



Minutes

City of Anacortes Council-Staff Retreat

February 21, 2020

Welcome & Introductions

At 8:30 a.m. Mayor Gere called the meeting to order. Councilmember Jeremy Carter, Anthony Young, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Carolyn Moulton, Bruce McDougall and Matt Miller were present. Councilmember Ryan Walters was absent. [Mr. Walters joined the meeting at approximately 11:30 a.m.]

The mayor welcomed the Council and department heads to the meeting. The advertised meeting was open to the public but no members of the general public were present at the opening session.

Retreat Objectives/Agenda Review

Human Resources Director Vanessa Bronsema facilitated the meeting. She reviewed the objectives for the retreat and the agenda for the day, referring to her slides which were added to the packet materials for the meeting.

Discussion Guidelines

Ms. Bronsema reviewed the roles of the attendees and offered guidelines for productive and cordial discussion.

Introductions

Participants introduced themselves: Don Measamer, Planning Director; Jeremy Carter, Councilmember from Ward 3; Carolyn Moulton, Councilmember Position 6; Steve Hoglund, Finance Director and City Clerk-Treasurer; Christine Cleland-McGrath, Councilmember from Ward 2; Emily Schuh, Administrative Services Director; Matt Miller, Councilmember, Position 4; Bret Lunsford, Museum Director; Laurie Gere, Mayor; Bruce McDougall, Councilmember, Position 5 David Oliveri, Fire Chief; Fred Buckenmeyer, Public Works Director; Ruth Barefoot, Library Director; Anthony Young, Councilmember, Position 7; Darcy Swetnam, City Attorney; Jonn Lunsford, Parks & Recreation Director; John Small, Police Chief; and Vanessa Bronsema, Human Resources Director.

Legal Presentation: Roles & Responsibilities

City Attorney Darcy Swetnam reviewed the roles and responsibilities of both elected officials and staff and the statutes pertaining to city governance. Ms. Swetnam's slide presentation was added to the packet materials for the meeting.

- The group agreed that future discussion was warranted to establish agreed upon procedures for responding to citizen communications to all councilmembers and subsequent responses in conformance with the OPMA, and coordinated retention of those public records.
- Mr. Young requested future discussion of conveying committee discussions to Council as a whole.

Mayor Gere called a scheduled 15-minute break in the proceedings.

Department Director Presentations: Goals, Challenges, and Priorities in 2020

Each department head summarized the goals, challenges and priorities of his or her department. All slide presentations, videos and handouts were added to the packet materials for the meeting. The presentation order was:

- Parks and Recreation Director Jonn Lunsford
- Museum Director Bret Lunsford
- Library Director Ruth Barefoot
- Planning, Community and Economic Development Director Don Measamer
- Administrative Services Director Emily Schuh

Councilmember Ryan Walters joined the meeting at 11:30 a.m. Richard Walker from the *Anacortes American* joined the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

- City Attorney Darcy Swetnam
- Fire Chief David Oliveri
- Police Chief John Small
- Public Works Director Fred Buckenmeyer

Due to time constraints, Human Resources Director Vanessa Bronsema invited participants to refer to her materials in the meeting packet.

- Mr. Young requested future discussion about expanding Parks and Recreation offerings for seniors
- Mr. McDougall requested expanding the number of searchable characteristics stored for building permits scanned into Laserfiche and made available on the public electronic document portal
- Mr. Young requested regular updates from staff on building activity
- Mr. Young requested that Chief Oliveri provide a call breakdown in support of his presentation
- Mr. Young requested future discussion of law enforcement mental health resources

Working Lunch/Finance Department Presentation

Participants collected bag lunches and returned to their seats. Finance Director Steve Hoglund shared a video of his department's presentation during the working lunch.

2021-2020 Budget Process Preview

Finance Director Steve Hoglund asked councilmembers to consider how best to achieve effective community involvement in the development of the next biennial budget. He reviewed the results of the 2015 budget survey which had been presented at the City Council retreat in spring of 2015 for the 2016 budget and said staff anticipated repeating a survey in 2020 prior to holding a full-day budget retreat.

