



**TSCC Regular Business
Meeting**

**Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 1, 2022
1:30 p.m.**

Chair Harmony Quiroz, Commissioners Ofsink, Norton, Wubbold, and Donahue were present, as were Executive Director Allegra Willhite and Budget Analyst Tunie Betschart, all via Zoom meeting.

Absent: None

REGULAR MEETING

Chair Quiroz called the meeting to order at 1:30.

Discussion on Hearing Preparation Meetings

Commissioner Norton led the Discussion on the Hearing Preparation Meetings agenda item, requesting commissioners and staff to state the top two or three questions they would like to pursue from the six questions emailed before the meeting.¹ She said this meeting would focus on the questions receiving the most interest. Commissioners and staff expressed the most interest in questions 1, 3, and 2, in that order, followed by 4 and 6 as time permits.

Commissioner Norton read the first question, which received the most interest.

- **What materials do you rely on most in preparing for our large district discussion meetings? Do you use additional sources currently not provided by TSCC staff? How far in advance of the discussion meeting would you use them, assuming they have been received? What do we want to change?**

With this being Commissioner Donahue's first budget season as a TSCC Commissioner, he asked what sources the commissioners use to track the significant issues for the larger districts.

Commissioner Ofsink said the materials he uses are the budget review from staff, news articles, the TSCC Weekly Update, and the questions from last year's hearings.

Commissioner Norton added that she uses the budget message with the proposed budget. Sometimes she will see a disconnect between what the budget message indicates is essential and what the budget numbers suggest. These discrepancies can be an excellent source for questions at the budget hearing.

¹ Goal: Making our Discussion Meeting Productive for Commissioners without burdening Staff (March 1, 2022)

Chair Quiroz stated the commissioners also rely on the other commissioners' areas of interest and expertise.

Commissioner Wubbold commented that it would be helpful if there were a way to collect news articles from the TSCC Weekly Update.

Commissioner Norton explained that when she sees an article of interest in the TSCC Weekly Update she thinks may be helpful during the hearing, she places it in a file on her computer under the district name. Then before the hearing, she will review these articles and determine if they are still relevant and if they would be of interest at the hearing.

Addressing the question, what do commissioners want to change, Commissioner Wubbold referred to the idea of reducing the history presented in the review. After some discussion, the commissioners agreed that staff should reduce the historical information in the review to show only material relevant to the budget since TSCC is not the primary source of the district's history.

Following the discussion of question one, the commissioners agreed they were comfortable with the current process of receiving the information a few days before the meeting. This process allows enough time to prepare for the meeting. They decided there would be no advantage to sending information earlier.

Commissioner Norton said what she is hearing from this discussion is:

- Staff will continue to send district packets for the commissioners to review and prepare for the discussion meeting 5-7 days before the meeting.
- Staff will provide prior-year questions for commissioners.
- Staff will provide a link to the district's budget document.

Commissioner Norton moved the discussion to the next question receiving a high number of votes. (Question 3 in the shared document)

- **How can we guide staff in the drafting of hearing questions before the discussion meetings begin?**

She asked if there was some way to inform staff about questions the commissioners were interested in before preparing draft questions. Can this area of interest be provided as the staff is preparing questions?

Commissioner Ofsink asked Executive Director Willhite if a platform such as Google Docs is available where everyone could exchange information and ideas? She said she would be happy to create a google doc that could be shared with everyone. She could send it out when she sends the packet for review to commissioners. The timing for sending this is three days to a week before the meeting.

Commissioner Ofsink responded that he thinks this would be a great tool. He suggested that questions from the previous year and those measuring success are important for him, and he would like them included in the document.

Executive Director Willhite will create a Google Doc listing each district so commissioners and staff can collect topics, suggest questions, and express areas of interest **before developing the draft questions**. She will link the previous year's hearing questions so that the commissioners will have easy access to this resource.

Commissioner Norton proposed using the Goggle docs in two places. One would be

developed immediately and left open for comments and suggestions from staff and the commissioners. Commissioners would compile their thoughts before the staff created the draft questions. The document would include each larger district in which TSCC holds its hearing.

Commissioner Wubbold requested a conversation around the number and content of questions to ask at the hearings. He stated that he felt 90-minute hearings should include an opening and closing question and 8-9 topical questions. The 60-minute hearings should have the opening and closing questions and 6-7 topical questions. The commissioners agreed it is better to determine the number of questions before hearing so the questions sent to the district do not have to be eliminated from the hearing because of time restraints.

