

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP
CITY COUNCIL, VENICE, FLORIDA

JANUARY 29, 2010

A Strategic Planning Workshop of the City Council was held this date at Village on the Isle, 930 South Tamiami Trail, Venice, Florida. Dr. Larry Ritcey of Ritcey-O'Loan and Associates served as facilitator. The meeting began at 8:09 a.m.

ELECTED OFFICIALS AND OTHERS PRESENT

The following elected officials were present: Mayor Ed Martin, Vice Mayor Ernie Zavodnyik, and Council Members Jim Bennett, Emilio Carlesimo, Sue Lang, Kit McKeon, and John K. Moore (8:24).

Also present: City Attorney Bob Anderson, City Clerk Lori Stelzer, City Manager Isaac Turner, Finance Director Jeff Snyder, Assistant City Manager Nancy Woodley, General Manager of Development Services Tom Slaughter, Utilities Director Len Bramble, City Engineer Kathleen Weeden, Public Information Officer Pam Johnson, and Recording Secretary Judy Gamel.

I. INTRODUCTION

After welcoming remarks, Mayor Martin initiated discussion concerning a State of the City event.

Mr. Turner outlined the workshop format of accessing completed projects and refocusing on remaining goals, and introduced workshop facilitator Larry Ritcey, Ritcey-O'Loan and Associates.

II. OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & LEADING CHANGE

Dr. Ritcey stated that each of the seven strategic goals would be reviewed by staff and followed by discussion, with the afternoon session consisting of roundtable discussions. Dr. Ritcey briefly discussed how good leadership, decision making and planning processes, and organizational changes affect strategic plans.

III. STAFF PRESENTATIONS

- a. Accomplishments of 2009 – Pam Johnson

Ms. Johnson reviewed strategic goals and presented an overview of staff assignments taken from the Strategic Goals Quarterly Tracking Report. Ms. Johnson noted that of 281 total assignments, 77 assignments were complete and 57 were inactive until completion of the Comprehensive Plan.

- b. Financially Sound City – Financial Constraints/Forecasts – Goal 4 – Jeff Snyder

Mr. Snyder reviewed the status of the current economy and strategies being utilized to meet financial goals.

(9:04) Discussion followed regarding declining property values, increasing sales taxes, health insurance premiums, supplemental insurance coverage, impact fees, staff providing input concerning council's direction, cost saving measures, city-wide computer system improvements, and beach renourishment funding.

c. Sustainable Controlled Growth – Goal 1 – Tom Slaughter

(9:29) Mr. Slaughter discussed staff initiatives for responding to council's strategies for the city's growth including responding to the Objections, Recommendations, and Comments report and transmittal of the Comprehensive Plan to the Department of Community Affairs. Mr. Slaughter commented on areas that staff was reviewing in the Land Development Code, such as zoning district and map amendments, architectural overlays, compatibility standards, conditional use, landscaping, and transportation and connectivity. He continued with an outline of customer service and cost recovery plans.

Discussion ensued regarding staff response to citizen and council input.

Mr. Slaughter concluded his presentation with a strategy for operating within budget constraints which included monitoring expenses and initiating cost cutting measures.

Discussion followed regarding providing customer service, reviewing development processes, non-profit organization fee breaks, tax reductions, and establishing fees.

Recess was taken from 9:53 a.m. until 10:05 a.m.

d. Keep Venice Beautiful and Eco-Friendly – Goals 2 & 3 – Kathleen Weeden

Ms. Weeden reviewed Goal 2 strategies which included landscaping, creating parks, design and architectural standards, maintenance standards for vacant buildings, and park land acquisition, and Goal 3 strategies including Green Community certifications, restoring and conserving habitats, promoting eco-tourism, implementing a harbor management plan, landscaping, and conservation opportunities. Ms. Weeden proposed combining Goals 2 and 3 into one goal entitled Keep Venice Beautiful and Eco-Friendly and adding strategies improving stormwater water quality, providing energy efficiency opportunities, and pursuing grant funding for energy efficient city infrastructure.

Discussion followed regarding free overnight docking, harbor management, free vehicle parking at the South Jetty, harbormaster services, RFQ language, council approving vendor agreements, skateboard parks, outfalls, and water quality.

e. Water Conservation Model/Upgrading Infrastructure – Goal 5 – Len Bramble

(10:36) Mr. Bramble discussed water usage, water rates, upgrading water and wastewater infrastructure, funding upgrades, and capital improvement planning, and followed up with recommendations to explore ways to conserve drinking water; complete master planning for potable water, waste water, and reclaimed water; replace the membrane and control system; establish renewal and replacement funding; and develop a capital improvement program for utilities.

(10:55) Discussion followed regarding comparisons of water treatment plants, grant and stimulus funding requirements, and major projects and routine maintenance projects.

f. Growing Diverse Economy – Goal 6 – Isaac Turner & Jeff Snyder

Mr. Snyder noted ways to attract new businesses and revitalize existing businesses including streamlining the permitting process; approving new construction; and working with the Economic Development Council, Venice MainStreet, and the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce.

