

MICHAEL HOUCK

TAPE 4, Side 1

March 22, 1996

M.O'R.: Today is March 22nd, and this is a continuation of the oral history with Mike Houck, and this is Michael O'Rourke for the Washington County Historical Society, and today's interview is taking place at Mike Houck's home in Northwest Portland.

I thought in general the overall topic to talk about today would be long-term strategy in terms of how to devise plans to protect rivers like the Tualatin and all the associated systems and habitat associated with it. I know that you were a principal in putting together the Coalition for a Liveable Future, and so I thought that that would be a good thing to start with, to start talking about, perhaps as an example of a long-term strategy and the kinds of problems that you face when you try to put something like that together.

So I'll just start by asking you where did the idea for the Coalition come from?

M.H.: Well, it actually is ironic, or coincidental, that Robert Liberty, who's Executive Director of a Thousand Friends of Oregon, lives in this four-plex, downstairs.

I had been working with a group of folks from Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and the San Francisco Bay Area, trying to put together a national green spaces initiative which was a type of coalition that would focus on urban green space issues, and I know some of those folks also know Robert through the National Growth

Management Council [which] they all work on. So there's a lot of networking going on around the country.

Robert at the same time, after having met Myron Orfield at a conference in New Jersey, got to thinking about a coalition in this area, in the Portland metropolitan region, and we were talking back and forth, and Robert then invited Myron, who is a state legislator from Minneapolis-St. Paul, who has done a lot of mapping of socio-economic and demographic trends in different metropolitan regions. And what Myron has found is that there's a tendency to create basically a hollowing-out of the urban core and then a disproportionate expenditure of funds out in the sprawling suburbs, and you wind up with a region that gets ripped apart socio-economically, and you wind up creating pockets of poverty, ghettos, in the inner city areas, and great affluence in the sprawling suburbs, and a region that is constantly at war over economic and social issues, and in fact that also results in loss of additional resource lands, in particular farmlands, typically, at the edges.

So all of that kind of came together in Myron's presentations in Portland. Robert got some funding from Northwest Area Foundation and HUD, and a bunch of us from this region, myself for Audubon Society and folks from affordable housing advocacy groups and the Urban League, Avell Gordly, who's African American representative, and Frank Shields, all got together and said, "Well, hmm, this seems to be a framework around which we can all coalesce to combat the sorts of trends that we see in other metropolitan regions that have both social and environmental downsides to them."

So about a year and a half ago, the Coalition formed, and we generated a list of objectives that we felt should guide regional

growth management. And the philosophy behind that was each one of us would sign on as a member of the Coalition, and by signing on committing ourselves to supporting the entire range of issues that need to be integrated into regional growth management strategy so you do have in fact a liveable future. Hence the name Coalition for a Liveable Future.

It started out as the Regional Growth Management Group, or something like that. Well, the folks who were into affordable housing and some of the other issues felt that that was too narrow a term to describe what we were trying to do, and the liveable future came out of the notion that if we address housing issues, if we address transit issues, if we address green space issues and some of the classic land use transportation issues, then we will have more liveable neighborhoods, more liveable communities, and hence a more liveable region.

And one of the primary tenets of the underpinnings of the Coalition is to protect natural resources both inside and outside the urban growth boundary, and water resources is a major focus of that.

M.O'R.: Now, you said that Robert put together some funding from HUD and Northwest Area Foundation?

M.H.: Mm-hmm.

M.O'R.: That was to fund the Coalition's work?

M.H.: Well, initially it was to fund Myron Orfield coming here giving his talks. He gave numerous presentations to Metro Council, City Club, a number of different venues, and to pay him, to contract with him, in essence, to do the same kind of mapping that he has done in Minneapolis-St. Paul region, and I believe

Philadelphia, Seattle, and Detroit, and other metropolitan areas. So it was actually a consulting contract with Myron to provide us with the same kind of information that he had in other regions.

And in fact, while this region is not as stark in the contrast that some metropolitan centers, like Detroit, for example, would be, all the patterns, the same patterns, are beginning to show up: creations of pockets of poverty. And it's interesting that a lot of people are resistant to the notion of increasing densities within the urban growth boundary because they fear crime. Well, in fact, all of the research that's been done, and certainly the research that Myron did in our area, shows definitely that crime has no relationship whatsoever to density. Crime has a direct relationship to concentrations of pockets of poverty. If you create areas where people feel hopeless, that's where the crime starts.

A lot of people have trouble seeing the nexus between me working - why would Mike Houck, who's working on protecting urban green spaces, care about that? Well, there - all of these issues are intertwined, and if you don't have an economically healthy region, and if you're ignoring social needs of people within the region, you're not going to be ultimately very successful in dealing with some of the environmental issues, in our opinion.

