

Oak Lodge advocates see 'lack of effective local agency''

Oak Lodge Governance Project Steering Committee

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Steering committee members: Residents and businesses deserve better than we are currently able to create.

As word of the Oak Lodge Governance Project (OLGP) grows in the Oak Grove and Jennings Lodge communities, we have had inquiries seeking to learn more about the members of the steering committee and what motivates us to engage in this effort. In the coming weeks, each of the 10 steering committee members will submit an individual statement explaining their personal motivation for participating in this project.

Many of us are currently involved in community groups and activities, and many of us have been active in the past. Some serve, have served or have been involved with Clackamas County sanctioned boards, task forces, panels and advisory councils. The personal statements to come will detail the extent and range of these activities, involvement that provides a close understanding of how residents and businesses in Oak Lodge (Oak Grove and Jennings Lodge) are served, underserved or not served by the current county government.

All steering committee members of OLGP are residents of Oak Lodge who share the common belief that there is a serious mismatch between the form of governance we have and the form of governance we need. We are an urban area with urban issues and needs being inadequately served by a rural form of governance. It is not from lack of trying. The county is doing its best to serve all the approximately 30,000 residents of this urban area. It is simply a mismatch between needs and services, creating a gap that steadily increases as this community steadily changes.

The 10 members of the steering committee have come together to volunteer out of care and concern for our area, with a belief that the residents and businesses of Oak Lodge can do better and deserve better than we are currently able to create for our community. There are things that are broken and everyone would benefit if they were fixed.

The following are a few recent examples of resident advocacy that attempted to achieve more equitable and sustainable outcomes but essentially struggled/failed due to lack of effective local agency:

- Evangelical Retreat Center/infill development: We've seen numerous single-family neighborhoods be developed in a manner that decimates existing trees and topography/hydrology. The most significant of these was the ERC where, despite the community's best efforts, we could not affect any standards and modifications to the development that would have included a mix of housing types and preserve key open space for a much-needed park.
- Active transportation infrastructure: This urban area has long lacked continuous pedestrian sidewalks and bikeways providing connection within our community and beyond. Not only does this cause safety issues for people who don't have access to cars, it essentially forces more people to own cars or suffer lack of access to schools, essential services, mass transit and employment.
- McLoughlin Boulevard: a woefully under-developed corridor, McLoughlin represents a huge missed opportunity for housing, employment, services and a tax base essential to our community. There is an enormous disconnect between zoned housing capacity and the actual/projected needs. Current development patterns ignore the available transit access and consist mainly of car lots changing over. The most recent snafu is a new storage facility located in the heart of our community where housing and services should be. None of this contributes in terms of local economic productivity, employment opportunity or social cohesion. The grant awarded to Oak Lodge Governance Project is for a study of economic and governance options for our community. None of the funds can be used for public outreach. Unlike governmental bodies, OLGP does not have access to public funds for outreach and community involvement. We do not have resources to send mailings to every household in the area nor conduct large scale public engagement projects similar to past county

efforts at community outreach. Any and all public engagement is being done by community members volunteering time and effort, neighbor sharing with neighbor, group sharing with group, to build, deepen and strengthen the bonds of community. We welcome your participation.

If you want to learn more about the OLGP, you can check out our social media: Instagram: "oaklodgeproject", Twitter: "OakLodgeGP" and Facebook: "Oak Lodge Governance Project" or contact us at oaklodgegovernance@gmail.com. Our website will be online soon where all informational sessions, public Zoom meetings and lots of relevant material will be accessible for all.



FILE PHOTO - Jennings Lodge's former evangelical education buildings and Fiesen Chapel were removed, along with most of the hundreds of old-growth trees on the site.

Oak Lodge Governance Project Steering Committee members include Mitra Anoushiravani, Nathan Breitenfeldt, Valerie Chapman, Jane Civiletti, Tom Civiletti, Joseph Edge, Nathan Ember, Eleanore Hunter, Chips Janger and Cole Merkel.