

Friday – January 8, 2010 - 11:00 a.m.
Saturday – January 9, 2010 – 9:00 a.m.
Warren Wilson College
Gladfelter Building – Canon Lounge

City Council Annual Retreat

Present: Mayor Terry M. Bellamy, Presiding; Vice-Mayor Brownie W. Newman; Councilman Cecil Bothwell; Councilman Jan B. Davis; Councilwoman Esther E. Manheimer; Councilman William A. Russell Jr.; Councilman Gordon D. Smith; City Manager Gary W. Jackson; City Attorney Robert W. Oast Jr.; and City Clerk Magdalen Burleson

Mayor Bellamy convened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the annual City Council retreat. She asked all present to introduce themselves and say one thing they are grateful for. She then explained her goal of the retreat is to have a shared vision for the City of Asheville.

Mayor Bellamy then introduced Ms. Margo Flood, Director of the Environmental Leadership Center of Warren Wilson College, and briefly outlined the successful national model of partnership between the City of Asheville and Warren Wilson College. She thanked Ms. Flood for hosting City Council's retreat.

On behalf of the President of Warren Wilson College, Ms. Flood welcomed City Council to the Warren Wilson College Campus and explained their shared vision of sustainability. She then outlined the many areas of partnership between Warren Wilson College and the City of Asheville.

Mayor Bellamy then introduced Ms. Margaret Henderson, facilitator with the School of Government. Ms. Henderson reviewed the ground rules for effective groups; asked each Council member (and Mayor Bellamy asked City staff) what they hoped to gain from the retreat and what they have to contribute to the success of working together; and what reputation or legacy does Council hope to collectively create for the benefit of Asheville now and in 2020. Assessing the internal and external circumstances, at Ms. Henderson's request, Council members stated their thoughts about circumstances in the City and circumstances outside the City but with local impact.

Setting Goals for 2010-11

Mayor Bellamy noted that the strategic goal-setting process will be for the period of July 1, 2010, through June 30, 2011, as the City is currently working on the 2009-10 Strategic Goals. She explained that after Council identifies their 2010-11 strategic goals, City staff will wordsmith the goals and bring the individual focus areas back to Council for their approval, and then Council will adopt their entire 2010-11 Strategic Goals. Council agreed to this process and reaffirmed the existing 2009-10 goals.

Councilman Davis provided Council members with the following list of items he would like addressed: (1) Downtown Issues (A) continue implementation of Downtown Master Plan; (B) accelerate discussion of Business Improvement District; (C) cleanliness, educate property owners of their responsibility, City lead the way; (D) parking, sooner than later evaluation of fee structure – on-street parking suffering, back-up in garages with new equipment; (E) Pack Square Park fee structure, push backs from users; and (F) homelessness (i) A-HOPE; and (ii) western gateway corridor; (2) Civic Center Issues (recognizing budget constraints, be accomplished utilizing the Civic Center Commission working with staff and Council (A) continue improvement of image (i) actively promote the number and quality of events, the success stories; (ii) track economic impact – overnight stays, zip codes of patrons, restaurant impact; and (iii) promote small subsidy to taxpayers; (B) improvement of facility (i) cleanliness; (ii) customer experience, (iii) opportunity to use residual of actual revenue below budget for capital improvement; and (iv) Sports Commission; and (C) Southern Conference bid (opportunity to partner with Tourism Development Authority); (3) Continue support of Riverfront Redevelopment Commission; (4) Stormwater Utility (A) understanding of revenue generated; and (B) accomplishments. Action items include (1) Azalea Park Road paving; (2) Continue active partnership with UNC-Asheville, Chamber of Commerce, Buncombe County, Asheville Tourists Baseball and City to recruit, coordinate and leverage athletic and recreational events sharing venues and assets promoting economic development ultimately leading to a Sports Commission; (3) Successful bid for the Southern Conference Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament for 2012-15; (4) Big South Lady's Basketball Tournament bid; and (5) Trash receptacles in western gateway corridor.

Throughout considerable discussion by Council, the following goals were grouped into the five focus areas: Affordable, Fiscal Responsibility, Green/Sustainable, Safe, and Job Growth/Community Development.