We're concerned, for example, about these factories coming in, chip plants or whatever, paying low-wage jobs located out in Hillsboro. They've gotten huge tax breaks to move there, and the people who are going to work in those plants cannot afford to live by the plants because there's no affordable housing. So what do they do? If they can afford it, they have a car and they drive from north-

east or outer southeast Portland out to Hillsboro. Well, that creates a huge impact, of course, on the transportation system, which ultimately decreases air and water quality. So that they're definitely intertwined, and we have to deal with them simultaneously.

M.O'R.: You sort of put your finger on it when you said why would Mike Houck, you know, care about issues of inner city crime, et cetera. Also I would think that you could say that with respect to maybe some of the other Coalition members, too: you know, why would they care about green spaces when ...

M.H.: Absolutely.

M.O'R.: ... the right to affordable housing, and maybe taking care of a wetland gets in the way of a specific siting plan for something like that. You say that there is a relationship between all these issues, and it sounds like a convincing argument can be made. But was everybody convinced in the beginning?

M.H.: You mean within the Coalition?

M.O'R.: Within the Coalition, yeah.

M.H.: Yeah, that's the exciting thing, really, is that it was one of those flashes, one of those epiphanies, I think, for everyone in the group. It was, "Of course! This is what we've all been waiting for. This is a watershed event. We all have some basis for getting together and cooperating."

And you mentioned affordable housing advocates; it's an excellent one, because one of my initial strongest draws to the Coalition was to start interacting with the low income - well, when we say affordable housing, by the way, we're talking low-income - 80 percent of median or below income, not \$300,000 McMansions in

Stafford Basin or out in Murray Hill. We're talking about people who have trouble affording - getting into a house, or keeping their home.

And we had come across, I personally had been in two specific situations where land, publicly-owned land was made available to - in one case, CDC out in Milwaukie, and in the other case the Housing Authority of Portland. And in both cases they were going in a sensitive wetland and riparian area simply because the land was free, and therefore it was deemed appropriate to be developed. Unfortunately, one of those projects is going forward, I learned yesterday, at Newell Creek in Oregon City. The other one wound up being moved to a more appropriate location.

So my feeling was if I could sit down with folks at the table within the Coalition and work out these issues and make it very clear - and keep lines of communication open, and that's one of the most important roles, I think, of the Coalition is we have regular meetings where we can talk about those issues. We don't wind up down the road having a wedge driven between us. So that there's - you know, here's this Planning Commission hearing or City Council meeting, and there's Audubon Society doing battle with the Housing Authority of Portland. That is not a particularly good use of our time, I don't think. We all have important social, environmental, economic, whatever goals, and we can't afford to be fighting one another, or the region will go to hell in a handbasket, because everybody will be out fighting for their own piece, and there will be no integrated whole.

M.O'R.: Well, how do you deal personally with a situation where maybe - you know, in terms of the compromises that you might

have to make in a Coalition like this if things don't work out exactly as you would like it? You just cited the example of the one project going ahead.

M.H.: Well, first of all, I'm taking a long-term view, and it's the objective of the Coalition to avoid those conflicts in the future through better planning. So for example, we are supportive of Metro's recommendation to take flood plains, stream corridors, wetlands, steep slopes and flood-prone soils out of the buildable lands inventory, and then to enact regulations and whatever other mechanisms we can to ensure that those lands in fact do not get developed.

The affordable housing advocates, being part of the Coalition, have signed on to that as one of our strategies. So that means they should not be building in those areas in the first place, and neither should anyone else, though. So they're not being singled out. It's a regional philosophy and a regional strategy, and there are other, more appropriate sites that can be developed, that should be developed, and we need to institute and implement long-range policies which make their work more possible, as well. So it's - you know, that happens to be, that particular instance, the Newell Creek situation, is something that's basically grandfathered in, if you will, and we're looking to avoid those in the future.

M.O'R.: So this was something that was already underway, basically, when the Coalition was coming together?

M.H.: Yeah. Exactly. Sure. And in fact, at the beginning of the Coalition there was a lot of - I spent a lot of time and energy communicating among the affordable housing advocates over that particular project - two projects. I would say, "Now, you

know, we're still opposed to this thing. Just because we're in this Coalition doesn't mean that I've changed my philosophy or position on that side, but I'm hopeful we can avoid those situations in the future."

M.O'R.: Do you plan to go ahead and fight that one anymore from this point?

M.H.: No, that's done.

M.O'R.: It's a done deal?

M.H.: Right.

M.O'R.: Okay. Well, another question I had about the Coalition was that it looked - I mean, you've mentioned Myron Orfield; I want to talk about him a little bit more, too - and it sounds like he was an impetus, or his ideas were an impetus behind this - but it also seems like maybe it grew out of Metro's 2040 process?

M.H.: Absolutely.

M.O'R.: And I'm just wondering to what extent was Metro on board from the beginning?