Discussion ensued regarding relationships with the business community, extending the school district's ad valorem millage increase of one mill, and business permit fees.

g. Affordable Housing – Goal 7 – Tom Slaughter

(11:29) Mr. Slaughter discussed affordable housing in relation to Comprehensive Plan policies; partnerships with Sarasota County and non-profit organizations; land development regulations; and benchmark and monitoring of the Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan, rental housing conversions, and market influences and corrections. Mr. Slaughter provided strategies for promoting affordable and workforce housing including adopting a Comprehensive Plan that provides incentives, exploring public and private partnerships for construction, exploring opportunities for mixed use development as part of the implementation of the joint redevelopment study with Sarasota County along U.S. 41 Bypass, and determining the future role and disposition of manufactured home communities.

Discussion followed regarding workforce housing being compatible with existing neighborhoods, workforce housing models, criteria, and protecting existing workforce housing.

Recess was taken from 11:45 a.m. until 12:31 p.m.

IV. CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Mr. Ritcey asked council members to make a list of three discussion topics of importance, to be included with Mr. Turner's list which included supporting the school tax, the state of the city, company tours, and water treatment plant (Seaboard area). He also discussed how good leadership, levels of conflict, and organizational changes affect planning and decision making processes.

Council members agreed to accept Ms. Weeden's proposal to combine Goals 2 and 3 into one goal entitled "Keep Venice Beautiful and Eco-Friendly" and add three strategies: Improve stormwater water quality (Venice Avenue Drainage Project and Flamingo Ditch/Deertown Gully evaluation), Co-partner with Sarasota County to provide energy efficiency opportunities (Currently being

pursued), and Pursue grant funding to improve energy efficient city infrastructure (Federal and state grant requests in process).

Council members also agreed to add ongoing strategies under Strategic Goal 7, Affordable and Workforce Housing, as a strategy under Strategic Goal 1, Sustainable Controlled Growth.

Discussion ensued regarding the Quarterly Tracking Report matrix; affordable housing being a follower of growth; and ways to integrate affordable housing strategies into Goal 1.

Mayor Martin left the workshop from 12:49 p.m. until 12:52 p.m.

Per Mr. Ritcey's request, council members presented significant topics including media coverage and relationships with local media; council interaction with corporate boards; Seaboard Avenue and north Venice Municipal Airport planning areas; accounting "101"; airport; citizen complaint handling process; streamlining the permitting process; Circus Arena; budgeting process; land development regulation priorities; re-use water; taxes; welcoming businesses; solar power; demarcation of Paw Park; services for young people; and utility infrastructure.

(1:08) Current and future planning for the north airport area was discussed including retaining planners to obtain input from council, the public, and the Economic Development Task Force (EDTF) to prepare a vision for the airport area. Council members prioritized areas in need of development including the airport, Seaboard Avenue, Laurel Road, and the Circus Arena. Discussion ensued concerning demolishing or restoring the Circus Arena and cleaning up and developing the surrounding property, maintaining city gateways, being business-friendly, and working with the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce to support extending the school district's ad valorem one mil increase.

(1:50) Mr. Zavodnyik handed out and discussed an information sheet outlining a proposal for streamlining the city's permitting process.

Discussion followed concerning problems that small businesses encounter when obtaining permits, having a welcoming attitude toward small businesses, and building the city's relationships with the media and small businesses at the state of the city event.

Recess was taken from 2:08 p.m. until 2:24 p.m.

Council members discussed their relationship with city boards including the perception that council did not respond to boards, some boards being more productive than other boards, giving direction to boards, lack of communication, the EDTF business plan presentation, joint meetings with council, boards not being decision making authorities, staggering board member terms, and board vacancies.

(3:18) Mr. Anderson offered suggestions to alert council members of city board term expirations including the clerk notifying council members of board vacancies prior to term expirations, which would allow council members to recommend that citizens submit board applications to the clerk's office. Mr. Anderson also suggested sending board vacancies to outside agencies.

Council members discussed media relations. Ms. Johnson commented on negative and incorrect information in newspaper articles, and encouraged council members to remain positive with responses to reporters.

Recess was taken from 3:31 p.m. until 3:38 p.m.

Council members discussed utilities issues including utilizing solar power, water conservation, upgrading water and wastewater infrastructure, the capital projects list, the Utilities Department budget, prioritizing utility infrastructure maintenance, reclaimed water, grey water, water storage, utility rates workshops, utility rate increases, remediation of membranes, and the utility rate study.

Mr. Bramble advised that the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority (Authority) was constructing a major north/south transmission line through Venice and were interested in selling water during good times and finding other sources of water during adverse times. Mr. Bramble recommended discussing this option with Executive Director Patrick Lehman.

Council members discussed previous opinions that the Authority only sought to purchase city water.

Council members agreed with Mr. Turner's suggestion that staff present information concerning the Wastewater Master Plan, the Water Master Plan, and the first phase of the membrane system replacement to council at a regular meeting in February. Mr. Turner commented on responses to members of the media.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:31 p.m.

ATTEST:

Mayor – City of Venice

City Clerk