

Friday – January 30, 2015 - 9:00 a.m.
U.S. Cellular Center - Banquet Hall

Retreat

Present: Mayor Esther E. Manheimer, Presiding; Vice-Mayor Marc W. Hunt; Councilman Cecil Bothwell; Councilman Jan B. Davis; Councilman Christopher A. Pelly; Councilman Gordon D. Smith; Councilwoman Gwen C. Wisler; City Manager Gary W. Jackson; Interim City Attorney Martha Walker-McGlohon; and City Clerk Magdalen Burleson

Absent: None

Mayor Manheimer convened the meeting and introduced Ms. Laura Cohn, who would be facilitating the retreat.

Each Council member shared what they felt were some accomplishments and/or moments of pride that stood out for them when looking back at 2014, what their top 2-3 priorities are for 2015, and why those priorities are important to them.

City Manager Jackson, Executive Director of Planning and Multimodal Transportation Cathy Hall and Chief Financial Officer Barbara Whitehorn highlighted the 2014 accomplishments, the Strategic Operating Plan and Two-Year Work Plan, and financial concept in looking ahead.

City Council then invited the public to join them in the following three breakout sessions to discuss the 2015-16 Strategic Operating Plan: Economic Growth & Sustainability; Affordability & Economic Mobility; and High Quality of Life. Following the breakout sessions, facilitators presented a high level review from each breakout group.

City Council then discussed their priorities and goals for 2015-16, as follows:

Councilman Pelly - include pedestrian safety when we look to make Asheville one of the safest cities; make crosswalks safer on some state highways that run through the city; begin addressing the backlog of needed sidewalk linkages across the City; request the City commit to five miles of new sidewalks annually including \$500,000 a year towards neighborhood sidewalks; and research bidding out leaf pick-up services rather than doing it in-house.

Councilman Davis - work closely with the Metropolitan Planning Organization on a regional basis for I-26 and to obtain connectivity on greenways, etc.; strongly pursue N.C. Dept. of Transportation funding for the River Arts District; work with Green Opportunities; double the CAYLA Program; update the Kimley-Horn Report on parking to see what the downtown parking needs are; review of the downtown street cleaning contract and continually assess or needs in keeping downtown clean; continue keeping public safety a high priority in the downtown which includes having the Police Department well staffed and visible; some areas in downtown are not adequately lit; need for new Christmas decorations as current ones are faded; request for fireworks at First Night of Asheville; and renovation of the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium.

Vice-Mayor Hunt - review of Council's goals for for infill density and how development relates to affordability and quality of life in neighborhoods; update the 2025 Comprehensive Plan; update the Unified Development Ordinance; dialogue with the community about the Asheville Police Department Strategic Plan; connection with boards/commissions and other advocacy groups; engage in the planning process for the Comprehensive Stormwater Plan; research a Pay as You Throw solid waste program to increase recyclables and move toward composting; continue improvement with partnering with Buncombe County; and continue to work with the Housing Authority for the revitalization of Lee Walker Heights.

Councilman Bothwell - need for mandatory review and mandatory compliance for architectural review of not only downtown and River Arts District projects, but projects throughout the City; review definition of Urban Place District; continue to fix pockets of mis-zoned areas; dissolve conditional zonings; need for Planning & Zoning Commission to do more planning and less review; need to increase parking fees downtown; research Pay as You Throw Program to reduce our waste streams; advocate for free-graffiti walls or some type of program where the walls are painted over after a certain period of time; and ban Styrofoam cups and containers and packing peanuts.

Councilman Smith - consciously plan for the land use and growth; complete the economic development incentive review and research minority business development; support a living wage for all City employees; looking forward to seeing how we act on the Classification and Compensation Study with our limited resources; support Green Opportunities; explore municipal broadband and what it would take to have it for our public housing residents; look for solutions to solve the affordable housing crisis, e.g., alternatives for gentrification, review of our accessory structure rules, institute tiny home regulations, move forward with land-banking, look at artist/live work spaces; increase Affordable Housing Trust Fund by \$100,000 a year; work with the Housing Authority on the revitalization of Lee Walker Heights; move forward the River Arts District Transportation Improvement Program (RADTIP); work with the N.C. Dept. of Transportation on the I-26 Project; recommit to the Food Action Plan and work towards a Food Action Plan - Phase 2; update the Unified Development Ordinance and the 2025 Comprehensive Plan; review our stormwater infrastructure; review the Haywood Road Traffic Study; review downtown parking and attempt to work with surface property owners downtown to provide additional parking; be an accessible government with more portals for the people to interact, offer input and provide data to Council; and move towards open data.

Councilwoman Wisler - revisit the Unified Development Ordinance; update the 2025 Comprehensive Plan; tie the Multimodal Transportation Plan in with the land use policies; transparent Police Chief search process with community input; implementation of the Police Department Strategic Plan; review the Civil Service Board process; focus on pedestrian safety; work with the region on transit issues; focus on the goals outlined by the Sustainable Advisory Committee on Energy & the Environment; review of Parks & Recreation and other city-owned facilities (like the US Cellular Center) and come up with a strategic plan on what we want to spend on these facilities and if there is no future plan for growth and investment, what our exit strategy would be; Council to focus better on what they ask City staff to work on; and continue to focus on community engagement by better reach out and communication with them.

Mayor Manheimer - collaboration, community engagement and partnership with stakeholders, citizens, other cities and counties; and revitalization of Lee Walker Heights and other public housing projects.

Using the discussion by Council, along with the information from the breakout sessions, City Council discussed the priorities and goals for 2015, with the purpose of reviewing and updating the Strategic Operating Plan.

It was the consensus of Council to have City staff wordsmith their priorities and goals and provide them to the Governance Committee for review and finalization at a formal meeting for adoption within six weeks.

Director of Communication and Public Engagement Dawa Hitch provided Council an update on communication, which included a new City News Site, the State of the City production; additional resources; website improvements which also include an open government page, and communication campaigns; more opportunity for live streaming and videos; over 10,000 followers on Twitter; and a diverse portfolio.

At 3:15 p.m., Mayor Manheimer adjourned the meeting and announced that City Council will gather for dinner later that evening.

City Clerk

Mayor