M.H.: Well, they have not been involved even really tangentially to the Coalition, and in fact, I think initially Metro and some other local elected officials, I think, were a little taken aback by Myron's work, and that's because a lot of people are in denial in the sense that they don't necessarily want to recognize that those trends exist in our region, that there are pockets of poverty, and they're not just concentrated in areas you would assume they would be, North, Northeast - downtown, for that matter, Old Town, but out in Forest Grove, Cornelius, Estacada, Gresham. You can see those trends throughout the region, and there are people - I know Gussie McRobert had some problems, the Mayor of

Gresham, with some of the work that Myron had done and was questioning its validity. So in reality, the Coalition was in my opinion providing the region with something of a wake-up call.

In fact, David Rusk, who spoke recently - I don't know if you heard him - in City Club and at PSU, had the same message that Myron brought. He put it a little less starkly, a little more, I guess, politically acceptably, and I think received a little more - or was given more credence by some of the local folks.

So no, Metro - you're correct that 2040 played a huge role in the Coalition actually coalescing, because it coalesced around 2040. There was a concrete, very specific target that we could look at, evaluate and, we hope, influence. And so most all of our work over the course of the last year has focused on - 98 percent of our work has focused on reviewing and making suggestions on rewrites for the regional urban growth goals and objectives, the RUGGO's, which are going to be used to write the regional framework plan, and on the growth management concept itself.

And more recently, we've been very actively involved in looking at the urban reserve study areas, which you may have followed, where they're looking to see where it would appropriate at some point between now and the year 2040, if the urban growth boundary needs to be expanded to accommodate additional growth, where should it go? So planning in advance.

So all of that provided a very important common opportunity to be proactive to try to influence the language, try to get good language in there. And in fact, if you go through, we have a document that is the Coalition's impact on the RUGGO's, and we've gone through and analyzed objective-by-objective what we recommend-

ed, what Metro accepted, what Metro Council actually adopted. We had a very major impact on the RUGGO's, and I think that the Coalition members saw the importance of that. And the reason we had the impact we did was we were a coalition. Metro Councilors actually called up after we went to hearings and said they were very impressed to see affordable housing advocates sitting with Mike Houck from Audubon and Mary Kyle McCurdy from Thousand Friends, and you know, other folks; whereas typically we just go in, do our thing, and then we're out of there.

M.O'R.: Now, the 2040 process is sort of a long-range plan that Metro was involved in, then?

M.H.: Well, Metro and all 26 cities and three counties. Everybody's at the table. But it's Metro's responsibility to produce that plan, yes.

M.O'R.: And have there been any stumbling blocks along the way in terms of putting the Coalition together?

M.H.: Of putting the Coalition together? Yeah. I think - well, I don't know about stumbling blocks, but we have a lot of things left undone.

One of the things we've been least good at is reaching out to the communities in Washington and Clackamas Counties in particular, out into the suburbs. The Coalition does in fact tend to be Portland-centric, or at least close in, the core of the region. That's where most of the active members of the Coalition live and work and spend their time in.

We also have been ineffective to this point in reaching out to African American community, people of color and low-income communities. We recognize that, and that's a major failing, given that

one of our major objectives is social and environmental justice and economic equity issues. You don't see a lot of people of color, or actually any people of color sitting, around the table. You haven't.

Recently we got funding from the Ford Foundation. The Coalition, I think, is quite interesting in that we get together and we'll write a grant to Ford. I put a huge amount of energy into getting that grant, even to the extent of going back to Washington D.C. - or New York and Washington D.C. with Robert to talk to Ford.

The money, though, the bulk of it went to the Urban League. So we did all the writing of the grants and submission of the grants and getting it. The money went to Urban League to handle an outreach coordinator to work with communities of color and low-income communities to get them actively involved in the Coalition, and the person that was hired is an African American, Cecil Prescott, who has a program on KBOO, and he's the Reverend. He has his own church, as well.

And the reason for doing that, of course, is that Mike Houck, you know, living in the flatlands of Northwest Portland, being white and marginally middle or lower middle class, doesn't have a hell of a lot of credibility going into the African American community in North and Northeast Portland, even though I've got relationships there, and I think that I have very valid issues that I want to work on, Cecil is a hell of a lot more credible to his colleagues and to folks in his community than I would be.

And so we're moving in that direction. I've been working really hard with Steve Johnson and some other folks to see if we can move out into outer southeast, which is an area I grew up in,

so I think I can - I don't think it would be totally inappropriate for me to say it's a region of a lot of poor white trash, is what people would describe it as. Very low income, streets unpaved, potholes. Looks basically the same as when I lived in there in 1960, '61. People tend to forget that, and they think North, Northeast, think African American community, people of color are the poor folk out there, when in reality there's probably, sheer numbers-wise, at least as many poor people in outer Southeast.