Commissioner Norton explored the opening and closing questions. She explained that the practice has been to have a common topic for all districts' opening and closing questions, adjusting the specific district's wording. The opener has been a topic that allows the district to showcase its accomplishments and sets a positive tone for the hearing. She suggested using targeted questions to avoid repeating what the district's spokesperson addressed in the opening remarks. She provided examples such as not asking what the district's most significant achievements or accomplishments have been. Instead, ask them to tell us about the top two achievements you were most surprised by and the top two areas the FY 23 budget expects to improve. These targeted questions may help avoid repeating the information discussed in the opening remarks.

To recap this discussion on hearing questions:

- Staff needs to convey to the district that the commissioners would like them to keep the introductory remarks brief ~ five minutes, allowing enough time for questions and discussions.
- Questions for the 90-minute hearings will be limited to 10-11 questions and the 60-minute hearings limited to 8-9 questions.
- Staff will ask districts for topics or questions they would like covered in the hearings. They will identify them as district staff suggestions when including them in the Google Doc.
- Commissioners will use the Google Doc to collaborate, identify their interests, and suggest questions before developing the draft questions.
- Commissioner will use Google docs for their suggestions for opening and closing questions.

Commissioner Norton describes the second use of Google docs as she reviews the fourth question from the shared document and opens the discussion on providing feedback on the draft questions.

- **How does staff want to get feedback from commissioners after budget review and draft questions are sent out? Do all budget review questions need to wait until meeting day? What if a commissioner wants to change a draft question or propose new questions? Can we commit to a process for proposing changes?**

Commissioner Norton explained when staff sends the packet to commissioners, this creates the second opportunity to present ideas using Google Sharing-Google Doc. Staff will create another Google Sharing document for each district to be used **after staff has prepared the review and draft questions**. This shared document would allow commissioners to review, revise, edit, rearrange, delete or comment on questions. Then final decisions and assignments could be made at the discussion meeting.

Each Google Sharing document will include the deadline for all comments.

Commissioner Norton suggested if commissioners have factual questions about the district's review, they should ask staff directly before the meeting to discuss the review and develop final questions. By doing this, it will avoid using meeting time for fact-finding questions. Try to resolve such questions before the meeting if possible. Commissioner agreed to do this whenever possible.

The commissioners addressed the following question next:

- **How can budget reviews be improved? How granular do we want the analysis? Can we streamline small districts reviews?** (Question 2 from the shared document)

Commissioner Norton stated that including the Approved Budget Summary Sheet showing all four years' budget numbers with the review has been very helpful. She said she would like to see that continue.

Commissioner Norton expressed that she prefers charts, graphs, and tables in the review and does not need the narrative explaining the same thing the graph or chart displays. If there is a significant change in an object classification expenditure or revenue, she would like to know the reason for the difference. The budget review should focus on the substantial changes in the budget and the reason for the change. There is no need to highlight small changes unless it reflects a shift in policy, such as a change in contingency or fund balance. If the budget is status quo, that can be stated.

Commissioner Wubbold said the one thing he pays particular attention to is whether or not the district's budget and their process comply with Local Budget Law since this is noted in the certification letter.

Commissioner Norton opened the discussion about the newest district to rejoin TSCC's jurisdiction. (Question 6 from the shared document)

- **Do we want to do anything different for the Gresham-Barlow School district, our second K-12 member district? It's a small district, but it will be the first time we consider it. What additional background material do you need?**

Commissioner Wubbold expressed an interest in knowing why the district decided to return to the TSCC's jurisdiction.

Executive Director Willhite explained that when meeting with district staff, they expressed an interest in transparency with the public regarding their budget, showing they are following all the regulations. Gresham-Barlow school district wants to show the public they are very conscientious about handling the taxpayers' dollars. The district also has several new staff members in its budget office. Some are not familiar with the school district's budget procedures and regulations.

Executive Director Willhite added that both Riverdale School district and Centennial School district had expressed an interest in rejoining TSCC. Both cited transparency as a reason for reconsidering their membership.

Commissioner Ofsink said he liked how TSCC handled the Corbett Fire District's rejoining. He suggested showcasing the district's past activities and less emphasizing current ones. Looking at the district as a whole will give commissioners an understanding of their values and interests.

Commissioner Wubbold suggested using this first year to establish a baseline for the district.

Executive Director Willhite explained that since this district has a short turn-around time, this is one of the district assignments for Mr. Gibbons. He will be able to provide history for the review.

