

Summary Highlights: Vetted Public Safety Facts

(Public Outreach 5.2)

Justice System & Public Safety Services (JS&PSS) Study Design: 2015 (Study Design)

Web Page: <http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/justicesystemexploratorycommittee.htm>

Mike Walker & Jon Whalen, Members
Hugo JS&PSS Exploratory Committee (Committee)
Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society



Draft December 12, 2015

The Committee believes in the importance of a knowledgeable public for a successful democracy. It has been trying to understand Josephine County's (JO CO's) JS&PSS problem/issue (i.e., public safety issue) since 2013, and it has been developing an educational public safety *Study Design* (idea) program ever since. Its *Study* (impact study) results (vetted information) are to be researched and written from a neutral point of view, meaning representing fairly, proportionately, and, as far as possible, without bias, all public views that have been published by reliable sources on the safety topic.

Understanding the public safety problems/issues, identifying alternative solutions, and assessing impacts of the alternatives are complicated tasks as there are substantial differences between Oregon counties in terms of their geographic and demographic characteristics, priorities, historic crime rates, willingness to tolerate certain levels of crime, and past and present funding of various public safety services.

Understanding is made more difficult with all those noisy facts when truth isn't always something as clear and unquestionable as desired. In many cases, such as in topics related to social sciences, there is no "truth" but simply opinions and assumptions. There are facts, opinions, facts about opinions and opinions about opinions. In most controversies there are more than truths and lies under the sun: there are half-truths, lack of context, words with double or unclear meaning, logical fallacies, cherry-picked pieces of information to lead the reader to a predetermined conclusion, inadvertent reuse of someone else's falsehoods, and straight misunderstandings.

Vetted Facts/Inventories are information about publically identified affected public safety conditions that will be vetted, or checked out, for accuracy and reliability. "Vetted" facts are part of *Study Design's* verifiability standard. Verifiability means that people reading *Study Design*, especially *Study*, can check where the information comes from and make their own determination if it is reliable. The Committee's goal is not to try impose "the truth" on its readers, and does not ask that they trust something just because they read it in Committee documents. Its goal is to empower citizens through educational materials that can be checked in order for neighbors to find their own truth.

Web Published Baseline Facts/Inventories It is believed that a step in the right direction is for different publics, that don't trust each other to share vetted, or checked, information. For that purpose, a web page of "*listening*" to baseline information, vetted facts, and disputed facts, has been started for consideration in *Study*: letters-to-the-editor (over 800); guest opinions (10 and adding), media articles (over 650), voters pamphlets (5), and studies & information (24 - e.g.,

declining federal payments to counties, demographic & population, health, OR reports of criminal offenses and arrests, local crime information, budget, etc.).

Common Facts Language The *Study Design* project will provide vetted public safety facts through its impact *Study* to help neighbors speak a common “facts” language, which the Committee believes has advantages. Just one facts language can create mutual support within a group to pursue common interests and goals. For example, people can share and debate ideas, build opinions, create understanding, and come up with plans of actions to develop a better future for their communities. A common facts language can help people to better understand their problems/issues, including their neighbors, and act on them. It can also help resolve conflicts which mainly occur due to misunderstandings and a breakdown of communications. This is one of the main purposes of vetted facts – for citizens to speak a common language, to solve problems, not to spend valuable time and energy discussing potential conflicting facts.

Decision-Makers Who are the decision-makers? The JO CO voters are the “Decision Makers.” All of us are committed to public safety. None of us want to accept cuts to public safety, especially below a *minimally adequate level of public safety services* (MALPSS), that has been in place while crime in Oregon has dropped to historically low levels. Are we below the MALPSS level? Can we accept the reality of fewer resources and plan for the future, or do we need more resources? If we plan, JO CO has a good chance to enjoy safe communities.

“Hoped For Benefits” is the simple belief that the benefits of a common facts language to better explain the public safety issue is worth the effort. For example, the authors believe strategies to combat misinformation are worth trying, within the framework that all citizens, voters, votes, and values are legitimate. Legitimacy has powerful hopes.

- A feeling of expectation and desire, and belief in citizens, for a certain thing to happen.
- *Study Design* helps facilitate a consensus definition of the public safety issue and a range of solutions.
- There are grounds for believing that something good may happen.
- Hope is belief that the glass is half-full rather than half-empty.

The *Study Design* authors will continue to try and share a view of public safety facts, researched, verified, and documented, to help citizens make better decisions and drive better conversations (see vetted public safety facts’ topics in Public Outreach 5.1, *Vetted Public Safety Facts*).

- Vetted Public Safety Facts
- Facts Not Researched to Support a Specific Proposal
- Independent Study Team
- Verifiability of Inventories
- Third-Party Sources for Inventories
- Identifying Reliable Sources for Inventories
- Unreliable Facts/Inventories
- Hoped for Benefits
- Making Informed Decisions & Critical Thinking
- Are We Arguing from the Same Facts?
- Do Facts Matter?
- Strategies to Combat Misinformation Are Worth Trying