So we're looking at a way to pull together interest in the Johnson Creek watershed management plan, the Springwater corridor; you know, that rail line trails project, and to look at - there's an area just east of I-205 known as the Smurfit property, which is a huge chunk of land that could be, even though it's in the flood plain, so that's another interesting angle on this, might be an anchor for some kind of economic development strategy for that particular area.

And what we're hoping is we can get the urban design folks in there and the greenies in there and the affordable housing advocates in there, and the neighborhoods - Southeast Uplift and PSU and the Johnson Creek Watershed Council and the PDC and the economic development folks and figure out a way to integrate all the things we're talking about doing through the Coalition, but in that sub-region or sub-area of the city.

So I think we're making pretty significant efforts to address what so far have been shortcomings of the Coalition, which is not really walking the talk when it comes to poor people and people of color.

M.O'R.: And this area that you mentioned, the Smurfit tract, this will be a mixed - ideally a mixed-use kind of area?

M.H.: I don't know. That's what remains to be seen is what vision will come out of the neighborhood and our involvement. I could envision something there like that.

M.O'R.: Well, you also pointed out that with respect to your own particular interests, overriding interest, maybe, in terms of pushing the Coalition's goals, namely, the interest in green spaces and environmental concerns - I think you pointed out in something I was reading last night that the poor disadvantaged populations are the ones that have the greatest need with respect to having more green spaces, but to the extent that they do exist, they don't exist in those areas.

M.H.: That's correct. And that is a major - I guess you would call that the environmental justice element of the work plan for the Coalition.

M.O'R.: Do people argue that, "Well, yes, that's probably true, but priority-wise this isn't as important as, you know, putting food on the table?"

M.H.: Oh, you mean from within that community?

M.O'R.: Yeah. From within that community.

M.H.: Well, you hear that, but I'll tell you, the folks I've talked to in North and Northeast and outer Southeast place a very high value on a healthy environment as well. Yeah, drugs, gangs, lack of work, making sure you've got decent housing is obviously much higher on a lot of people's priority list because they have to fulfill those needs. And that's why I think it's important that the Coalition put some energy into assisting - providing some addi-

tional energy and resources to those communities to make sure that they're not left without when it comes to parks and open spaces, or that they don't have to live in a degraded environment with poor water quality or air quality.

M.O'R.: I imagine you probably hear the argument, too, that to the extent that parks do exist in these areas, they're often places where drug dealers meet and ...

M.H.: That happens.

M.O'R.: ... where things happen that they're probably trying to avoid?

M.H.: Yeah. There's a huge amount of interest in the African American community on restoring the Columbia Slough. The slough is a natural resource which really isn't one of those areas where the drug dealing goes on. It's more in the neighborhood parks where you run into those problems.

And then in situations like that, park design may be different than I might prefer in terms of line of sight and some other issues that they have to deal with, but I think that again it's so hard to separate these things out. If you have decent housing - and I've seen some examples where there's affordable housing - the Maya Angelou project in inner Northeast, for example, has turned that whole drug problem around. The entire neighborhood is lifted up each time one of those projects goes in.

So if people feel hopeless, you're going to have a lot more problems. I've had some personally. I lived in a housing project in Philadelphia, and you know, it was a pocket of very poor people. And you know, I can remember back - it was sixth, seventh, eighth, part of ninth grade - it was a pretty rough place even then, in

1961, '62 '63. And the reason it was is people just felt they had no future. So we've got to deal with the economic end of the spectrum as well as the ecological and others.

M.O'R.: Well, I've asked you questions about the potential conflicts and priorities involving underprivileged and Black communities in and around ...

M.H.: And Hispanic.

M.O'R.: And Hispanic, too, for sure.

M.H.: Out in Forest Grove and Gresham and ...

M.O'R.: Yeah, I imagine that's even tougher in some ways.

M.H.: And there are a lot of Russians that have moved in, a lot of Asians. They tend to be more difficult, I think, to interact with than even the African American community. They tend to be a little more closed, I think. Probably the term self-reliant might be a better term, in some respects, as far as the clans getting together.

When a new group of Russians come in, for example, I noticed in Seattle - this is true in Portland, too. I was on a plane, and there was one couple with their grandmother and children that showed up at Portland on a flight from Seattle - it was a repeat of a scene that I saw in Seattle - there were 300 people waiting in the Portland International Airport for this one family, Russians. They were assimilated, boom.

In fact, I've talked to some of the affordable housing folks who have said that it is more difficult to do outreach into that community because they tend to be a little more closed.

M.O'R.: Sure. So it's kind of hard to get them involved in coalitions, eh?

M.H.: Yeah. They have their own coalition.

[end of side one]

MICHAEL HOUCK

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M.O'R.: ... the underprivileged communities on the one hand, but you also have the more affluent communities that live out in the suburbs, and you just mentioned the problem of people working for high-tech firms out there but actually not being able to afford to live out there and living in here, et cetera. But you also mentioned that drawing in the people that actually do live out there has not - has also been a place where the Coalition hasn't quite met its goal. Have you tried to address that problem at all?

