



**TSCC Regular Business
Meeting**

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 4, 2022

12:30 p.m.

Chair Harmony Quiroz, Commissioners Ofsink, Norton, and Wubbold were present, as were Executive Director Allegra Willhite, and Budget Analyst Tunie Betschart, all via Google Meeting. Also present were outgoing TSCC Chair David Barringer and Matt Donahue who will become the newest TSCC Commissioner pending Governor Brown's confirmation.

Absent: None

REGULAR MEETING

Chair Quiroz called the meeting to order at 12:30. For the benefit of the pending new commissioner, Matt Donahue, each commissioner introduced themselves and gave a brief description of duties as a commissioner, some background on their career path, outside interests, and why they enjoy serving on the commission. Matt Donahue also introduced himself, giving some information about his background, family, current job, career path and his interest in the commission.

Recognition of Chair Barringer's Service to TSCC

Chair Quiroz thanked David Barringer for his service to the commission for the past eight years. Each commissioner gave their personal appreciation to David for his service on the commission, his leadership, temperament, kindness, guidance; his approach to the districts, the positive changes that have happened in the district's perception of the commission in the past 8 years, his attention to details, the assistance with understanding the process and procedures, and navigating through the changes and challenges brought on by the pandemic the last two years.

Executive Director Willhite added her appreciation for the kindness shown, support given and interaction with staff and availability David has always shown that has made the organization such an appealing place to work. Ms. Betschart added her agreement with the commissioners about the way the districts view TSCC now versus several years ago. They have more respect for the organization and due to David's leadership, the organization has improved the services provided to the districts.

Executive Director Willhite's Updates

Progress Report TSCC FY2022 Work Plan December 2021¹

- **Workplan Item A: Onboarding & Education of New Director**

Staff has met with 30 of their member districts, and have had communications with the other three districts. Some of the things they heard about the value of TSCC were: the district staff receives value from the training given; they appreciate receiving the questions for the hearings in advance; they value being able to call or email with questions and receiving help; (staff receives one or two questions a week from districts); the partnership approach taken by TSCC was acknowledged by the districts.

Something TSCC staff took away from the meetings with the various districts was most districts do not use the Annual Report extensively, more for reference, and are happy to go to the online version. This is an opportunity to take a look at the Annual Report to see where to focus our energy, possibly doing an updated version of this report since the next one will be the 100th edition of the TSCC Annual Report.

Overall, the meetings and interaction with districts' staff has been very positive.

Executive Director Willhite has attended a number of trainings, completed material reviews, and met with stakeholders which has been extremely helpful. She met with the former director Tom Linhares, talking about what has changed and what has stayed the same.

Commissioner Wubbold asked what type of questions the districts asked and if there was a way to capture this, maybe on the website as a Q&A, and make it a point of interest for those interested in TSCC and what the commission does. Executive Director Willhite explained that the questions are mostly related to process and procedures or budget law. These questions are tracked and one online training session this year is dedicated to discussions around the questions TSCC receives. There are many signed up for this session. Staff has heard from districts that they would like to see TSCC update some of the training materials and produce more. This needs to be included with the overall priorities so when additional staffing or more time is available, a more robust training program could be developed and could be incorporated into the information provided on the website and weekly update.

- **Workplan Item B: Facilitate Board Transitions**

We are waiting on Governor Brown's office to move forward with the final confirmation on the commissioners' reappointments and the appointment of the newest commissioner. There is not an estimated date for when this will happen. It was anticipated to be completed by December 15, but that did not happen. We are hoping this will be resolved soon.

- **Workplan Item C: Weekly Update Refresh**

The refresh of the Weekly Update has been completed and staff has received positive feedback on the changes with the color scheme change receiving the most comments. The update continues to be a great tool for TSCC.

- **Workplan Item D: Communications & Engagement Plan/Implementation**

Staff will be working on the Communications and Engagement Plan this month. This is such a broad topic and can go several directions so Executive Director Willhite has questions for the commissioners to determine specifically the desired outcome, and in what areas they would like staff to put their energy. This will be discussed in the brainstorming session toward the end of this meeting

¹ Progress Report TSCC FY2022 Work Plan December 2021

Commissioner Ofsink asked about staff attending districts' meetings. Executive Director Willhite explained that it is a bit awkward since they are online meetings and you cannot just sit quietly in the back and observe. This is especially true when attending smaller meetings. She has attended a few finance meetings and has received some interesting comments.

Commissioner Norton asked about the interaction with the City of Gresham. She said she is hoping at some point this district will rejoin TSCC. Executive Director Willhite said she has talked to the budget manager and the finance director and has received positive feedback about TSCC, but there is a timing issue with the requirement for TSCC to hold tax measure hearings. She discussed the limited membership option with them. They will be considering this in the future. She stated that staff met with one of their new budget analysts, and discussed updates to Annual Report information to give a more accurate picture of the City of Gresham's budget. In addition, she has received questions from them about the upcoming training. So, by continuing to provide good service to them we hope to gain them as at least a limited member.

