



City Council Study Session Minutes – February 22, 2010

At 7:40 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Brad Adams called the regularly scheduled study session of February 22, 2010 to order. Nick Petrish, Erica Pickett, Brad Adams, Bill Turner and Cynthia Richardson were present. Kevin McKeown and Brian Geer were absent (excused).

Anacortes Futures Project Roundtable

Mitch Everton of the Chamber of Commerce opened an unprecedented joint meeting of the Anacortes City council, Port of Anacortes Commission and Anacortes Chamber of Commerce for a roundtable discussion of the Anacortes Futures Project. Mr. Everton introduced the Anacortes Futures Project Steering Committee: Dick Nelson, Bob Hyde, Mark Bunzel (not present), Courtney Orrock, Mike Trafton, Stuart Janke, Duncan Frazier, Laurie Gere, and Mayor Dean Maxwell (not present).

Mr. Everton noted that the Steering Committee is charged with keeping the project on track and on schedule, overseeing a professional facilitator, producing a finished report by late 2011, keeping the process transparent, and establishing and monitoring committees that will address the issues raised in the visioning process. Mr. Everton asked what the three boards present would like from the Steering Committee in terms of reporting.

Mr. Everton gave a brief synopsis of the Anacortes Futures Project and its work to date. Updates were presented to the Anacortes City Council on July 13, 2009 and January 25, 2010. Mr. Everton asked those assembled to address 1) how to effectively get citizen input, 2) what to do with the input, 3) how best to keep the elected officials present informed, and 4) the proper role of the professional facilitator.

Before beginning their comments, Keith Rubin (Port Commission), Jim Clarke (Chamber Board), Bill Short (Port Commission), Peter Whiting (Chamber Board), Bill Turner (City Council), Matt McKay (Chamber Board), Erica Pickett (City Council), Pat Mooney (Port Commission), Brad Adams (City Council), Mike Trafton (Chamber President), Steve Hopley (Port Commission), Cynthia Richardson (City Council), Suzanne Knutson (Chamber Board), Zee Hogan (Chamber Immediate Past President), Ray Niver (Port Commission) and Nick Petrish (City Council) introduced themselves.

Mr. Rubin expressed enthusiasm for this collaborative project. Mrs. Richardson said that the process of community dialog will be as important as the end product and should include as many community groups as possible. Mr. Adams observed that the Anacortes Futures Project is now a household word in Anacortes and recommended town hall meetings to create a comfortable atmosphere for citizens to brainstorm what they would like to see in Anacortes in the future in all sectors. Mr. Trafton said the Chamber of Commerce is very excited about the project and that the Steering Committee is looking for ideas for conducting the public visioning process. Mr. Petrish praised the project for being undertaken by Anacortes citizens, not outside consultants. He suggested that the Steering Committee key in on what is doable and focus on prioritizing projects. Mr. Hopley expressed his support for the project and praised its initial report and the draft RFP for the facilitator. Regarding public input, Mr. Hopley said the project needs to take a broad look at the future, not just at the economics but at other sectors as well; he called economic development a means to broader ends. Mr. Mooney said the top priority should be creating jobs so children who grow up in Anacortes can continue to live here. Mr. Turner expressed support for the process. He said City Council struggles with the many competing interests in town and he would like the project to seek input from as many different business interests as possible and then prioritize where to begin. Mr. McKay said as a small business owner and father of two children he has an interest in how the Futures Project will affect all ages. He said he would like the school district to be involved in this process. Mr. Short said he is pleased with the make up of the Steering Committee. He is concerned about livability in Anacortes and said he does not want Anacortes to be destroyed like other small towns where density and traffic have become too great

and where parking is a problem. Mr. Clarke said he'd like the project to be sure not to shut the door on possibilities but to open the process to new ideas including looking to other communities to see how they have grown and developed in ways the community admires. Mr. Rubin echoed Mr. Clarke. He suggested the visioning process should include as broad a group as possible and encourage unlimited imagination. Mr. Rubin said once the community's desires are defined the Port can recruit businesses to fit that vision. Mr. Trafton observed that a strong stable economy is what makes possible the lifestyle citizens appreciate. Ms. Hogan said that she wants her children to be able to continue to grow here, noted that small business owners need to be able to own their buildings, praised the City's infrastructure, and suggested that affordable housing needs to be incorporated in town. Ms. Knutson expressed faith in the potential of Anacortes and urged incorporating the viewpoints of Anacortes youth in the project. Mr. Whiting expressed excitement about the project and hope that the collaborative nature of the enterprise will yield useful results. Mr. Niver praised the Futures Project report and discussed the perspective and role of the Port of Anacortes in the process. Mr. Mooney suggested very open brainstorming during the visioning phase of the project before prioritizing ideas and against stressed the need for developing jobs in Anacortes. Mrs. Richardson agreed with Mr. Niver that the Port's objectives may not always be the same as those of other entities but said the value of this process is for each sector to discover where their objectives can assist one another. Mr. Turner said Anthony's Restaurant came to Anacortes because the town was ready for it and suggested the Futures Project needs to arrive at a consensus of what Anacortes wants so it can invite in the businesses to fit that vision. Mr. Adams thanked the Steering Committee for the effort it is undertaking to collect a diversity of viewpoints. Mr. Adams stated that Fidalgo Bay is the geographic center of the plan and is currently underused; he said he was glad that MJB is participating in the project to work with the community on a plan a majority will buy into. Mr. McKay challenged everyone present to talk to constituencies, collect opinions and bring that information back to the Steering Committee. Ms. Hogan asked the Steering Committee to look at what kind of retail, jobs, and living wage employment the community wants to have by 2025. Mr. Clarke noted the challenges facing the Steering Committee and the facilitator. Mr. Niver noted that the Port's economic base is different from the City's; the Port is not funded by retail sales and property taxes but the Model Toxics Control Act (MoTCA) tax is funding the Port's current extensive clean up efforts. Mr. Short acknowledged the need for affordable housing in Anacortes, the inevitability of growth and increasing density, the broad involvement of the Port in the town's economy, infrastructure and recreation, and the problem of absentee landlords downtown.

Mr. Everton asked for concluding comments. Mr. Trafton asked the Steering Committee to provide not only a vision but also an implementation strategy. Mr. Turner asked for a prioritization of what the community wants. Ms. Hogan thanked the Steering Committee for undertaking the next phase of the Futures Project. Ms. Knutson expressed enthusiasm for the project. Mrs. Richardson praised the RFP for the consultant and appreciated its phased approach. Mr. Everton announced that anyone who wants to communicate with the Steering Committee is welcome to do so through him via email (meverton@anacortes.org).

There being no further business, at approximately 8:38 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Adams adjourned the regularly scheduled study session of February 22, 2010.