

MEETING FACILITATOR REPORT

City of Henderson Annual Council Retreat

Wednesday and Thursday, February 21 and 22, 2018

This document is intended as an internal report to the City for use as an aid in the compilation of the official minutes of the meeting, as well as a reference for the staff and Council. The power point presentations created by the staff and the facilitator for the meeting are included as part of this document.

PURPOSE:

This meeting of the Henderson City Council and the City's Leadership staff was coordinated to allow the Council to review their board processes and make adjustments if needed, to affirm and strengthen their shared commitment to govern together for the good of the City, to engage in deeper policy discussions than is normally convenient at regular meetings, and to provide direction to the staff for the upcoming budget and work planning cycle.

All members of the Council and staff leadership attended at least some portion of the retreat. The Thursday morning portion of the retreat was covered by local press.

WEDNESDAY

Housekeeping

The Mayor welcomed all to the retreat, and thanked them for taking the time to attend. He acknowledged that several members would need to come and go over the course of the day and a half, and thanked them specifically for attending when they could, despite the very pressing personal concerns they are dealing with.

The Facilitator explained that the format of the retreat was different from previous years, and expressed the sincere hope that they would enjoy the change.

Facilitated discussions

After a brief networking period several questions were posed to the group for discussion:

What are the benefits of governing as a group? What are the difficulties? The Council had a full and heartfelt discussion in response to these questions, primarily focused on the various ways that diversity of opinion results in better answers. There was also general consensus that the mixture of ward and at-large representation creates an effective channel to broad, town-wide thinking.

The Council then turned their discussion to a description of what attributes mark a highly effective governing board; to what degree does this particular Council display those attributes, and in what areas could this Council strive for improvement.

Council reported feeling confident in the strength of their mutual respect. They said from that springs all manner of good factors – a safe environment for them to have disagreements; a complete airing of their diverse opinions; honest efforts at frank and open communications. They noted that their diversity is a source of strength because of their mutual respect, that they are able to be ‘mind thinkers.’ The Council noted that improvements could be made still:

- In communications
 - With each other, wouldn't it be helpful if they could share more about their particular constituents, and
 - With partners, could they do better in their work with County Commissioners?
 - With the public, the public perception of the City and the Council are not as positive as the Council's perception. How can Council show the citizens that things are not as gloomy as they think – that good things are finally coming to pass?
- In decision making
 - There is a hesitancy on the Council to take bold action, there is great depth of expertise in the staff that Council isn't taking full advantage of
 - Perhaps we could use additional financial training for Council members?
 - And once decisions are made, it seems to take so long for things to get done, would more Council meetings help? Some on the Board are willing to go back to a bimonthly calendar.

The discussion was concluded with a small action on the part of the individuals. Each Council member wrote, for their eyes only, a change in habit or activity that they could effect this year, to make the Council function better as a whole.

Taking up a new topic, the Facilitator explained to the Council that their responses to the survey about important topics to address at retreat were very much appreciated. The Manager had directed his staff to come tomorrow prepared to address these topics. Most of the topics would be addressed in the staff discussions in the morning, or the budget discussion just after lunch, and there is time in the afternoon to take up the remaining items. Again the Facilitator noted this is a new format, and asked the Council to try to take full advantage of less structured format by asking all the questions that come to mind.

The Council was then asked to discuss how they felt things are going vis-à-vis meeting agendas, and minutes. All were satisfied, and took a few more minutes to discuss whether they should go back to 2 meetings per month.

The discussion about conduct, public interface and communications was delayed till Thursday, so that the Council member who requested the discussion could participate.

The Manager spoke briefly to the Council about his plans for the budget discussion tomorrow, noting the Major Project Update Report.

City Clerk reminded us all that the breakfast would be ready at 8:30.

The Mayor thanked everyone again, and we recessed for the evening.

Thursday

Objectives

The Council started the morning declaring their objectives for the retreat.

- A clear path to new initiatives was posed by one Council member and supported by several others as a fair statement of their retreat objective as well.
- Gaining an understanding of individual and group objectives and how to make them a reality.
- Improving my understanding of my role as a Council member.
- Improving the effort to give our citizens a better understanding of what we do and why.
- Finding ways to improve how I address the concerns of my community
- Lots of learning
- Hearing about new resources

Staff presentations and discussions

Housing, Neighborhoods, and Redevelopment

Kendrick Vann presentation: One highlight: the new signs in the parks have made a surprisingly large difference to the neighborhoods. Mr. Vann says this will be a great low cost way to help in the fight against blight and is committed to finding others.

Corey Williams presentation: One highlight: in his comprehensive presentation about blight, Mr. Williams mentioned that over 400 buildings have been removed by the demo program since 2004. The City currently owns 150 of those properties and he would really like to see the Neighborhood Stabilization Program up and running again.

Paylor Spruill presentation: Mr. Spruill continued the discussion about revitalization that Mr. Williams had started, directing attention to potential projects and outcomes within Henderson.

OUTCOME: The Council committed that this year they will budget the necessary money to get the Redevelopment program started. They will fund a preliminary study and they will continue their outreach efforts with the County Commissioners.