Mr. Miller supported the survey and suggested restructuring the final question to force the public to rank topics. He also urged councilmembers to seek budget input directly from constituents. Mr. Walters questioned using surveys for which the data is not statistically valid; he preferred soliciting free responses from the public. He did support repeating the survey for the seven current councilmembers. Ms. Cleland-McGrath suggested soliciting input from the Chamber of Commerce, service clubs, school district administration, and other organized community groups. She urged publishing the survey in the *A-Town* magazine so all readers would have an opportunity to participate. Ms. Moulton supported small group sessions in various locations around town, and also a special public meeting in Council Chambers specifically to solicit budget input. Mr. Young supported holding a Council study session to focus on budget priorities. Mr. Walters suggested calling such meetings Listening Sessions, and suggested locations besides the City Council chambers. Mr. Miller said he found the scatter gram plot from the 2015 survey to be useful even if not statistically valid. Ms. Moulton suggested a framework to focus public responses. Mr. Hoglund thanked Council for its input and said the Finance Committee would begin mapping out a strategy at its next meeting. Ms. Cleland-McGrath suggested that each department present three budget requests (both one-time projects and ongoing services), then ask the community to rank them

and add their own. Ms. Schuh reminded that ongoing essential services need to be included because they need to be prioritized also.

Internal Business Processes & Communication

Ms. Bronsema facilitated a discussion of best means for communicating internally to efficiently achieve the city's business. She presented potential areas for improvement that had been identified in her individual interviews with both department heads and councilmembers.

Mr. Walters said Agenda Bill should provide a summary of the packet materials for the agenda item, so councilmembers are prepared in the meeting. He asked that *every* agenda item including informational presentations have an agenda bill in the packet, so that both Council and the public can pick one up without prior exposure and have the critical information at hand. Ms. Cleland-McGrath asked that agenda bills include links to prior discussions and resources. Councilmembers asked for BARS titles as well as numbers. Ms. Moulton asked to know more information about funding sources and funding impacts for proposed actions. Mr. Walters suggested issue tracking through some sort of coding on all documents related to an issue.

- Finance Committee was tasked with reviewing the agenda bill and proposing revisions. Mr. Walters requested making the Agenda Bill into a Laserfiche form to track routing and approvals.

Mayor Gere asked for ways to minimize councilmembers putting directors on the spot during Council meetings, and staff putting Council on the spot with insufficient information to make decisions. Mr. Miller said his practice is always to call or email directors prior to the meeting with questions. Mr. Walters said it was unrealistic to expect directors to have all the information and suggested that they bring their staff who are familiar with the issue. Mr. Young observed there is value to the public in being able to see, in a public setting, that Council is doing its due diligence by asking for information and staff is doing its due diligence by providing that information. Mr. Walters suggested that agendas indicate when public comment is *not* appropriate, rather than when it is.

Councilmembers and staff discussed the value of committee meetings and brainstormed means of sharing information from committee meetings with the full Council. Mr. Miller suggested that each committee have a chair responsible for reporting to the full Council, and that committee reports clearly identify items that will come before full Council for action.

Museum Director Bret Lunsford asked which sources of information councilmembers found most useful to prepare them to consider and make decisions. Councilmembers identified Agenda Bills, committee work and reports, additional topic reports from staff, and citizen input.

External & Community Communication Strategies

Ms. Bronsema shared areas for improvement identified in her interviews with staff and councilmembers. Mayor Gere said the lack of a single person assigned full time to communication and the city website has been repeatedly identified as a challenge. Mr. Walters suggested that public expectations are for immediate electronic access to current information. Ms. Cleland-McGrath urged agreeing on a consistent, positive means of communicating with the public and supported the notion of having a single staff person managing those efforts. Ms. Moulton echoed Ms. Cleland-McGrath's comments. Mr. Walters urged continued focused discussion and problem identification prior to selecting a solution.

There being no further business, at approximately 3:30 p.m., Mayor Gere adjourned the meeting.