Affordable

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- Transit oriented affordable housing
- Hold the line on taxes and support efforts to look at tax and fee relief
- Support diversified job growth and small business development
- Support the Housing Authority to develop a comprehensive plan for public housing; continue to pursue redevelopment of public housing with a HOPE IV-type project
- Support initiatives to end homelessness in Asheville
- Continue support of Housing Trust Fund
- Eagle-Market Street Redevelopment – Support progress and momentum in Mt. Zion Property
- Explore opportunities to enhance affordability through reducing utility costs and energy efficiency programs (public facilities and community and private properties)
- Implement reforms to Unified Development Ordinance that will enhance affordable housing as outlined in the Affordable Housing Plan
- Affordable transportation options; align with affordable housing development
- Small business support revisions through reduction in taxes, fees, restrictive regulations (e.g., sign regulations)
- Improve frequency of transit on major corridor service
- Restructure water rates to encourage conservation, affordability for residential user
- What will City's policy on affordable housing be? Look at zoning in key corridors to encourage affordable housing, e.g. public support for affordable developments via public/private partnerships. Creative financing to incent the type of development Council wants to see
- City support of non-profits that develop affordable housing
- Continue support for HOPE VI-type projects
- Continue to support initiatives to end homelessness with emphasis on Housing First philosophy and related strategies
- Balance affordability goals with fiscal responsibility
- Provide free bus passes to individuals who receive services at A-HOPE
- Explore Bus Pass Program to enhance affordability
- City staff directed to capture language about broad support for affordable housing.
- Ensure stormwater program effectiveness and value for fees charged
- Better communicate/understand the stormwater utility revenue and how it is used and invested in community; review policy direction of utility and Capital Improvement Plan
- Ensure appropriate utility rates

Fiscal Responsibility

- Maintain balanced budget and review Fund Balance levels/policy
- Review revenue streams and reliability
- Discuss financing of capital improvements and infrastructure with City and through partnerships
- Explore funding opportunities through county partnership
- **Combine** - Attract and retain quality employees with an emphasis on local labor pool development opportunities **AND** Ensure operational effectiveness by paying sound wages and benefits
- **Combine** - Ensure financial accountability by matching resources with strategic initiatives and creating meaningful performance measures **AND** Filter City Council's strategic planning through the probability of a near-term economic downturn **AND** Operate the City of Asheville's organization to the highest fiscal responsibility
- Sustain a healthy Fund Balance in accordance with recommended State standards
- Leverage internal and external partnerships for Capital Improvement Projects and infrastructure improvements; think creatively about City property (Mayor Bellamy used a PowerPoint presentation to point out several different partnership opportunities)
- Form subcommittee to review Master Plans and interdependencies
- Explore feasibility of bond program now or in future years; get information about financial options outside of property tax increase
- Implement ways to reduce City-wide solid waste
- Efficiencies in Master Plan implementation
- Proactively pursue funding opportunities with state and federal economic stimulus packages
- Review cost recovery for sewer line improvements
- Review utility billing cycle and methods (Finance Committee)

Green/Sustainable

- Work with regional partners to create incentives for green building, energy conservation and energy independence
- Expand community education programs to attract volunteers to initiatives, including climate awareness, water conservation, recycling, stormwater, and sustainability
- Take sustainability program/energy reduction goal to the next level (4% minimum – how do we get there)
- Set a community energy/energy efficiency reduction goal
- Integrate and implement a multi-modal transportation plan including sidewalks, bike paths, signal preemption, transit, greenways, and other system improvements resulting in a funding priority list
- Work cooperatively with state and county elected officials to enable the city to implement practical water system management and voluntary annexation policies

Job Growth/Community Development

- Provide leadership in buying local products and services
- Increase downtown cleanliness and beautification efforts
- Support the riverfront redevelopment partnership and dedicated office
- Complete the Downtown Master Plan process and begin implementation of the Plan
- Expand partnerships with UNC-Asheville, A-B Tech, Mars Hill College and other institutions to achieve common goals, including health and wellness, workforce development, and sustainable economic development
- Partner in regional economic development strategies, including the HUB; continue partnership in the Economic Development Coalition
- Enhance diversity throughout the City as an organization so that the workforce more closely resembles the community, especially in the area of public safety
- Pursue models for re-formatting the Unified Development Ordinance
- Promote sustainable, high-density, infill growth that make efficient use of existing resources

Safe

- Make Asheville the safest city in America based on approved metrics for similarly sized cities (City staff directed to look at survey data and come back with a specific bullet on accountability)
- Track and monitor performance of nuisance court
- Reaffirm commitment to eliminate open air drug market in Asheville
- **Mayor to re-work bullet** - Support of recreation and employment alternatives for youth at risk of gang exposure
- Support the Safe Routes to School program by implementing one school this year
- Develop an Action Plan for maintaining fire and rescue standard of cover
- **Staff to work on language** – Maintain Fire Accreditation and ISO ratings and continue to increase inspection program to 90%

Councilman Russell asked that more detailed information be included in the fiscal impact section on staff reports.

Mayor Bellamy stated that she was not comfortable in pursuing annexations this year. Vice-Mayor Newman stated that he would like to place on an upcoming Planning & Economic Development Committee meeting agenda the City policy of not annexing manufacturing facilities in areas that meet annexation requirements, with an idea of possibly phasing in their property tax over a reasonable period of time.

It was the consensus of Council to direct the City Manager (1) to provide Council with a report regarding studying the impact of the changes in the Minimum Housing Code, such as rescinding mandatory rental property inspections; (2) to review bicycle safety from the bicyclist and automobile driver points of view and report to the Public Safety Committee prior to being reported to the full Council.

City Council expressed their appreciation for City staff's efforts in preparing the Financial Crossroads paper.

After a quick evaluation of the process, at 5:10 p.m. Mayor Bellamy recessed the meeting until 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 9, 2010.