M.H.: Well, yeah. Actually, we're applying for a grant from Northwest Area Foundation out of Minneapolis-St. Paul, and one of the partners in that particular grant is the affordable housing folks in Hillsboro, Leon Laptik's organization, Washington County Community Development Corporation. That's not the exact name, but that's pretty close.

And we're planning on actually hiring a person, a Coalition staff person. We only have one Coalition staff person; that's Zack Sempke, and he is housed at Thousand Friends of Oregon. This individual, who would be working on affordable housing issues, will be housed in Washington County, in Hillsboro. And the idea there is we have a presence staff-wise out there. And the reality is, most all the people in the Coalition are volunteers, and you can only accomplish so much when you're working with volunteers. You've got to have some staffing for continuity and just because there's a hell of a lot of work to be done.

So that's one way we're reaching out to Washington County. We've got a tour that we've set up for later this month into Clackamas County with elected officials and with community leaders in Clackamas County, so we'll be going around looking at affordable housing and green space and urban growth boundary issues in Clackamas County. So we are - we're cognizant of the need to do that, and we're, you know, doing what we can to address it.

I just gave a presentation to the Beaverton Women's Club, and it turns out after - at the end of the evening, that they had been working on Habitat for Humanity projects, and so I went, "Okay, I want to get you together with Tasha Harmon and the community development network, and Peg Malloy and Portland Housing Center, and some of these other affordable housing folks, to see if perhaps they can't take on a project in Beaverton." So we're doing what we can.

M.O'R.: Let me back up, then, just a little bit to your guru here, Myron Orfield, whose ideas, I guess, sort of formed the basis for getting this Coalition together. Can you tell me a little bit more about just exactly who he is, what kind of person he is and maybe a little bit more about his ideas, as well?

M.H.: Yeah. At this point, I don't know if I'd describe Myron as our guru so much as a critical resource for the Coalition. The Coalition members, I should say, are pretty damn bright and motivated and have their own contribution that they bring to the Coalition. So it's very much a partnership, and Myron's part of that partnership.

He is extremely young-looking. I don't know how old the guy is. You know, he's in his 40's - maybe mid 30's, I don't know. He

looks like he's about 20. He's a state legislator. I know that his brother - and he's been elected by 80 percent of the electorate have voted for him. He comes from, actually, a pretty affluent area of Minneapolis-St. Paul, I understand. I have not been to his district.

Actually, one of the most fascinating things that Myron has done that we want to do here, and in that sense he's very much a beacon out there, is he has managed - and he's very astute politically, extremely politically astute. He went around and talked to the different elected officials, whether Republican, Democrat or whatever, and ascertained that of all of the multiple jurisdictions in Minneapolis-St. Paul, there would be more gainers than losers if they implemented a tax base sharing scheme that would equalize resources across the region.

And he set about passing, in fact, successfully the only tax base share program in the country for Minneapolis-St. Paul region. I think they share 40 percent of the revenue. So that Intel plant going in out in Washington County or the Fujitsu plant coming in out in Gresham will add to the tax base for those communities, but that will be shared with Tigard and with Beaverton and with Portland. And one of his great concerns is this inequity of distribution of resources, financial resources for schools, for infrastructure, including green spaces. And that's something we would very much like to see happen in this region, revenue-sharing. And we're looking to him for leadership in helping promote that, and there's a lot of political interest in this region in doing that as well, so you don't wind up with some areas of the city or the region where the pockets of poverty are where of course the needs are very

high, the social service needs are extremely high, tax base is relatively low, so the resources aren't there. You go out into the hinterlands, where the tax base is huge, the resource needs are few, and there's a huge inequity, a huge disparity there with respect to expenditure of resources. We're planning on proposing that for this region. And Myron is a major inspiration for that.

M.O'R.: Yeah, I saw that, in fact, even in the earliest information that you had given me on the Coalition, that was something that people talked about.

M.H.: Yeah. Now, Robert Liberty is particularly interested in that, and I would say that's something we haven't really taken on head-on right now because we've been focused on the 2040 process, but that will be coming up at some point.

M.O'R.: It seems that Myron would have had to have been very politically astute to have sold that idea.

M.H.: Yep.

M.O'R.: I mean, it seems like a pretty hard sell.

M.H.: Yep. It's the only one in the country. But he did it - I mean, the manner in which he did it was just to count heads, count the votes. More gainers, you win.

M.O'R.: As long as you can convince all the gainers that that's true.

M.H.: Right. Exactly.

M.O'R.: Now, you said that he had made some presentations to Metro as a result of your efforts?

M.H.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: And you also made the remark that Mr. Lusk was maybe more credible than Myron?

M.H.: Well, no. I think Lusk had ...

M.O'R.: To people at Metro, some of them?

