



Sustaining Quality of Life in the Southern Willamette Valley

**Groundrules for Regional Policy Advisory Board
Structure and Decision-Making
February 25, 2004**

The Regional Policy Advisory Board is an intergovernmental committee created to guide the Region 2050 process, lead the discussion of regional issues, and recommend to the region's elected bodies a strategy to improve and sustain quality of life over the next 50 years.

A. Purpose

1. To develop and agree on a strategy, including *Goals, Objectives, and Actions*, to improve and sustain quality of life in the Southern Willamette Valley in each of the following categories:
 - Land Use and Development Patterns
 - Jobs and the Economy
 - Housing
 - Transportation
 - Natural Resources, Open Space, and the Environment
 - Community Facilities and Services
 - Education;
2. To guide the Region 2050 process and scope of work;
3. To provide a forum for developing recommendations for resolving regional growth-related issues, including agreement(s) on the future distribution of population and employment growth, how that growth will be served, and how those services will be financed; and
4. To promote intergovernmental cooperation, coordination, and collaboration between and among local governments.

B. Functions

Regional Policy Advisory Board members serve as liaisons between the Regional Policy Advisory Board and their respective local communities and agencies that will eventually be asked to approve the strategy. The Board members perform the following functions:

1. Communicate with respective local elected bodies and state and local agencies;
2. Report on the Region 2050 Project at meetings with these groups;
3. Obtain the input of these groups and on decision points;
4. Reflect the views and desires of these groups in advisory decisions of the Regional Policy Advisory Board; and
5. Serve as spokespersons for the Region 2050 Project with members of the media and the general public, potential funding sources, the state legislature, and others.

C. Membership

The Policy Advisory Board will consist of one or more elected official from the cities of Coburg, Cottage Grove, Creswell, Eugene, Junction City, Lowell, Oakridge, Springfield, Veneta, and Westfir, Lane County (representing the rural residents), a staff liaison representing state agencies (e.g., a representative of the Governor's Community Development Office), and a Lane Transit District Board member.

D. Chair and Vice Chair

The Board will select a Chair and Vice Chair from its membership, with trained facilitators continuing to facilitate Policy Board meetings. The Chair's roles are to: help the meeting facilitator bring the Board to consensus on specific topics; confirm the agenda with staff; help staff communicate with the media; represent the Board's position to outside agencies and interests; and other leadership functions. The Vice Chair will serve as Chair when the Chair is absent or otherwise unavailable to serve the above functions.

The chair will rotate every year, in January each year with the option for the previous chair to continue if they so desire and if agreed by a majority vote of the Board.

E. Voting

Only elected officials will vote and only one member from each jurisdiction will vote on any one item.

F. Decision-Making Process

Consensus-Building

A consensus-building model is proposed for all decisions of the Board. The attached paper, *Consensus Defined*, provides some general guidelines for the consensus model. A trained facilitator will assist the Board in reaching consensus on every action item by following these four steps:

1. Give each member an opportunity to express his or her views and discuss and debate the item among members. Allow discussion within the allotted time, with the option of extending the time or of tabling the discussion to a future meeting
2. Following discussion, summarize the direction the Board appeared to be heading and ask if anyone disagrees or objects.
3. If one or more person objects, allow more time for discussion if these views have not already been presented and discussed.
4. Ask for a show of hands in favor and opposed. Hands in favor indicate that the person *can live with* the decision; hands opposed indicate that the person *cannot live with* the decision.

G. Decisions

The Board will make the following two levels of decisions:

- Decisions to amend the groundrules; and
- All other decisions

Notes

The Board will use a different definition of decision for substantive decisions than for process decisions, as is common. Process-types of issues are often decided in a more expedited fashion than more substantive decisions such as those involving the adoption of public policy. The advantages and disadvantages of making this distinction include:

- The advantages of having a simple majority vote on process decisions are: it expedites the process; it saves meeting time for discussion of more consequential matters; and it allows a majority of members to have a voice in the structure and process of the Board.
- The primary disadvantage is that one or more members may disagree with a process-related decision and, although they will express and debate these views, the decision of the majority will not reflect opposing positions.