January 9, 2010 – 9:00 a.m.

Present: Mayor Terry M. Bellamy Presiding; Vice-Mayor Brownie W. Newman, Councilman Cecil Bothwell; Councilman Jan B. Davis; Councilwoman Esther E. Manheimer; Councilman William A. Russell Jr.; Councilman Gordon D. Smith; City Manager Gary W. Jackson; City Attorney Robert W. Oast Jr.; and City Clerk Magdalen Burleson

At 9:00 a.m. Mayor Bellamy reconvened the meeting. There was a brief reflection on the goal setting process.

Master Plans

City staff responded to various questions/comments throughout the introduction and update on each of the following Master Plans making sure that Council aware of what staff is currently working on and trying to implement: City 2025 Plan, Water Asset Management Plan, Affordable Housing Plan, Comprehensive Bike Plan, Downtown Master Plan, Downtown Parking Plan, Parks & Greenways Master Plan, Pedestrian Thoroughfare Plan, Sustainability Master Plan, Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, Wayfinding Master Plan, Wilma Dykeman Riverway Plan, Transit Master Plan, Water System Master Plan, Civic Center Renovation Study, and Swannanoa Flood Damage Assessment Study.

City Manager Jackson was directed to compile a report of the accomplishments of the Pedestrian Thoroughfare Plan, the Parks & Greenways Master Plan, and the Comprehensive Bike Plan, particularly noting the use of economic stimulus funds. He was also directed to prepare a report summarizing the bicycle infrastructure improvements, sidewalk improvements and bicycle and pedestrian improvements that are forthcoming.

When Public Works Director Cathy Ball noted that the biggest hold-up in moving forward on some plans is getting easements, Councilwoman Manheimer commented on how labor intensive it is for staff to negotiate easements and noted that MSD outsources their condemnation components. Mayor Bellamy, member on the MSD Board, explained MSD's procedure. City Manager Jackson was directed to (1) bring back the existing City policy on non-condemnation for Council to revisit; and (2) in the next six months, review the MSD model for right-of-way condemnations for the Planning & Economic Development Committee review prior to coming to the full Council under the Consent Agenda, if appropriate.

City Manager Jackson was directed to provide Council a review of the 2008 Consultant's Report on bond capacity during the next quarterly update.

Partnerships

Mayor Bellamy noted that the City has a bi-monthly meeting with the Chamber of Commerce and felt it would be beneficial for City Council to be prepared to discuss partnership opportunities with them. She felt it was important to discuss the current and potential partnerships we have with the Chamber of Commerce, the N.C. Dept. of Transportation, the Buncombe County Commissioners, the State legislators, the Tourism Development Authority, and others. However, due to time constraints, it was the consensus of Council to schedule a worksession on Tuesday, January 19, 2010, at 5:00 p.m. in the First Floor North Conference Room to discuss strategic partnerships with other governmental, private and non-profit entities.

City Council Rules of Procedure

Mayor Bellamy provided Council with a copy of the City Council Rules of Procedure. She reviewed the "Form to Request Items on City Council Agenda" ("Form") that she felt would be beneficial to the process.

It was the consensus of Council that (1) all Council Members would submit the Form to the City Clerk for an item to be placed on the agenda; and (2) an urgent item would be considered by Council (without having to go through a Council Subcommittee) if a total of three Council members requested it. The Form would still need to be sent to the City Clerk. City Attorney Oast was directed to prepare an amendment to the City Council Rules of Procedure pertaining to this item to be placed on the January 26 agenda.

It was the consensus of Council that once a Council Committee has reviewed an item that unless there is some significant new aspect, it would not have to be reviewed again by that Council Committee.

City Attorney Oast was directed to see if there was a way to compress the number of times a project must be brought before the Council.

Work Processes

City Manager Jackson provided Council with a memorandum outlining protocols and procedures used by staff in the City Manager's Office to provide administrative support to the Mayor and City Council.

After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of Council that if a Council Member wants to have a meeting to conduct City business during normal business hours in the City Hall, Public Works Facility or the Municipal Building and the space is reasonably available, that City staff will accommodate the request for space only, not staff support. If space is not available in those buildings, then the meeting will need to be held in one of the community centers.

It was the consensus of Council for Mayor Bellamy to place on a future Council meeting agenda consideration of approval of the RICH Task Force, Mayor's Committee on (Dis)abilities, and Mayor's Committee on Veteran's Affairs in order for these programs to receive City staff resources. Mayor Bellamy also supported keeping the City of Asheville Youth Leadership Academy program as a Council program.

Boards & Commissions Members/Liaisons Assignments for 2010-11

Discussion and appointments were made for the City Council liaison and mandatory seats for Council on the various boards and commissions. City Clerk Burleson has a complete listing of all appointments made.

Adjournment

At 1:35 p.m., Mayor Bellamy thanked City Council, Ms. Henderson, City staff and Warren Wilson College for their participation in the retreat and adjourned the meeting.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR