrin, David Seater, Patrick Taylor, Alex Rouse, Lisa Bogardus

**Members Absent:** Vicky Clarke, Councilmember Mike O'Brien, Ben Noble

**Guests:** Rachel McCaffrey, Nick Makhani, (both SDOT)

**Facilitator:** Maketa Wilborn

**MEETING CALL TO ORDER:** 5:30 PM

**Public Comment:** None

**Introduction:**

Betty: Thank you, Patrick, for suggesting that we take time to have a retreat.

Patrick: I'd also like to thank Hester, she initially had the idea

Ron: Yes, I'm glad we're doing a retreat, looking ahead and doing this planning.

## **Agenda item #1: Welcome, intro, and overview**

Maketa Wilborn introduced himself and his work in organization development and strategic planning. He reviewed the agenda/outline and encouraged the Committee to start thinking about two prompts: What is a core personal value that guides/informs you work on this committee? What is the best thing that could happen for the LOC as a result of this retreat?

## **Agenda item #2: Check-in and connections**

Maketa described the junction between Equity/Strategy/Team is relationships. All this work is about authentic connections and relationships. Relationships are a way to be effective in our work.

Rachel B: Core value for social equity, passion for green space. Thinking about how to use the Levy as a way to address green space. Current structure replaces diseased/removed trees near projects but doesn't address other and highest need areas. Interest in more Urban Forestry updates on how levy dollars are being used. Best outcome of retreat would be more discussion of pedestrian environment and increasing tree canopy.

Nick P: Core value is creating a livable city. Been in Seattle for 43 years and seen growth and pain, so as an engineer would like to bring this knowledge to monitor SDOT's work and best spending of money to build a livable city. Best outcome for the retreat is to think about lessons learned from this levy and apply to next levy.

Maketa: This is great. Try and focus the second question on outcomes for the upcoming two hours.

Sam F: A core value is being action-oriented. Observing issues with transportation in my neighborhood and around the city and wanting to get involved in this work. Best outcome of retreat: head start on the remaining years of the levy, focusing on 2020.

Ron P: Personal value relates to career in public service. This was a voter-approved levy. I want to make sure the levy delivers on its promises, which is essential to bringing voters along in the future to fund transportation.

Betty S: Core personal value is around building trust. The levy package is a huge investment and the Committee oversees this. Going back to Bridging the Gap, the work of this group is essential, to be representatives of the citizens of this levy. This is about transparency, oversight. Oversight is separate from the city. Rigor in oversight. Best outcome would be to leverage good positioning of the Committee now. Tap into everyone's capacity to achieve goals.

Todd B: A core value is performance. Move Seattle, for the Freight Board, is move all of Seattle, which includes all modes. Freight was undersold in the levy, but goods are important as other modes are. Asking for a new levy in 2024 will be a big lift. Best outcome would be continuing the great work this group did over the last year.

Hester S: Clarification of earlier statement. Core value: transportation has a ripple effect on many aspects of life (health, mobility, etc.). Best outcome would be finding a way to be efficient with a huge amount of content. There's a lot that SDOT is creating about the levy, and some resonates and some doesn't. How can the committee be efficient with the huge amount of information when we all have different areas of expertise.

Lisa B: Core value is community. Seattle is growing and tension is coming with that, pulling city apart because of these issues. Committee has position to work with the city to make things better despite many challenges. I have a labor background. It is important that our region trusts public government and how tax dollars are spent. Best outcome: clarity for 2020 and how to make the most out of what's coming in the next few years. So citizens continue to put trust in the government.

Joe L: Values. I like the diversity and dynamic in this group. Just in this room there is a huge amount of knowledge and passion in this group. We can learn so much from each other. Amazing opportunity to serve and learn together. Best outcome would be getting to know each other better.

Alex R: A core personal value that I bring is curiosity, or professional skepticism. Not being afraid to ask questions and probe deeper to understand why and how things are working. Looking ahead to 2024, what has been successful and why. Being open to hearing the answer. Best outcome: energized to tackle 2020. Personally feeling pretty vulnerable these days, especially as a mother and pedestrian. Interested in looking at how to keep safety in mind as a purpose of the committee. This isn't just about performance and outcomes. The root of the levy is about moving people safely.

