

Good morning Commissioners, my name is Gary Marschke and this is a story of the power of privilege and the will of the people.

On June 9<sup>th</sup> of this year, three apparently privileged and entitled members of the Citizen Involvement Committee's Executive Committee marched into the Office of Citizen Involvement and fired its Executive Director.

They did this without the knowledge, approval or authority from the rest of the not so entitled and not so privileged committee members - setting in motion a series of events that now threaten the independence if not the very existence of that committee.

Subsequently, the Citizen Involvement Committee refused to recognize the firing and initiated actions to remove the members of their Executive Committee that perpetrated it.

Since then, barriers of all types have been thrust in their path by those privileged few intent on obstructing the committee from its mission – transparent, inclusive, and equitable community engagement in county policy and budget decision making.

Many of those obstacles have been perpetrated by this body, specifically by continuously delaying legitimate appointments to the committee and even insisting that both new and existing members be somehow “vetted” - which we can only presume means “handpicked” by the very body the voters mindfully mandated that the committee be independent from.

This is clearly NOT the transparent, inclusive, and equitable community engagement the voters intended.

Established in the county charter in 1985 to provide that very means for community engagement, it now seems apparent that the voice of privilege is the only one being heard while the remaining voices – the majority of the

Citizen Involvement Committee – are being bullied, manipulated, ignored, and ultimately silenced.

Such is the power of privilege.

The Citizen Involvement Committee also has power – at least according to the people and the charter of Multnomah County.

Such is the will of the people.

I ask you:

Will privilege once again allowed to prevail?

Will this earnest, diverse, and community driven attempt at transparent, inclusive, and equitable community engagement in county policy and budget decision making be relegated to a distant memory?

At this moment you, the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners, have a golden opportunity to support them and to choose inclusive, transparent, and equitable rather than perpetuating exclusive, opaque, and discriminatory.

I call on this body to do the right thing by fulfilling its duty and mandate as outlined by the voters in the county charter and give **at least equal voice** to these unheard and underrepresented voices and not to simply bow to the power of privilege.

I call on this body to approve the pending Citizen Involvement Committee appointments of these 7 committed volunteers who care enough about their community to step up and be counted instead of once again telling them that they don't count...that once again, only the voice of privilege really counts.

I call on this body to care enough...to be brave enough to choose the will of the people over the power of privilege.