

COUNCIL RETREAT

November 7, 2014
The Den at Fox Creek

Council present: Aldermen Kevin Lower, David Sage, Mboka Mwilambwe, Judy Stearns, Joni Painter, Karen Schmidt, Scott Black, Diana Hauman and Jim Fruin, and Mayor Tari Renner.

City staff present: David Hales, City Manager, Stephen Rasmussen, Asst. City Manager, Sue McLaughlin, Interim Asst. City Manager, Brendan Heffner, Police Chief, Les Siron, Acting Fire Chief, Emily Bell, Human Resources Director, Scott Sprouls, Information Services Director, Jim Karch, Public Works, Director, Tom Dabareiner, Community Development Director, Jeff Jurgens, Corporation Counsel, Patti-Lynn Silva, Finance Director, Brett Leuschen, Interim Water Director, Georgia Bouda, Library Director and Tracey Covert, City Clerk.

Additional staff present: Tina Salamone, Performing Arts Manager, Austin Grammer, Economic Development Coordinator, Nora Durkowitz, Communication Manager, Alex McElroy, Asst. to the City Manager, and Beth Oakley, Executive Asst.

Others present: Lynn Montei, Montei Associates, facilitator, Keith Sommer, State Representative.

AGENDA

Welcome, Opening Remarks – Mayor Renner

Remarks – David Hales, City Manager

Get acquainted/connection exercise

Retreat Outcomes & Agenda

Dialogue with Department Directors

- Expression of Past Year's Accomplishments

- Conversation on Organizational/City Council Shared Values

- Process for Addressing Citizen Services/Needs (Alderman/Director communications)

Clarity and Formulation of Council Purpose (Mission)

- Two new members have joined the Council since the last retreat. Review the purpose conversation from the last retreat and improve a proposed Council purpose statement.

Vision Dialogue

Review 11 high-level vision categories identified at the last retreat. These will serve as a framework for the Mayor and Council conversation about the City of Bloomington vision for the future. Begin crystallizing the City of Bloomington Vision for 2020 and High-Level Goals for the Year 2016.

Evaluate the Day, Plan for Day Two and Adjourn

Mayor Renner called the Retreat to order at 2:20 p.m.

Mayor Renner made opening remarks. He cited change, transition and transparency. Mayoral Open Houses had seen limited attendance. He cited his open door policy. The City had received a transparency award from the IL Policy Institute for its website. The goal was to receive 100 points from same. Information was available on the Internet. The Council passed a transparency ordinance. The culture change meant that the City was more responsive to citizens. He noted staff turnover which had been for a variety of reasons. New staff had been hired which brought new ideas/energy. He cited legal counsel/services as an example. Contract language had been improved. He applauded those who had helped. He still wanted additional change, responsiveness was key. Progress had been made.

He addressed the budget. There had been challenges. He cited the Pension Funding Policy. The Council needed to establish priorities and be clear where the dollars would go – service delivery. The majority of the budget went to Police, Fire and Public Works. Council needed to make a judgment regarding where budget dollars went. He cited Priority Based Budgeting and his interest in same. The City had been offered free consultant services from the university environment.

He cited economic development successes, (i.e. RR Donnelly, Rt. 66 Visitor's Center, Downtown Plan, etc.) There was investment interest in the Downtown. A Downtown hotel represented a single piece. He cited a \$40 million investment in the Downtown which would be one of the largest private investments in same. He noted tourism dollars from the Rt. 66 Visitor's Center. Signage would be needed in the City, Town of Normal and along the Interstates.

District 87 might support surgical TIF, (Tax Increment Financing), Districts which would increase property values, (i.e. redeveloped of the former Electrolux located at 807 N. Main St.).

The City was on the move. He thanked David Hales, City Manager and Lynn Montei, Lynn Montei Associates, for their efforts regarding the retreat.

Mayor Renner opened the Public Comment section of the meeting. He added that there would not be a response from the City under the Public Comment portion of the meeting.

Alton Franklin, 508 Patterson Dr., addressed the Council. He cited budget priorities and team building in order to do what needed to be done. There had been too much talk which had delayed action.

He expressed his appreciation to Alderman Stearns for her service to the City.

Keith Sommer, State Representative, addressed the Council. It was an honor to serve and he was present to learn more about the City.

David Hales, City Manager, addressed the Council. He informed them that Sue McLaughlin, Interim Asst. City Manager, would be relocating to the Aurora area. He expressed his appreciation to her for her service to the City. Ms. McLaughlin would assist with the transition to Steve Rasmussen, Asst. City Manager. He provided background information regarding Mr. Rasmussen.