M.H.: Yeah, or maybe people in general. Myron's phraseology sometimes can be problematic. For example, at City Club we all winced at our table when he said that we were fortunate not to have lots of people of color here.

Well, he didn't mean it in that way, but you could - you know, anybody listening on OPB or in the audience kind of went, "What are you talking about?" You know, because you don't then have the problems of pockets of poverty and, you know, racial strife and so forth. That's not what he meant. What he really was getting at was we were fortunate in that we didn't have a hopeless situation, which some regions find themselves in now that are pretty intractable. We have the opportunity to get out in front of it and address those issues now, in advance of them getting to be really severe. So it's really more a question of phraseology and how you describe those issues. And Rusk just happened to put it a little more - in more politic terms, I guess.

M.O'R.: A little more polished presentation?

M.H.: Well, no, Myron's extremely polished, it's just that he was pretty blunt in that particular statement. So we talked to him about it, and actually the Coalition had to take his work, review it, and ask him to redo some of it, because it really - you can't compare Portland to Detroit. You know, it just doesn't work. And so there were some generalizations that Myron had been making about Portland that just don't fit. There are others, of course - a lot of the basic tenets do. So it's been a back-and-forth process, negotiations and so forth.

Anyway, he's still there, and I don't know when he's coming back to Portland next, but he will be coming back to do some more - finishing up his project and doing some more addresses. But we're kind of beyond - that was the kick-start for the Coalition, and we're kind of on to the next stages, in which case we'll be bringing out folks like Myron who are leaders out there around the country and providing their expertise.

For example, I've got Tom Schuler coming next week to speak to MTAC, Metropolitan Technical Advisory Committee. I know Tom from meetings I've attended around the country, and he's the guru of urban watershed management. The objective is to bring him in with his expertise and try to push that agenda forward to do a better job of managing watersheds.

So there are lots of folks out there. We're not afraid of admitting we steal good ideas from other people - or let's say apply them, appropriate and apply.

M.O'R.: I was going to ask you - you've already sort of answered the question with respect to where the group is on this revenue sharing idea, but you said that's about to come to the forefront as an objective the Coalition is going to work on?

M.H.: I would suspect over the course of the next year that will happen, yeah. We've got a pretty full plate right now with just the 2040 stuff.

M.O'R.: How would you even go about convincing Washington County that they should give up part of the taxes they collect from Intel to fund a project in North or Northeast Portland? I mean, not that the funds would necessarily be specifically tied to a specific project ...

M.H.: Sure.

M.O'R.: ... but just transferring the money in that way?

M.H.: Well, I think we're fortunate in this region in having pretty good political - quite good, actually, political leadership, and I would hope, short of just counting heads and just rolling people, which is certainly one way to do it: say, "We don't care what you think. We've got the votes, and we're just going to do it - because you might be a gainer in 10 years, 15 years, whatever." And that's happened, as a matter of fact, in Minneapolis-St. Paul jurisdictions who have voted for revenue sharing one year were losers down the line, and they're voting against it now, of course, in their own interest.

I'm hopeful that this region is enlightened enough, and I think in many regards it is - there's still a lot of bickering and infighting and turf out there, egos and so forth, just as there is in any other region, but I think that the selling point is that it's better for an overall healthier region, and if the entire region is healthy economically, environmentally, socially, then they're gainers. They win. They recognize - the enlightened elected officials, anyway, recognize that it's extremely important to have a healthy downtown Portland. That is important to their economic well-being. And so the notion that an overall healthier region is better for them I think is - that would be the way I would sell it. Whether they would buy that or not remains to be seen. So far, in terms of transportation and some other issues, there's been pretty great acceptance that the - and that was because of limited financial resources, which this represents, as well. So I don't know. We'll see.

M.O'R.: I took a look at some of the information you gave me about the Coalition's work with respect to the 2040 process, and it sounds like there are some fairly impressive accomplishments there in terms of getting commitments in the 2040 Plan to affordable housing, cutting down on the single vehicle - or single occupant vehicles, and better public transportation, and more attention to managing and restoring watersheds, your issue. It sounds like a pretty good list. I'm just wondering what's the significance of this? I mean, these are goals that are now in the 2040 Plan. Is this - can you talk a little bit about the importance of these kinds of goals and getting them incorporated in a document like that?

M.H.: Well, the significance of the RUGGO language, for example, is that that's what's going to be used to write the regional framework plan, which, once that's done, every city and county will have to review their comprehensive plan and change their comprehensive plan to conform to the regional framework plan.

So it's a very arduous process, and there are a lot of people who think I'm out of my mind and in fact it's meaningless, because it's just another goddamn plan. I mean, it's incremental, you know. They're building blocks toward a goal, and that goal is a ways off yet, and in fact we all recognize that, and people are pretty freaked that we're not going to get there because development patterns being what they are already, the way we're treating streams, water quality already is bad, they're going to thwart the overall long-term objectives of 2040.

