

February 14, 2013
General Assembly
Note Taker: Tallam Wolffe

About 8 people attended the Feb 14 GA. While the meeting was not officially convened there was dialog for over an hour about the future of Occupy PDX as an entity. The following are some notes on comments made during the discussion. Note taking did not start until it was apparent that the discussion was going to go on for a while. In general the focus of the discussion was on the future of Occupy Portland.

It was noted that we had two “in house” activities ongoing the vigil and Light Brigade, though the light brigade had recently taken “Occupy” out of its name. Elder Caucus remains an active occupy body that is beginning to develop a street theater type action called “Radical Soup.” People’s Budget is also affiliated with Occupy but has some reticence about that affiliation.

There had been enthusiasm about PAL until N-3. A retrospective analysis of PAL’s the N-3 events was discussed.

It was suggested that Occupy might be an organ with a voice through the media and info teams. Occupy still has status with some of the staff of Willamette Week and the Oregonian.

It was suggested that we identify some core functions that can be achieved to keep Occupy alive and allow it to be around to evolve. The idea of building a nut and reaching out was discussed. There seemed to be general agreement that we need to both build a solid core (“nut”) and reach out at the same time, to ensure what is built serves and is desired by those we hope to serve. The general vision seems to be one of Occupy serving a non-hierarchical support/coordinating function, providing venues and forums for interaction, space for meetings/activities, and disseminating information.

It was noted that every time we cut back meetings to consolidate participation and reduce burnout membership seems to drop.

Maintaining unity is a very difficult challenge.

To what degree do we build up by joining others. Is the Occupy organization permanent?

It was observed that what connects them (other organizations) is corporate power. When Occupy happened all the groups I was involved in came. Now all are back out doing their own anti-corporate activities. But I’m having a hard time giving Occupy up.

Is there an opportunity to re-coalesce?

We should keep something going so there is something to come back to when the time is right. The 1% in regards to economic policy is the reason we want to see Occupy continue.

How do we generate diversity within this group. Push for in all ways – alternative religions, sexual orientations, etc.

It is important that we talk to those who are different from us and see if they think Occupy is a realistic piece of the puzzle.

Unequal pays supports the 1%.

Would love diversity of tactics between moderates and radicals but each time it has been a disaster. Diversity of tactics/nonpermitted do not ah veto be violent.

Dan Keller has done some kind of a bottom line analysis.

Core reason for Occupy because 1% blew up the economy, that strong motivation has been lost in Occupy Portland and elsewhere.

It was reported that at one point Occupy Wallstreet considered asking the homeless to move out from the encampment.

It was suggested that we put out a cosmic 2 line sentence on the mission, we do not need a complicated core mission. Need processes in place to keep Occupy in place. We have a tendency to over design. Design the hard nut but make sure we don't overdesign.

One person committed to a personal mission of reaching out to other groups to generate diversity.

One of the problems will be we will not be able to ever guarantee that the language used in meetings will be acceptable to everyone present – unless we come up with a completely gender neutral language, which will be difficult.

One person volunteered to work on liaison and advocacy.

We meet every Thursday and keep the Spokes and GA going out of tradition. Need to reach out to diverse groups and cross pollinate with VOCS, PCASC and others.

Common connection is capitalism.

Another opinion: It is important to focus on corporatism as the problem and less on capitalism.

We might focus on the date that Glass Steagall was repealed as a protest date.

Meeting every week is not working. It is diluting too much. We need to get going in a direction in which we have support and interactions.

Every time we've dropped meetings, it's worked in reverse, we get fewer participants.

We need to know what values to pursue, need to be able to feel ok even if we get slighted, we need to be able to step back and let others (the broader group) tell us what process will work for them.

There was a discussion about how to encourage meeting turnout and whether we needed a rapid expansion of participation or could deal with a slower growth rate.

It was suggested that we take 3 weeks to work intensely on the questions of the future of Occupy but no resolution was reached on that suggestion.

A proposal on a direction for Occupy was circulated around the room for people to look at. There was generally a positive reception. This proposal had also been provided at the last Spokes meeting.

Occupy Portland
Where Do We Go From Here
One Suggestion – 2nd Draft

The following is based on what I took away from the January 31, 2013 Occupy “Talk Back Town Hall”

Situation (One Perspective): There has long been, is now, and will long continue to be an occupation of Portland by the social and economic justice movement. The Occupy encampment of the fall of 2011 brought together the elements of this movement at a single place and time. The Occupy encampment gathering connected organizations and individuals together in a joint action that provided participants, and many of the citizens of the Portland metropolitan area, an awareness of their common struggle. It connected us in a way that we could see the awesome power and potential of the economic and social justice occupation. In the encampment, the social and economic justice occupation was given a name and that name constellated a community and organization which has continued since the end of the encampment (Occupy Portland). The encampment occupation has now dispersed back out into the city with some discouraged but many invigorated and re-dedicated to the larger cause—taking more specifically targeted actions in smaller groups at different places and times spread across the metropolitan area. While dispersed, it is more vibrant than ever. For the social and economic justice movement that continues to occupy Portland there is value in maintaining a connection among these occupying groups and providing a voice that speaks to the commonality of their grievances and the oppressive sources of those grievances. The Occupy Portland organization which arose from the encampments can continue to serve that purpose.

Four Initial Proposals for Consideration:

1. That Occupy Portland repurpose to offer itself as a connecting hub and voice of common cause in support of the social and economic justice movement’s occupation of the Portland metropolitan area.
2. That Occupy Portland objectives be
 - a. to provide opportunities for groups and individuals to be aware of and coordinate with one another, as is appropriate for their own objectives and tactics,
 - b. to serve as a voice drawing attention to the common aspirations and sources of oppression which implicitly unite the causes of all social and economic justice oriented groups, and
 - c. to be adaptive to other roles and needs in the future (e.g. organizing an Occupy protest) –[The point here is to focus our energies on success in achieving a and b first, and then figure out where we might go.]
3. That in pursuit of these objectives the following be Occupy Portland’s initial focus.
 - a. Host events at which participants in the social and economic justice movements can gather and share (e.g. open house potlucks).
 - b. Maintain highly visible office space to provide: a formal meeting and art space for organizations that don’t have their own space; an informal gathering and support place for activists (e.g. internet computers, information on housing opportunities and services); and a physical contact location from which to develop and disseminate information about the Portland economic and social justice movement.
 - c. Research, develop, and disseminate materials that help identify commonalities in our struggle against oppression as it manifests in a wide variety of forms.
4. That the following be the initial actions taken under the new objectives.
 - a. Announce new objectives and ask for regular monthly donations to support the office space – this will provide people a reason to donate (to get the best office space we can afford to achieve our objectives) and allow us to determine a budget.
 - b. Begin long term planning for an open house – give ourselves plenty of lead time and see if we can get direct commitments from other groups to attend and publicize to their membership.

