

After a yearlong hiatus, Vancouver council revives town halls

If you go

■ **What:** The Vancouver City Council will host a town hall, allowing small groups to speak with individual members.

■ **When:** 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Jan. 17.

■ **Where:** Clark College at Columbia Tech Center, 18700 S.E. Mill Plain Blvd.

New format will have small groups talking with individual councilors

By **ANDREA DAMEWOOD**
Columbian staff writer

Think of it as speed dating with the Vancouver City Council.

The city's elected officials are bringing back their traveling town halls with the public, idle since November 2010,

but with a tweaked format.

Instead of having all seven members at the front answering questions from one person at a time, each councilor will sit at his or her own table and speak with a small group, Mayor Tim Leavitt said.

"It's a much more inviting atmosphere for everybody to come and speak with council, versus just those few who would grab the microphone and use it as a soapbox," he said.

Leavitt said last year that he sus-

pended town hall meetings — a 2009 campaign promise — "due to the rancor and disrespect of others demonstrated by a handful of individuals."

Since then, the city council has held citizen forums at its bimonthly consent agenda meetings, where residents and nonresidents alike can speak to the city council on any topic, but the city has held no town hall gatherings at locations outside City Hall.



Tim Leavitt
Mayor of Vancouver

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Because the holidays mean no citizen forums are planned for January, Leavitt said it's time for a town hall. The meeting is set for 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Jan. 17 at Clark College at Columbia Tech Center, 18700 S.E. Mill Plain Blvd.

"We haven't been out in east city with our town halls for quite some time," he said. "It's time we get back out there and give folks an opportunity to come visit us."

He hopes this new format, which may or may not include time limits at each table, will

allow more people to speak, and allow more city councilors to share their views.

"Conversation will be kind of directed between folks at the table," he said. "With several people sitting there all wanting to get a question in or make a comment, it should make it difficult to monopolize time."

The meeting will also allow the public its first chance sit down with Vancouver's newest city councilor, Bill Turlay, whose first meeting will be Jan. 9.

ANDREA DAMEWOOD: 360-735-4542 or andrea.damewood@columbian.com or www.facebook.com/reporterdamewood or www.twitter.com/col_cityhall