So that we're working on what is known now as Phase 1 of the regional framework plan, which I believe has mutated from what's

being - has been called the interim measures - interim measures meaning those measures that are adopted immediately rather than waiting for three years to deal with minimum lot sizes and parking spaces and how we treat streams and so forth. Let's get this stuff on the books now, and everybody has to do it. They're overarching regional things that everyone has to do, and that RUGGO language is what will be used as the basis for writing this interim measures language.

I am, to be quite frank, extremely concerned whether that RUGGO language will in fact be translated into meaningful interim and long-term regional framework plan language. That remains to be seen. That's the next frontier. All I can say is, if we didn't have the RUGGO language to fall back on and say, "Remember, we did this?" then there would be no basis for saying this particular language should be in this regulation or ordinance.

So I mean, I don't want to be Pollyana-ish about it. It's going to be a struggle because there will be people - and there's even internal conflict. Right now we're doing battle with Charlie Hales, City Commissioner in Portland and Portland Planning Bureau. The Bureau of Environmental Services, which is responsible for water quality, is trying to implement some measures to protect water quality in Johnson Creek and some other areas, and the Planning Bureau and Charlie Hales are fighting them because it's eating into their alleged density targets. And in essence they're saying, "Well, we can't afford to protect water quality because we have to get all these houses in here." No, that is not what 2040 is all about. You have to do both. And if you have to give up a few

units to protect that stream, or to protect the storm water from being polluted, then you're just going to have to do that.

So you know, we're going from the general and the visionary and the philosophical to the particular, which of course gets tougher each step of the way, because once you can look at a piece of land and say, "Oh, that's what you mean? Well, I didn't know that." You know, it's understandable it's going to get more contentious as we go along. That's life. But it's better to try to do it than just to opt out.

M.O'R.: Maybe we could take just a minute to talk about the extent to which the 2040 process and the Coalition's work impacts the Tualatin, which is of course the subject here ...

M.H.: Right.

M.O'R.: ... for this interview.

M.H.: Well, no, that's perfectly appropriate.

Well, obviously the Tualatin flows through farm, forest and urban lands, and we have to look at all three of those general land use patterns and figure out what we can do to reverse a lot of the trends, and a lot of the trends that have resulted in the Tualatin being degraded.

What's going on out in the ag lands and the forest lands is beyond the purview of Metro and beyond the purview of much of the Coalition's work. Although I spend time talking to the farm community and so forth, the Coalition per se is, I suppose, more interested in holding the urban growth boundary so that we're not continuing to put impervious surfaces on the ground out in the farmlands.

Now, there are many practices that the ag community engages in that are very negative on water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and overall quality of the Tualatin River and its tributaries. That is another arena, which I certainly am interested in working in and will be in the future and continue to, but right now our focus is pretty much, you know, on making sure the urban growth boundary doesn't expand and eat up more of the farm land, which could in the long term have more serious negative impacts on the Tualatin River.

Ensuring that within the urban growth boundary that we're implementing ordinances and regulations which deal with issues like impervious surfaces; can we - is there some way that development in the future can occur that you're reducing the amount of impervious surface - so reducing parking lots' sizes and encouraging on-site infiltration of water rather than piping it off to the stream, which has a huge negative impact on the stream, just by virtue of the volume. And then of course pretreatment of water before it gets discharged into the streams. All of those things are just as relevant to the Tualatin as they are to Johnson Creek, as they are to Balch Creek or the Columbia Slough. So the beauty of the region 2040 planning process is that it is oriented around creating region-wide policies, so if they're good for Johnson Creek, they should be good for the Tualatin, I guess is the simplest response.

And in fact those resources - you know, tributaries of the Tualatin are no different than tributaries to Johnson Creek. I mean, the same principles apply. If you don't have a healthy riparian zone along Fanno Creek, you don't have wildlife, you don't

have water filtration capabilities, you don't have shading. Same thing applies to Johnson Creek.

M.O'R.: In terms of holding the line on the urban growth boundary - and that's another one that's going to be probably a contested issue constantly because there will be constant specific situations, I imagine, which challenge that.

M.H.: Yeah. I just was in one yesterday, Forest Grove. They want to expand the urban growth boundary onto farmland, and what they're saying they'll do, though, is restore the stream that's been trashed by the farmer, in exchange, and donate 25 acres to the City for park. That's a dilemma, you know? Really. I mean, we're sitting here going, "Well, let's talk. It sounds intriguing. What are the policy implications? What are the regional policy implications, and then of course what are the implications for this particular site?" It's dicey, because you don't want to start creating a lot of exceptions to our planning.

M.O'R.: But on the other hand if it's a good deal ...