Inga M: My core personal value for this work is transparency. I don't like miscommunication or misunderstanding. Best outcome would be if we could review the legislation and plan for focusing on Vision Zero, Safe Routes to School, and Equity – which were included in section 7 of the legislation as areas to evaluate. How can we incorporate that more into our work?

Patrick T: Core value would be urban sustainability. But the value is values. Projects should be physical manifestations of the city's values. Equity, social justice, sustainability...all of these should be in our mind as we do our work. Outcome: focus on the O in LOC – what is oversight? Meetings are full, lots of presentations, and we go home. But what is our role? What happens beyond downloading the information we receive?

David S: Core values guiding me are safety and equity. As an advocate, want to make sure everyone can walk/roll/bike around their neighborhood. In relation to this committee, it's important to make sure all the projects we fund are working to achieve this. An outcome I wanted was to hear about everyone else's core values to better understand what motivates you and brings you here.

### **Agenda item #3: SDOT Update**

Rachel M presented the first page of the current SDOT org chart and shared a link for where this is [publicly available online](#) to download. The org chart is 50 pages and updated quarterly. It's searchable and useful to understand who people are and where they fit into the organization. Rachel presented on executive leadership positions and how the levy programs and projects fit into various parts of SDOT.

Betty: I appreciate that the Committee gets executive leadership that comes to our meetings. Do the modal boards have this representation?

Alex R: Candida often comes to the Transit Board.

Patrick T: No, we don't often see these names or titles at the bike board.

Nick P: How is institutional knowledge managed and protected? How and where does leadership manage when there is turnover?

Rachel B: Goran Sparmann wanted to make SDOT less siloed. Can we have another update with more clarity on the Dept not being siloed.

Alex R: What have been the challenges with SDOT being siloed?

Rachel B: A while ago, it wasn't clear when progress was being made. Now, when we get updates you can tell it's more connected.

Betty: It was previously intentionally siloed. We couldn't tell when things were going wrong because it wasn't transparent. For me, not being siloed is making transportation about mobility not pitting modes at each other. Think about the transportation system more holistically. It would be good for the Committee to keep an eye on this moving forward and get updates from Sam and Lorelei on how the organization is working. This has been a big issue in the past.

Ron: The Multimodal Corridors are ripe for conflict. Back when we learned about Roosevelt, it was getting a bike lane not a bus lane. Being siloed goes from the federal government through the state and local. It's

complicated and challenging. Especially when organizational change takes time but we also need to deliver the levy on time.

Patrick T: I'd like to note the time and keep moving through the agenda.

#### **Agenda item #4: Review and refresh: committee culture and operating procedures**

Maketa: Moving to your culture and operating procedures, think about during a brief moment in time, as the LOC, when you were able to move through a sticky situation and find resolution. At the core of your success, what was happening and how were people communicating to come to a decision. Now we'll work in small groups and reflect on what works well with the Committee. This is about content, decision making, logistics, format, and Committee culture.

##### What works well (content/decision making/logistics/format/culture):

Report group 1:

- Shared respect for different priorities and goals of different members.
- Structure of committee is good, variety of geographic areas and boards represented, diversity of expertise.
- Group operates the best when there are clearly defined goals.

Report group 2:

- Effective SDOT staffing for the committee is critical. We appreciate SDOT staff investment in committee and meetings.
- Importance of subcommittees. This is important and we should get back to this. Subcommittee offer an opportunity to do a deep dive into content when there's not time for this in monthly meetings.
- SDOT staff helps define what should be asked or digested in presentations.
- We'd like to know what difficulties is staff experiencing??? So we can think about how the LOC can help.
- Quarterly reports are readable and helpful.
- Don't want to lose SDOT staff in 2024.

Report group 3:

- People are here for the right reason.
- People take their role seriously, as evidenced by the LOC's role in the Neighborhood Street Fund project evaluations.
- Co-chairs who can refocus conversations to stay on topic and within our scope. This is important.

Report group 4:

- Board has a lot of influence which is motivating. Opportunity to make change.
- Highly skilled, lots of expertise.
- Frequency of meetings is more sufficient than before. Overlapping but changing co-chair leadership is productive.

How would you describe the culture of this group/Committee:

Conscientious. Take the job seriously. Committed to public service. Respect. Not snarky.

Finance subcommittee is good. Not just produce document but chance to discuss deeper, get feedback.