Decisions to Amend the Groundrules

The process for amending these ground rules is as follows:

1. The amendment request is placed on the agenda for the next meeting of the Policy Advisory Board;
2. The text of the amendment is included in the mailed packet for that meeting;
3. The facilitator follows the 4-step consensus-building process specified above; and

4. The decision carries if it is agreed-to by a majority of the Policy Board members, including proxy votes, obtained either before or after the meeting. Proxies will be obtained after a meeting only when the action requested changes as a result of discussion or a member is out of town.

All Other Decisions

The process for all decisions other than those to amend the ground rules is as follows:

1. The substance of the action requested is placed on the agenda and included in the packet for the next meeting of the Policy Advisory Board;
2. The text of the proposal and background materials are included in the mailed packet for that meeting;
3. The facilitator follows the 4-step consensus-building process specified above; and
4. The decision carries if it is agreed-to by nine (9) of the members, including proxy votes, obtained either before or after the meeting. Proxy votes will be obtained after the meeting only when the action requested changes as a result of discussion or a member is out of town, EXCEPT that when one or more of the following conditions applies, the decision cannot carry:
 - a. The decision is counter to adopted policy of the objecting member's city or county; and/or
 - b. The decision is counter to the wishes of the elected body of the objecting member's jurisdiction, as expressed by motion of that body.
5. When an objecting member states that either condition a or b applies, the matter will be dropped or tabled until such time as the Policy Board decides to re-open it for discussion; for example, when a member wants time to confer with their council or board, or when conditions change following the initial discussion.
6. Nothing in this process will prevent two or more jurisdictions or agencies from entering into agreements with each other to achieve mutual goals.

Approved: January 14, 2003

Amended: June 19, 2003, February 25, 2004

Consensus Defined

Consensus is a decision-making process whereby decisions are reached when all members present consent to a proposal. This process does not assume everyone must be in complete agreement. When differences remain after discussion, individuals can agree to disagree, that is, give their consent by standing aside, and allow the proposal to be accepted by the group.

While decision-making is as much about conflict as it is about agreement, consensus works best in an atmosphere in which conflict is encouraged, supported, and resolved cooperatively with respect, nonviolence, and creativity. Conflict is desirable. It is not something to be avoided, dismissed, diminished, or denied.

Generally speaking, when a group votes using majority rule, a competitive dynamic is created within the group because it is being asked to choose between two (or more) possibilities. It is just as acceptable to attack and diminish another's point of view as it is to promote and endorse your own ideas. Often, voting occurs before one side reveals anything about itself, but spends time solely attacking the opponent! In this adversarial environment, one's ideas are owned and often defended in the face of improvements.

The consensus process, on the other hand, creates a cooperative dynamic. Only one proposal is considered at a time. Everyone works together to make it the best possible decision for the group. Any concerns are raised and resolved, sometimes one by one, until all voices are heard. Since proposals are no longer the property of the presenter, a solution can be created more cooperatively.

Consensus strives to take into account everyone's concerns and resolve them before any decision is made. Most importantly, this process encourages an environment in which everyone is respected and all contributions are valued.

Although every individual must consent to a decision before it is adopted, if there are any objections, it is not the choice of the individual alone to determine if an objection prevents the proposal from being adopted. Every objection or concern must first be presented before the group and either resolved or validated. A valid objection is one in keeping with all previous decisions of the group and based upon the commonly-held principles or foundation adopted by the group. The objection must not only address the concerns of the individual, but it must also be in the best interest of the group as a whole. If the objection is not based upon the foundation, or is in contradiction with a prior decision, it is not valid for the group, and therefore, out of order.

Decisions are adopted when all participants consent to the result of discussion about the original proposal. People who do not agree with a proposal are responsible for expressing their concerns. No decision is adopted until there is resolution of every concern. When concerns remain after discussion, individuals can agree to disagree by acknowledging that they have unresolved concerns, but consent to the proposal anyway and allow it to be adopted. Therefore, reaching

consensus does not assume that everyone must be in complete agreement, a highly unlikely situation in a group of intelligent, creative individuals.

Drawn from *On Conflict and Consensus: A Handbook on Formal Consensus Decision-Making*, by C.T. Butler and Amy Rothstein.