Alderman Lower arrived at 2:37 p.m.

Mr. Hales introduced the following new staff members: Austin Grammer, Economic Development Coordinator, Tom Dabareiner, Community Development Director, Nora Durkowitz, Communications Manager, and Les Siron, Acting Fire Chief. He added that this was the first retreat for Aldermen Painter and Hauman.

Mr. Hales cited this year's accomplishments. He noted new personnel who had brought new ideas and experiences. There had been process changes related to the culture change. There was a foundation to move forward. His goal was to make Bloomington the best performing city in the state. It was critical to update and refine the City's Mission, Vision and Values. It was critical for the Council to set priorities. Key questions needed to address direction and priorities. City staff needed clarity. In the next decade, there was an opportunity to make a difference. Council/department heads/employees needed to create unity/teamwork. This was a work in progress. The new staff members provided the opportunity for unity. Council was critical to this goal. Council needed to articulate where the City was headed. He cited the Comprehensive Plan as a critical tool.

He introduced Lynn Montei, Lynn Montei Associates. He provided background information and her history working with the City.

OUTCOMES

Ms. Montei noted a pre retreat held with the Directors. She noted the number of new staff members. There were new and seasoned employees. The organization and elected body would interact and navigate themes/topics. The hope was that there would be integrated understanding. There would be discovery work. The retreat had been designed based upon the Council interviews. Hopes for the retreat included a commitment to a quality experience.

(See Desired Outcomes flip chart.)

Ms. Montei explained the Past Year's Accomplishments exercise. This exercise was addressed at the table level which would be followed with a reporting by table. Participation was important.

Ms. Montei reviewed the agenda and noted that there were two (2) more components to Dialogue with Department Directors. Mission would be followed by a vision dialogue. These two (2) items would be revisited and then the group would move forward. On Saturday, the Council would address setting priorities and prioritization and budget planning.

Mayor Renner informed the group that he planned to leave the Retreat to host the Mayoral Open House at City Hall. He would be absent from 4:15 – 5:45 p.m.

EXCERPT FROM THE COUNCIL RETREAT SUMMARY OF NOVEMBER 15 – 16, 2013 (handout)

Conversation About Shared Values

Ms. Montei stated that values were guidelines not rules. The conversation needed to give meaning. Each person needed to control their part. There were boundaries which served as guideposts. Values govern actions/behavior when the going became tough. Foundational values addressed how to be with others.

Ms. Montei introduced the Shared Value exercise. (See handout A Conversation About Shared Values.) This exercise was completed at the table level followed by a reporting by table.

Ms. Montei welcomed comments, themes, reaction, etc.

Alderman Mwilambwe cited the importance of risk taking. Employees were fearful. The Council needed to establish a safe environment where employees would take risks, be creative and achieve excellence.

David Hales, City Manager, noted that the City's culture was one of finding fault. The City had limited resources. There were unrealistic expectations. The City wanted perfection and had no tolerance for mistakes.

Alderman Black was interested in something different. Responsiveness to citizens was better.

Ms. Montei questioned if the City was a reflection of the community. She cited diversity, (i.e. Council and City staff).

Sue McLaughlin, Interim Asst. City Manager, believed that the Council needed to empower citizens and employees. There was a culture of fear. Everyone makes mistakes. Citizens needed to be engaged and have their voices heard.

Ms. Montei noted that she would prepare a synthesis of the retreat.

Mr. Hales addressed values. The Council needed to distill core values. There should not be more than six (6) of them. Two (2) key tools were training and communications.

Ms. Montei noted the overlap. The synthesis would be given to the team. It would provide guidance, clarity, suggested wording, etc. It would be reviewed by all. It would not be built upon past retreats. The Council had made progress. Ms. Montei would draft the synthesis and then work with the team.

Break: 4:25 – 4:35 p.m.

Ms. Montei noted that Process for Addressing Citizen Services/Needs would be postponed due to the Mayor's absence.

DEVELOPMENT OF COUNCIL PURPOSE/MISSION STATEMENT (handout)

Clarity/Formulation Council Purpose

Ms. Montei noted that this would be a whole group discussion. She reviewed the handout which had been prepared from the 2013 Retreat. She addressed Council purpose and questions used to develop same. She described purpose/mission as what you do and why you do it. Council observed the what/why. The handout contained a list of ideas which had not been synthesized. Key words/phrases were underlined. The City should be a place where people wanted to live. The second page of the handout listed keywords/expressions. There were two (2) categories: Lead/Steward the City and Elevate/Lift the City. There was a listing of ways under each category. The challenges could be overwhelming. Council and staff needed to find inspiration.