There was a discussion about inviting the district to a TSCC Regular Business Meeting to welcome them back to TSCC and remind them of the advantages of being under TSCC's jurisdiction. Given the short time frame for the district's budget process, new staff, and not wanting to burden them with a meeting during this busy time, the commissioners decided to do this in late summer or early fall. At that time, TSCC will invite the board of directors, superintendent, and budget staff. The meeting would give Gresham Barlow School District a public forum to interact with commissioners to discuss their district personally rather than just on paper.

Commissioner Ofsink suggested considering a procedure to schedule a meeting to welcome back any district that rejoins TSCC jurisdiction, allowing them to update TSCC on the activities of their district.

Commissioner Ofsink recommended that during the budget review process this year, Gresham-Barlow School District's certification letter should contain a note thanking them for rejoining TSCC and requesting the commission's oversight.

Executive Director Willhite expressed her appreciation to Commissioner Norton for developing the questions, suggestions and facilitating this discussion. She said today's decisions would be beneficial during the upcoming budget season.

TSCC Communication Plan – 2022

Executive Director Willhite reviewed the Communications Tactics table within the TSCC Communications Plan - 2022², which displayed the primary objectives of the communications plan and the tactics to accomplish these objectives. She expressed her goal for today was to determine which of these objectives the Commissioners would prefer she completed during this fiscal year and which can wait until next year. She would want the commissioners to prioritize them 1-5 and then discuss the tactics to accomplish them. The first three priorities will be her focal point for this year, and the remainder will be future work.

Commissioner Ofsink expressed that notifying the media of upcoming hearings for large districts is essential. He recommended doing this for just a few of the larger districts.

Commissioner Norton said she feels the media is the target for increasing the public interest in TSCC and the hearing attendance. TSCC has little contact with the general public. Announcing through the media that the commissioners hold hearings for certain districts would be the best way to reach the general public. Commissioner Ofsink will provide a contact list that TSCC can use.

Commissioners and staff decided to list the priorities 1-5 using the tactics column instead of the objectives since this seemed more appropriate.

Commissioner Norton said the groups she is interested in reaching are the various oversight groups within the districts. These could include the Budget Oversight Committee for PPS, The Bond Oversight Committee for Multnomah County Library Bond, and the City of Portland has multiple oversight committees. They may be interested in attending our hearings since the hearing would relate to the oversight work they do for the districts. If the interested members attended, this would add to the attendance at TSCC hearings, which would be a measure of success for TSCC.

² TSCC Communication Plan – 2022

Commissioner Wubbold and Chair Quiroz agreed that this should be the highest priority for the contacts. Engaging the oversight committees will be one of the highest priorities.

Executive Director Willhite will develop a contact list for the budget and bond oversight committees to notify them of the specific hearings that may interest them. She will inform them when the hearing will occur and advise them that they are welcome to attend. The Executive Director will be working with district staff, alerting them of her intent to send an introductory letter to their governing body from the commissioners and mentioning the hearing to the oversight committee.

Commissioner Norton suggested creating a modified version of the elected officials' letter for the oversight committee members. The letter would be an excellent introduction to TSCC's duties and inform them of what to expect during the hearing.

The letter to the officials was the second priority for this year. Executive Director Willhite sent a draft of this letter with the materials emailed to the commissioners on February 22. She requested feedback about the letter soon since this document will be sent to TriMet prior to their hearing in April.

The third item of interest is to notify the media of the TSCC hearings, which the commissioners and staff discussed earlier.

Executive Director Willhite will accomplish as many of these three priority items as possible and report the progress to the commissioners.

2022 Training Survey

Commissioner Wubbold commented on the positive comments received from the training attendees stating that it was great to see such positive comments on the 2022 TSCC Training sessions from all those who made comments.

Chair Quiroz commented on the high volume of comments on the training sessions. These comments are representative of an excellent presentation.

AEAF Committee Update

Commissioner Wubbold stated that is a lot of work to keep the commissioners informed of the activities of the AEAF. He thanked Commissioner Norton for her willingness to serve on this committee and share the committee's activities, struggles, and accomplishments.

Commissioner Norton said this report covered three or four committee meetings. Most of the committee members are new, and they are still determining their role as committee members. She will continue to relay any information back to the TSCC commissioners at TSCC regular meetings as she hears any vital information.

January 26, 2022, Regular Business Meeting Minutes and Voting Record Attachment

Meeting minutes for January 26, 2022, TSCC Regular Business Meeting Minutes were accepted as presented.

Next Regular Business Meeting

The next meeting will be on April 19 to discuss TriMet's review and develop the final questions for the hearing.

Attachments 2:

- 1) Goal: Making our Discussion Meeting Productive for Commissioners without burdening Staff (March 1, 2022)
- 2) TSCC Communication Plan – 2022