Performance subcommittee is a piece that's missing.

What aspects of the culture/operating procedures could improve efficiency:

- Tap into the expertise in the room. More opportunities for small group work. This is a way to communicate better and get things done. This is not necessarily standing subcommittees, but more strategic workgroups.
  - o Whose responsibility? Not co-chair, this should be self-initiated.
  - o This is great, but how do you make it happen? We are volunteers. Need to think about be
  - o Transit Board and Bike Board both do this. If it's a quorum, it needs to be a public meeting.
  - o The idea of workgroups takes initiative. How do you solve that part? Maybe co-chairs facilitate workgroup development, ask for or delegate a workgroup lead.
- What is our role? What does oversight mean? How do you know what to dig into and believe what SDOT is saying?
- Different ways and speeds that people process information. There is a casualness to how conversation happens, which leaves people out of the discussion. Sideways name tent is a good way to ensure everyone has a voice at the table.
  - o This is a great idea. We should institute this protocol.
- We should intentionally talk about what 'performance' means. It means many things and we may have different interpretations or perceptions.
- Tie projects back to big-picture values and goals. What stories are we telling about how the levy is changing people's lives?
- 2020 calendar looks quite dry.
- Tell more stories.
- There is modal board representation, but the LOC doesn't necessarily understand what else is going on in the modal boards or how it affects this group. There is existing 5-minute updates from the modal boards, but can we leverage or expand this?
- Room for improvement in how letters are drafted. Currently the group has to move from a general topic to a completed letter in one month. Logistically this is challenging in that there's not much time to consider or offer edits so it might not truly reflect the Committee. We should think more about how to get everyone involved in drafting the letter, recognizing the timelines are quick.
  - o What effect do LOC communications/letters have? No mechanism to get feedback on LOC communications.
- Public comment. What is this for in the context of an oversight entity?
- Our duty is to have outreach and hear from the public. Bigger picture: what other outreach should take place? We can't rely on public comment solely. What is our role in regards to community engagement? Maybe a connection to the Community Involvement Commission's work.
- Think critically about recruitment and bringing diversity through filling future vacancies.

## **Agenda item #5: Looking ahead: 2020 meetings and LOC planning**

Priorities for 2020:

- Talk more about who is the audience of the LOC. Appreciate interaction with high level staff at SDOT. But who is the audience of Committee letters?
- Use workgroups (small groups) to address some of these topics that have been raised?
- Workgroups are assumed not to be staffed (or need to request if SDOT staff may be needed).
- Workgroups:
  - o Clarity on our “oversight” role: Joe Laubach
    - How to effectively engage with a large amount of SDOT content
    - How to tie back to values
    - How can smaller workgroups or subcommittees be utilized to expand and deepen our role in oversight; define expectations and charge of small workgroups, plus how to leverage expertise of various committee members
  - o Approach for drafting LOC letters/communications: Sam Ferrara
    - Protocols for writing and reviewing that is inclusive and time-efficient
    - Who is the audience
    - What topics and when to use LOC letters
  - o Food: Rachel B – let’s vote on food. Food is in
- Request for Urban Forestry come to brief

Adds to 2020:

- How does Streetcar fit in?
- Vision Zero needs to come back. Levy relates to city policies like climate goals and Vision Zero.
- Race and Social Justice Initiative change team. How does this play out in project and practices?
- Also Transportation Equity Workgroup.
- Hearing from modal boards. Updates from SDOT staff working on modal plan updates as they are update (like we heard from the Pedestrian Master Plan staff).

Maketa: Rachel M, is this everything you need for 2020 planning?

Rachel M: This is a lot of really great ideas. Of course it will depend on time and, and I’ll need to work with someone from the Committee for this to be strategic.

Betty S: This should be work done with the co-chairs.

Ron P: Yes, it will be hard to fit this all in. One idea is to have one “special topic” per meeting. So agendas don’t get terribly long or too full, which has been a problem for us in the past.

## **Agenda item #7: Co-chair vote**

Ron: Nomination for Rachel Ben-Shmuel at last meeting. Not everyone was there, so does anyone else have a nomination they want to make? Anyone?

Ron: All in favor, raise your hand.

Nomination of co-chair Rachel Ben-Shmuel: approved.

**Meeting adjourned: 7:27 PM**