Ms. Montei read a draft Council Mission statement, (see handout). She introduced a small group exercise.

Alderman Sage questioned the definition of steward. Ms. Montei noted richer than management. It included accountability, quality and caring. There was a service aspect.

Alderman Fruin noted that it lack a financial element. Citizens wanted more services while paying less in taxes.

Discussion regarding the word steward which had become overused. Well being took on a holistic approach. The vision took on a long look (i.e. future generations). Consensus to keep it simple.

Mission feedback: Council mission statement would address the Council's unique role. The Council would perform their role with clarity. There was a value to the Council's particular role. It would be for internal use. It should be short and meaningful. Uplifting applied to the City. Council's unique role was cited. City staff was operational. There was a desire for a clear short statement. The Council needed to live it, see it everyday. It needed to be single and unifying.

(See Mission Feedback flipchart.)

Dinner break: 5:30 – 6:01 p.m.

Process for Addressing Citizen Services/Needs

Ms. Montei addressed the City being efficient, effective and fair. Issues had been raised by the Council and Department Directors. There were service demands and revenue constraints. Ms. Montei planned to interview Ms. McLaughlin who had had the opportunity to observe. Ms. Montei would set the content. The key was balance of roles and the purpose of the Council. The Council and City staff needed to learn how to manage time, the budget and City services. The Council set policy. City staff implemented same. However, the budget impacted the ability to provide services. City staff was pressured to address Council's requests. There might be others in the service queue and limited dollars budgeted. The Council needed to remember their policy role and send citizen requests to staff. The question of fair allocation of services across the City was mentioned. City staff would report back to the City Manager and the City Manager would then report back to the Council. It was restated that the Council made policy decisions. A 3 – 1 – 1 Work Order systems was suggested. Citizen requests would be assigned to the appropriate staff level. Staff would be responsive and held accountable. There were limited dollars to serve the service requests/needs.

An Alderman's question would be shared with the entire Council. A level playing field was cited. Requests would be centralized. The Council would address/decide any budget amendments. Council's purpose was to represent their ward and the City. It was a balancing act to respect the needs of all. The Council needed to be leaders and address the structural deficit. City staff should address the day to day. Staff wanted the Council to lead, (i.e. Board of Directors). Council needed to be empowered and ready to fulfill their unique role. Council needed to trust and empower City staff to perform. There was a fear of saying no. The Council had the power to amend policy. Things changed based upon Alderman's request.

Mayor Renner expressed his interest in being responsive to citizens and resolving the issue where possible. As Mayor, there were times when he needed to bend the rules in order to do what was right. Common sense trumped the rules. He lived by principles.

Ms. Montei stated that the conversation was about the routine not the exception. She encouraged the Council to focus on routine operations of the City and the fiscal constraints.

Alderman Schmidt noted her strong and valuable relationships with constituents. Citizens wanted to speak to their Alderman. Aldermen were requesting and not expecting privileged treatment. She added that the Council had been instructed to contact the department director. She believed that this allowed the director to deploy staff.

Ms. McLaughlin noted City staff's ability to say no to an alderman. There had been a number of requests. There were dollar costs associated with each request.

Ms. Montei cited citizen's comfort levels. She encouraged the Council to encourage citizens to call the department.

Mr. Hales also addressed routine matters. Citizens might be more comfortable with their Alderman versus City staff. However, all requests should be placed in the queue. Priority should not be given to Aldermen. City staff needed to be fair and responsive to all. The City did not have the staff and could not respond to all in a timely manner. The director needed to instruct City staff regarding the response and address deployment. The City Manager and Asst. City Manager needed to be involved in troubleshooting. If citizens were not happy with the first go round, then City staff needed to look at systems/response. The goal of improved work/life balance was cited.

Mayor Renner believed that the issue was reasonableness. Some systems were working better.

Alderman Black cited the following departments: Public Works and PACE, (Planning and Code Enforcement). He understood the more routine as he had seen the process and was often able to answer the question.

It was noted that the City had educated professional staff.

Alderman Schmidt expressed her opinion that citizens did not want to know.

