Hello everyone. As you probably know if you are reading this webpage, I was appointed as the Consensus Builder for the Lincoln City VRD Consensus Building Project. My purpose in writing today is to offer an update of what has happened in the past month, and to give you a sense of what’s coming next.

THE PAST MONTH

A lot has happened in the past month and all of it good, I think. We held the first public meeting and the first meeting of the working group. At the public meeting, I described events to date and we heard from a great many concerned citizens, residents, business owners and others. At the first meeting of the working group, we asked the big question – is the group composed of the right representatives from the right groups to make this process work. As is usual in these situations, we agreed that more people needed to be added and so we did. We also discussed data we might want and how to move this project forward.

The documents that have been posted with this memo describe in more detail what we’ve been up to. If you read them all, you will see the public meeting agenda and a summary of the comments made at the public meeting, the working group agenda and a summary of the proceedings at the working group, a list of the principles we will use to guide the working group, and a current roster of the working group (with the additional members suggested by attendees at the first meeting). There still may be one or two members added to the working group, but this list is pretty much final.

We’ve received a number of emails and have tried to respond to all of them on the day they come in. It’s been great to see how active you all have been and we hope that you will continue to participate at the same level of energy and enthusiasm.

WHAT’S COMING

As you may know, the next public meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 26th from 5:30-8:30 p.m. and the next working group meeting will be on Wednesday, June 27th from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Both meetings will be held at the Cultural Center in the Auditorium and both are open to the public.
The next meetings will center around what the dominant interests are in this discussion. Of course we know some of them – a viable and robust economy, great neighborhoods where residents feel comfortable and where people want to live, good rapport between government and the governed and more. But we want to flesh out all the interests and discuss tradeoffs between interests.

In that regard, we would like you all to consider two somewhat far-fetched questions.

The first is “what if there were no VRD's in Lincoln City?”

The second is “what if everyone who wanted to could have a VRD with no regulations at all?”

There may be good things and bad things associated with each scenario – for example, a “no VRD” rule would yield a lowered cost of enforcing VRD parking regulations, but it also might also have negative effects on the Transit Room Tax. An unregulated VRD scenario would also lower the cost of enforcing regulations (if there were no regulations, there would be nothing to enforce), but it might create so many VRDs that many would go unrented. These are just examples of the kinds of things that might happen in these extreme scenarios.

Why talk about unrealistic scenarios? They tend to reveal interests. In the same way as if you were trying to decide what car to buy, and you had a limited budget, you could not afford a top-of-the-line Hummer or a Ferrari. However, if you discussed what you liked and didn't like about each of these cars, you would be able to refine your preferences. If you said “the Ferrari is too small and the Hummer uses too much gas,” that would reveal something about your interests in the size of the car and the fuel economy you wished to achieve.

Bear in mind that we will have two more meetings after this, and these meetings will be devoted, in order, to finding more realistic options for the future of the VRD Ordinance and then refining those options to see if we can reach consensus on one.

For now, the discussion is intended to be a broad one that focuses on what the important interests are and what the tradeoffs between these interests are.

All of us on the Consensus Building team hope you will plan on attending, that you will encourage your friends and colleagues to attend, and that you will continue to send us emails at Consensus@LincolnCity.org.

In the meantime, we wish you a happy June.