- Workplan Item E: TSCC Trainings

The original training strategy was to provide one comprehensive, in-person session January 13, and an abridged, online presentation on January 19 with an online question and answer session January 25. Due to the Omicron variant spreading across the US and the rising hospitalizations the decision was made to move the January 13 session online. It will be split into two sessions so the material can be covered without spending too much time all at once in the online environment.

- Workplan Item F: Create Staffing Plan

This is an item just as a place holder, nice to get to if possible but not expected to at this time.

- Workplan Item G: Website Revamp

Executive Director Willhite has updated the website security and some small technical fixes but more is needed at a later date as time allows. This ties to the training goals as well.

Year-to-Date Budget Report

- Budget Summary

Executive Director Willhite gave a quick overview of the TSCC Budget as of December² explaining that the reason for spending 100% of materials and services was due to \$7,600 one-time expenditures for computers that was expected to be captured in fiscal year 2021 budget and landed in this year's budget. With the transition of the previous executive director to the current one there was considerable increase in personnel services expenditures as well. TSCC may bump up close to the approved budget but will not reach the maximum budget approved by statute. Executive Director Willhite will keep commissioners informed about any unexpected increase.

She asked for commissioners' thoughts on the use of contingency, with commissioner approval, to bring Craig Gibbons in during the latter part of budget season to help with the review of the larger districts if necessary.

Commissioner Ofsink thanked her for introducing this thought ahead of time and presenting it to them now. As they have talked about previously, this is part of her developing a

² FY-2021-22 Budget Report - December

sustainable staffing plan. He said he was totally onboard with this use of the contingency.

Commissioner Norton added that this is consistent with what was discussed when they established the contingency. She suggested presenting a plan to the commissioners showing how much of the contingency is needed and how it will be used so the amount needed can be moved from contingency into the spending category by March.

Commissioner Wubbold asked if Craig Gibons would be available to work the 120 hours projected for the budget season during the March-June timeframe. Executive Director Willhite said yes, this is what was discussed and he is willing to return for about 3 weeks during the busy time, including converting data for input into the Datacuity system.

Executive Director Willhite expressed thanks for bringing up the process needed to move forward using contingency. She will put together a request for the commissioners to consider to move the necessary funds into the operating budget.

Commissioner Norton added that this may be a good time to true-up all budget items, and treat it as a budget amendment.

- Budget Forecast

Executive Director Willhite shared the 5-year forecast graph explaining that when creating this graph, she used the Multnomah County forecasts for the internal service inflater. This is what the county has suggested, and it may change. She said the insurance inflater of 4% is what Craig Gibons has used in the past, and it is similar to the Mercer (a company that does an industry-wide look) estimates of average cost increases. Multnomah County is showing a bit lower than that so we are using the 4% to be on the safe side. In the past, wage increases have not always followed a standard process, making an estimate a little more difficult. So, this is just the best guess using what has been done over a period of time. She explained that Multnomah County assumes a 4% increase just for COLA next year with a 3% merit increase. Even with inflation, TSCC will remain below the maximum budget. Included in this estimate is a placeholder for staffing changes that may be needed in future years.

Commissioner Wubbold mentioned that before TSCC reaches the maximum budget, plans would need to be in place to revisit the legislature to increase the budget if needed. There was discussion on the procedure and time it takes to be heard in the General Session of the Legislature in order to change the maximum budget. Even with the staffing transitions anticipated, the budget ceiling should be within range for a few years. But the time it takes to actually acquire the needed approval to change the maximum budget needs to be considered – commissioners estimated TSCC would need to start the process two years before the change is needed. When going before the legislature TSCC will need to contact the lobbyist for Multnomah County to sponsor the changes.

Executive Director Willhite mentioned that funding HB2992 could put a strain on the budget. If this becomes an issue, the commission may want to talk with the legislature about potential increases sooner than expected. To date, no one has requested or been eligible to receive this stipend. Based on the number of meetings held by TSCC in past the estimated cost for this could be around \$5,000 per commissioner receiving the stipend.

There was discussion of various ways to accommodate people so they can serve as TSCC Commissioners, such as covering travel expenses or childcare expenses. Removing barriers will be important to enhancing membership of TSCC Commissioners. The current commissioners will continue to explore this before 2023 when two commissioners' (Commissioner Norton and Commissioner Ofsink) terms will end.

- Training Updates

Executive Director Willhite thanked the commissioners for doing their state mandated training. There are two mandated trainings that commissioners need to complete each year, Preventing Discrimination and Harassment Training and Information Security Training. Each commissioner will have an entire year to complete these training sessions. However, if commissioners take a similar training elsewhere, through another organization for example, they may request a waiver.