M.H.: Absolutely. If you can - and in fact I guess philosophically the way to view that, and from a policy perspective, is really what we've created is an environment in which if you want to call it extracting, that may be appropriate, it's probably a little less heavy-handed than that, if your policies are such that a developer is inclined to come in offering you a good deal in terms of parks and open space and restoration of the stream and so forth, that's a good policy. You know, what's wrong with that? And in that case, maybe it's reasonable to negotiate. You've got a basis for a negotiation, whereas before you hadn't; they could just come in and do whatever they wanted.

But the interesting thing is the planner from Forest Grove said - he was making a presentation, and he said, "Well, I'm sure ..." - he confessed this to me. "I'm sure even Mike Houck would like this," which I had never even seen it, so he apologized for having said that in public because I haven't seen the site, I hadn't seen his plans, nothing. I didn't even talk to him. All I knew is we were going to have a meeting.

Mary Kyle McCurdy and I were sitting in this meeting. I said, "Well, I can't - I'm sitting here as a member of a coalition. I care very much about Mary Kyle's hit on this with respect to precedent-setting concerns on the urban growth boundary. It's farmland. We don't know if it's prime farmland or not yet, but that's a concern.

"Furthermore, I look at your layout here, and I don't see a particularly creative layout. I see a typical subdivision. I'm going to be asking questions about lot sizes, average lot sizes, about transit, about affordable housing and all these other issues that are in our overall goals. So it is not - you're not going to get my buy-off on this just because you're restoring this stream here and creating a park here. That is not enough. That's what I care about very deeply, and I want to be involved in reviewing that, but you're not going to get me to sign off if Mary Kyle doesn't sign off, and if Tasha Harmon doesn't sign off and if, you know, the urban design group doesn't sign off. We're all in this together, and we're not going to split up. I'm not going to go over here and say, 'Oh, sure, go ahead and do it,' because you're taking care of my concerns. And I presume that other Coalition members would have the same philosophy: 'Yeah, well, that's great

you're providing affordable housing here. Well, what are you doing for this stream over here?'"

M.O'R.: So again, I guess the benefit of the Coalition comes - is pretty clear in this situation?

M.H.: I believe so, yeah. I think I mentioned in an earlier interview that the Council was a little perplexed when I spoke up one day about urban design issues. I had already - I had just finished giving them my opinion on a variety of open space and wildlife habitat and watershed management issues, and they were talking with John Chandler of the Homebuilders. And he brought up some urban design issues, and they all started talking among themselves. And I finally raised my hand, and they said, "What do you want to say about this, Mr. Houck? I mean, you're a greenie, you know. You're not interested in urban design."

I said, "Yes, I am. I'm a member of a Coalition, and I know that the urban design working group has submitted this language, and I'm here to support that language as a member of the Coalition." They were really kind of taken aback.

So I think it's very powerful because I believe that that conveys the notion that, contrary to how some people get portrayed as the, quote, special interests are not in fact special interests; they are general - they're interested generally in the quality of life in the region, and it's not enough to only address the quality of that stream and the water in the stream.

M.O'R.: I noticed also in some of the information that I had on this that the Tualatin River Keepers were one of the early groups involved in the Coalition?

M.H.: And Fans of Fanno Creek, too.

M.O'R.: In fact, maybe they make up a fair percentage of the Washington County participation in the Coalition ...

M.H.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: ... at least at that time?

M.H.: Yes.

[Interruption]

Although the direct involvement of the Tualatin River Keepers or Fans of Fanno Creek has not been - well, Mary Vogel, who's staff at the Tualatin River Keepers has been pretty actively involved. Fans of Fanno Creek, it's typically if we need a letter of support or some specific thing, then they'll do it, because of course they're doing their own work out on Fanno Creek or whatever.

M.O'R.: Anything else to say about either 2040 or the Coalition that we haven't talked about?

M.H.: I think we've covered it pretty well, actually. There's always more to say, but -.

M.O'R.: Well, I'll ask you one more question about 2040 ...

M.H.: I am going to go to City Club today and ask Linda Peters, as Chair of Washington County Commission and a member of MTAC, if she's going to vote to do the things we've been talking about. Should be interesting. You might want to listen in.

M.O'R.: The things that the Coalition has been talking about, you mean?

M.H.: Well, no, the flood plain issues and so forth and watershed management.

M.O'R.: Okay. What I was going to ask you about 2040 generally is: Is this a typical response for regional governments to growth? I mean, it seems planning out 50 years in advance what

your region's going to look like is maybe not typically how it's happening.

M.H.: Well, actually, Robert Liberty will be upset with me for saying this, perhaps, because he likes to think that - and I agree with him to a large extent that what we are doing is trans-portable to other regions. But I believe that - I feel pretty damn strongly that this is a unique region. We have very progressive elected officials in general. We have the only directly-elected regional government in the country. There is no other Metro anywhere in the country. This is it. There are associations of governments and other advisory regional bodies, but that's all they are. Metro has a charter.

[end of tape]