Infrastructure

Clark Thomas presentation: Mr. Thomas reviewed the status of federal and state grants, provided a method of risk management that includes identifying the greatest areas of harm and fixing those, and reminded the Council that an assessment project is ongoing which will result in budget recommendations at this point unknown.

In his introduction of Ms. Lipscomb, Mr. Thomas informed the Council that her team had once again won an award for the quality of their water.

Christy Lipscomb presentation: Ms. Lipscomb reviewed the operations at the water treatment facility and noted that her staff is so good that they have placed in the top 5 Best Tasting Water in eight of the last ten years.

Lamont Allen presentation: Mr. Allen reviewed the operations of the 'new' plant but noted that not everything at the plant is new. The ultra-violet systems will need to be upgraded in the upcoming year. He explained that Council may see the cost of that in the upcoming budget as well as further demolition of the remaining older structures.

Andy Perkinson presentation: Mr. Perkinson reviewed the operations of Public Works department, which is responsible for the storm water and waste water collection systems, city streets and sidewalks, collection of brush and yard waste, maintenance of city fleet, and of cemeteries, and the organization of street closings for events. He mentioned his desire to start a reward program for SSO alerts, because every hour counts in an overflow event of sanitary sewer.

Mr. Thomas and Mr. Perkinson together fielded some discussion about Elmwood Cemetery and the possible use of funds set aside by law for the cemetery.

Public Safety

Chief Marcus Barrow presentation: The top three accomplishments included a record low UCR since 1985, departmental restructuring and continued success working with the Federal system. Chief Barrow noted that Henderson's crime statistics are down. He reported that his department is in court now more than they've ever been, thanks to a change at the County DA office. He reminded Council that his department makes heavy use of social media platforms, and that his department is involved in many areas of the community, including even economic development, but in his opinion it's not enough. He believes the City would be well served by hiring a PIO. He had a lengthy discussion with the Council about a City sponsored scholarship program designed somewhat like what the state is currently considering. The Chief plans to continue to prosecute criminals, introduce a new program, in conjunction with Recreation and Parks Director Kendrick Vann to the District Attorney, Juvenile Services, school system, etc. and find creative programs/advertising methods to recruit highly qualified officers. He noted that in regard to the redevelopment program, he has plenty of staff that would love a chance to own a 'Cary style condo' in downtown Henderson.

Fire Chief Steve Cordell presentation: One highlight: while the ISO is now 2, a great accomplishment for his department, they are having to shift their protocols a bit to meet the recommended staffing guidelines that we will ask for in the upcoming budget.

Budget

Joey Fuqua presentation: Mr. Fuqua presented the very positive financial results from the changes made to the procurement procedures and thanked all the department heads for their participation. He also stated revenues and expenditures are pretty much where they should be for this time of year.

Council Items

Council member Simmons outlined for the Council a proposal to create a class to be offered as an elective at the high school. The class would teach about government in general, and about Henderson in particular, and offer internships at various departments for interested students. She explained the many benefits of this program to the City, including providing a more informed citizenry and a future work force.

Mayor Ellington presented information about joining in a class action suit with other Cities re: the opioid crisis.

Mayor Pro-Tem Daeke suggested to Council that the City should embark on bringing back a City-wide Anti-Litter campaign. This idea was roundly supported by the other Council members and many ideas were brought forward, all of which were noted by staff.

Council discussed ideas to better communicate with citizens. They want the City website and social media presence improved and made several suggestions noted by staff.

Before beginning the final task of updating the Strategic Plan (shown on following page), the Council outlined their major responsibilities for initiatives:

- Advocate
 - Declare themselves loudly and firmly in support of the effort
 - Work for legislation if necessary
- Acquire partners
 - Work on the City's behalf with elected officials at other governmental levels
- Allocate resources
 - Approve budget funds and staff hours to get the job done

Conclusion

The Council reviewed their retreat objectives and declared themselves satisfied that their objectives had been met. The Mayor thanked all for their attendance and participation.

Adjourned at 4:00

Strategic Plan Updates

KSO #1, Objective #2: Improve the website

Create a City Facebook page

Initiate the City Class as outlined by Ms. Simmons (Also in KSO #6)

KSO #2, Objective #2: Restore the Clean Up Initiative, bring in businesses, art students, community orgs, etc.

Objective #3: Join the Class Action lawsuit as presented by Mayor

Objective #4: Revisit this effort with Circle of Faith and other faith-based outreach, using not just PD but also Council members and the Outreach committee and approve funding for preliminary planning.

KSO #3 Objective #3: Initiate the Redevelopment Program

KSO #4 Objective #1: Reinvigorate the Housing Committee

KSO #5 Objective #4: (new objective) Storm Water Utility

KSO #6 Objective #5: (new objective) Develop internship program by Initiate the City Class as outlined by Ms. Simmons (Also in KSO #1)

KSO #7 Objective #2 (new objective) Develop a splash park. ALSO – bring the Pavilion project and Veterans' Park to the next Council meeting.

Report prepared and submitted by Madeleine Henley, Walking Stick Associates February 28, 2018.

Walking Stick Associates