Communications Plan Brainstorming Session

Executive Director Willhite presented three topics for today's discussion to add direction to the communication goals.

They were:

Communication Goals

- Inform districts of tools and training available
- Refine public outreach approach
 - Getting work out to the public (budget reviews, hearings, reports, etc)
 - Improve engagement with TSCC hearings (consider as a tactic – engaging more with media)
- Capitalize on 100-year anniversary of TSCC

Key Messages

- TSCC is an Oregon innovation ensuring accountability and transparency in how public monies are spent.
- The commission is made up of community members who care deeply about safeguarding taxpayer funds and helping local governments use their revenues wisely.
- Community members are represented by “professional citizens”
- With the input of our professional staff, we provide independent oversight of the budgets of some of the state's largest governments.
- We host public hearings each year on tax measures and government budgets and, representing the taxpayers of the County, ask thoughtful and educational questions of public officials.

Anticipated Obstacles

- Oversaturation – too much information, too many news stories
- Apathy – some members of the public may have other priorities/concerns
- Confusion – local government operations can seem opaque and complex

Commissioners were asked to take a few minutes to review these topics and then give feedback on this. Executive Director Willhite will then use the comments and discussions to create a more defined draft to present at the next meeting for discussion with more specific information and goals, that are time-bound, and give more specific direction on what the desired outcome will be.

Some of the ideas that came out of this exercise were:

- ❖ Reestablish the anniversary of 100-year celebration
- ❖ Prior to budget season, do outreach to elected officials as a reminder of what TSCC is, what they do, and what to expect at hearings

- ❖ Create awareness of the services TSCC provides
- ❖ What we want to share about TSCC, what it is, what it does etc.
- ❖ The media relations topic that commissioners have mentioned relates to the public hearings. Commissioners would like to get the word out that they conduct hearings to discuss and certify the district's budget, and that these hearings are another avenue for public to get their message across to the district.
- ❖ TSCC serves on two separate groups: District Staff and Electeds, and the Public. Each of these two groups need different types of communication. This is mentioned in the 2019 strategic planning documents.
- ❖ Recommended changing the media piece to be more about public outreach. Engaging the media is not a goal to itself but a tactic to get information to the public.
- ❖ Language that could be used "professional citizens" or "professional community members" (Left as a place holder to be refined by others)
- ❖ Op-ed drafted by commissioner Wubbold will be sent on to Executive Director Willhite for editing.
- ❖ In the past a letter was sent to the elected officials describing TSCC's purpose and anticipated actions at the upcoming hearing. It was suggested to take a look at that letter and use the parts that could be edited to fit today's environment.

With the problems experienced by commissioners, staff, and district's staff using Google Meet, TSCC staff has decided to spend \$150 to purchase a Zoom membership for a year. This will make it easier for commissioners, staff and the districts to communicate virtually, since the Zoom platform seems to be more reliable and user friendly.

Schedule for the Upcoming Hearings

Commissioner Ofsink will not be available to attend hearings after June 15. Currently, there is only one hearing, Mt. Hood Community College, scheduled after that date. (UFS&WQ's hearing recently changed to Monday June 13.)

There was discussion with the commissioners about using the Proposed Budget to prepare the budget hearing questions and possibly meeting with them to discuss the review using the Proposed Budget. Staff will receive the Proposed Budget much earlier and the Approved usually has only minor numeric edits. This could be done for districts where the Approved Budget is received just prior to the hearing (in some cases just 16 days prior to the hearing). This is just in the thinking stages and will be a continued discussion at a future meeting.

Many hearings will be in the virtual venue.

Art Education and Access Fund (AEAF) Oversight Committee Status Report

Commissioner Wubbold, who had served of the Arts Committee in the past, commended Commissioner Norton on the AEAF Oversight Committee report she presented via email December 21. He encouraged her to continue pushing on the piece about impact and access accountability. He would like to see some sort of study showing the benefits and quantifiable education they have received that can point directly to these dollars. This was brought up years ago and has never happened.

Commissioner Norton said since writing this report, she has met with City of Portland staff. She now has the latest RAC contract dated July 1, 2021. The measures seem to be quantity driven rather than quality driven. Since RAC represents both community and

schools this is a difficult situation. The Arts Tax and the distribution formula was 1 to 500 hundred students at the K-5 level. All districts are performing much better than this. She gave the example of PPS being about 1 to 280 something. They fund arts teachers with money other than the arts tax money. So figuring who is doing what, with what money and with what impact, is a challenge.

Chair Quiroz thanked Commissioner Norton for volunteering on this committee.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be January 26, 2022 at 11:30.

With that the meeting was adjourned.

Attachments:

- 1) Progress Report TSCC FY2022 Work Plan December 2021
- 2) FY-2021-22 Budget Report - December