

Oak Lodge Governance Project: New website expands outreach

Oak Lodge Governance Project Steering Committee

July 15 2021

Steering committee members: 'There is a serious mismatch between the form of governance we have and the form of governance we need'

The Oak Lodge Governance Project (OLGP) is pleased to provide an update on recent accomplishments in the ongoing exploration of the economic realities and governance options available to the Oak Grove and Jennings Lodge communities. The main news is that our new website — oaklodgegovernanceproject.org — is up and running!

The "Home" page provides a grounding in the foundational values that continue to motivate and inspire the project — sustainable prosperity, equity and community engagement — as well as a quick and easy way to join the email list to be kept up to date as the project continues and expands.

The "About Us" section provides a map of the boundaries of the study area and links to the history of the project including the initial grant application, the scope of work drawn up between OLGP and the consultant team, a video of the Zoom call reviewing the scope of work, and a thorough documentation of the results of the quick, informal, community survey done as the scope of work was being developed. This page also includes information on the 10 steering committee members.



RENDERING COURTESY: CLACKAMAS COUNTY - A new Oak Lodge Library wing is proposed to be constructed next to a renovation of the current 1936 building on NCPRD's Concord School property.

The comprehensive "News and Updates" section contains links to all the OLGP articles published in the Clackamas Review that trace the inception and development of the project to date and links to the four one-hour information sessions that have been held so far on topics ranging from local taxation to local transportation. Please enjoy the site, oaklodgegovernanceproject.org, and join the email list.

A quick refresher for those new to OLGP. The approximately 30,000 residents in the unincorporated, urban area of Oak Lodge (the Oak Grove and Jennings Lodge communities combined) currently have a rural form of governance with the five Clackamas County commissioners serving as "mayors" of the area.

The five commissioners have a wide range of responsibilities and no commissioner is required to live in the area, nor is any commissioner assigned to a specific district in a county that is larger than the state of Rhode Island.

The steering committee of the OLGP believes that there is a serious mismatch between the form of governance we have and the form of governance we need. A densely settled, urban area has urban issues and needs that cannot be adequately served by a rural form of governance.

There is no question that the county is doing its best to serve all the residents of this urban area. It is simply a question of bandwidth. The disparity between the interwoven needs of urban residents — housing options, transportation options, employment options, social and recreational options, zoning and environmental safeguards — and the level, sophistication, coordination and availability of the services provided creates a gap, a gap that steadily increases as this community steadily changes.

For the sake of accuracy and credibility, the research study currently underway is focused on the realities and consequences of just three possibilities: 1) for the entire area to annex into the city of Milwaukie, 2) for the entire area to incorporate, or 3) for the entire area to remain as is, unincorporated.

This is not to say these are the only options, merely that these are as many options as the present grant will allow to be studied thoroughly. The OLGP is strictly focused on providing factual, analytical information to allow informed decision-making by the residents of this area on future governance options. How that plays out will be determined by the people of this area, for this area.

Who knows? One portion of the community may wish to annex, one may seek to incorporate, and one may want to stay as is.

While previous projects had a specific goal, OLGP is an open-ended project designed to respond to the residents of the Oak Lodge community. It is a deliberate choice to have no elected officials, county staff or influences outside the residents of Oak Lodge. This research study and the conversations the study results will spark is understood to be just the first phase with additional phases and results forming organically as the project unfolds.

The steering committee members, all volunteer residents of Oak Lodge, are curious about the implications of alternative governance options and look forward to engaging with our neighbors through respectful discourse to collectively explore the most equitable way for our community to be governed.

Equity and inclusion are necessary for true representational discourse to occur and the involvement of all of our neighbors — all ages, creeds, colors, income levels, orientations and physical abilities — is essential for truly transformative discourse to take place.

If you want to learn more about Oak Lodge Governance Project, please connect with us at oaklodgegovernance@gmail.com, Facebook: Oak Lodge Governance Project, Twitter @Oaklodgegp and Instagram @Oaklodgeproject or the fabulous new website, oaklodgegovernanceproject.org !

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.

<https://pamplinmedia.com/cr/28-opinion/515557-412018-oak-lodge-governance-project-new-website-expands-outreach>