Mr. Hales cited a 3 - 1 - 1 Center. He addressed common sense and questioned who would decide when to break the rule or that the situation was an exception to the rule, (i.e. Mayor, Alderman, City Manager, etc.). There were systems in place which the Council needed to make use of. If the Council wanted open, transparent government, then the City's actions needed to be consistent and fair.

Brendan Heffner, Police Chief, addressed the Council. He noted that often there was a need to have historical background information. He urged the Council to be careful. The Police Department has seen the need to track data, (i.e. has the citizen called). There could be consequences, (i.e. other citizens hear about). The Council needed to be mindful. He cited the value of good historical information.

Alderman Fruin expressed his opinion that if the City enhanced its website, then the volume of routine calls would decrease.

Alderman Mwilambwe addressed the City's website. The key to a web search was the person conducting the search.

Ms. Montei noted that the conversation had occurred. There would be no resolution today. The Council and directors needed to practice being a team. A protocol should be developed which would be better than what the City currently had.

Mayor Renner cited the information exchange and shared understanding.

Ms. Montei stated that a first step would be to follow up on this evening's discussion to find a shared solution. A team of Council members and directors could be formed to work on finding a new way.

Alderman Stearns noted that each call was unique. Citizens wanted personal attention. She questioned the ability to generalize. She respected each elected officials judgment. She could not see a protocol.

Mayor Renner believed that citizens wanted to see empathy and understanding. The majority of the time issues have been resolved.

Ms. Montei readdressed a process with guidelines. The first step would be to listen and take each citizen seriously.

Alderman Sage noted staff's stress level; the Council did not see the hows. He did not want to lose sight of this conversation.

Ms. Montei addressed next steps.

Mr. Hales expressed support for a small group (Council/Director). Protocols for the routine and the extreme needed to be updated/created.

Ms. Montei noted that guidelines/processes were needed.

Alderman Stearns left the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Ms. McLaughlin cited the importance of being a team. Staff believed that it would be okay to tell Council no. There was a void between the two (2) groups.

Alderman Schmidt expressed her interest in a 3 - 1 - 1 system. Anyone would be able to check on the status.

Scott Sprouls, Information Services Director, informed the Council that a work order system was part of Munis Phase 4. He believed that the City had an interim solution.

Mayor Renner stated the value of the truth. The issue was responsiveness.

(See Citizen Inquiry flipchart.)

Mr. Hales stated that priorities needed to be set, and realistic expectations established based upon resources.

Break: 7:10 – 7:15 p.m.

DEVELOPMENT CITY VISION AND HIGH LEVEL GOALS FOR FUTURE TARGET YEAR (handout)

Vision Dialogue

Ms. Montei noted that the handout was developed a year ago. It was a vision for the future. There were eleven (11) categories. She noted the overlap. She had created seven (7) categories. They would be used as part of the discussion regarding priorities. She reviewed the seven (7) categories which would serve as a framework.

From the Council's brainstorming session, ideas were assigned to the seven (7) categories. She reviewed same. The framework would be used to identify priorities/accomplishment in 2016. There would be multiple vision statements. At the Saturday, November 8, 2014 session, the Council would create goals and prioritize same.

Alderman Sage addressed Priority Bases Budgeting (PBB) which identifies public safety as a category. The Downtown/Rt. 66 Visitor's Center was unique. This might be included under Local Vibrant Economy or Healthy Livable Neighborhoods. He believed that there should be six (6) not seven (7) categories.

Ms. Montei cited community preference and prioritization by expenditure level. She noted strides in the Downtown and believed that there was still more to do. This handout would be used at tomorrow's session.

Alderman Hauman expressed her interest in discussing this item with the staff.

Mr. Hales added his opinion that public safety needed to be included. He cited response times. He noted the report which addressed needed improvements to the various fire stations. He cited the cost of same. A key question addressed result measurements. Finally, there was fiscal policy/resource allocation.

Alderman Black believed that public safety could be included in Healthy, Livable Neighborhoods. He questioned PBB. He specifically cited what questions would be asked.

Ms. Montei stated that integrating citizen input would be invaluable. This would not be a substitute for Council clarity.

Ms. McLaughlin urged the Council to not forget about Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts.

Ms. Montei informed the Council that these items had been listed under Distinctly Bloomington.

(See Friday Vision flip chart.)

Motion by Alderman Hauman, seconded by Alderman Schmidt to recess the meeting/retreat until Saturday, November 8, 2014 at 9:00 a.m.

Motion carried, (viva voce).

Respectfully submitted,

Tracey Covert
City Clerk