



**BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT
February 27-28, 2020
PARKER'S ON PONCE**

MINUTES

Members Present: Jonathan Elmore, Mayor
Brian Fisher, Mayor Pro Tem
Lionel Laratte, Commissioner
Lisa Shortell, Commissioner
Dee Merriam, Commissioner

Staff Present: Patrick Bryant, City Manager
Shannon Powell, Asst. City Manager
Paul Hanebuth, Asst. City Manager
Stephen Quinn, City Attorney
Gina Hill, City Clerk

Former Decatur Mayor Bill Floyd facilitated the retreat. To be successful, he said it's important to recognize that change will happen and it will be controversial. Leadership in the face of change is doing what needs to be done for the long-term interest of the community. Mr. Floyd's other actions for success include continue to plan, invest for the future, invest tax payer money in the community, work with the right people, and narrow ideas down to overarching principles and goals that inform direction.

City staff had three areas of focus. One is building a downtown. That included such projects as the US278 redesign, zoning rewrite, historic preservation guidelines, the street grid, stormwater, and the town green. Another focus was restructuring and creating systems and processes. Examples cited included establishing day-to-day operation procedures, scheduling maintenance of public spaces, restructuring code enforcement program, revamping communication strategy, revising human resources manual, revamping the administrative assistant position, revising the evaluation process for employees, evaluating the city's retirement plan, and staffing needs or changes. The final goal was to continue regular city operations.

The group discussed tasks for 2020. One of those was staffing. Staff for the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), which also serves as the Main Street America Board, was a topic. The DDA is in need of assistance but the optimal way to achieve that was unclear. City staff will also explore filling the financial position that's already been approved as well as the potential to need a construction project manager.

Progress on the US278 redesign project will also continue. City Manager Bryant and Assistant City Manager Powell will plan for right-of-way acquisition work on a communication plan for construction. The goal was to complete this by July 1st.

For the town green project, consultants, staff and the public should complete design of the park – including the Washington/Parry connection and street grid – by June 2020. The development team and Fabric Development will work out a development agreement by June or July 2020.

By this July, consultants and city staff will have completed the zoning code rewrite (central business district, residential and sign) including process ordinances.

A request for proposals (RFP) for the stormwater master plan has just been released with the aim of hiring a firm for the project this July. The plan could be completed by December of this year.

Communications will be an ongoing project. Assistant City Manager Powell and Communications Manager Rebecca Long have road map for external communications. Internal communications will focus on updates and talking points for the Board of Mayor and Commissioners (BOMC) and other involved parties. Members of the BOMC will continue to make connections with other area officials.

A facilities improvement plan was also discussed. City Manager Bryant will use budgeted funds to address problems at the existing public works building by August 1st. He will simultaneously work with a real estate agent to locate a new location for lease or sale outside the central business district. The group talked about points to consider, such as security, parking and space needs. Since the needs at city hall will likely change in the coming months and years, Mr. Bryant will work with an architect to explore changes to the existing building.

The process and procedures for public city meetings will be changing. For starters, there was consensus to vote on proposed ordinances after two public readings instead of three. This was an idea supported by the city attorney. There was also agreement to change the BOMC meeting schedule. There would still be two meetings per month but each meeting would include a work session and regular meeting afterwards. Items voted on in the regular meeting portion would have been discussed at the work session two weeks prior. Invocations would also be dropped from the regular meetings. In addition, there will be monthly commissioner chats that are regularly scheduled and open to all members of the BOMC. The BOMC will hold a town hall meeting to discuss these changes with the public before anything is implemented. The BOMC aspired to address this within the next few months.

Annexation was another topic to be considered. There was agreement that the city was never prepared to move forward with any annexation when timing called for it. There was consensus that long-term steps may include resident outreach, communication with legislators and also with those in potential annexation areas. In the short term, City Manager Bryant will look into hiring a lobbyist to look out for the city's interests. Staff will also amend the stormwater RFP to collect existing infrastructure data for existing annexation map.

Assistant City Manager Hanebuth will do a preliminary study of senior tax relief options and present his findings to the BOMC at a future work session.

There was not time to discuss all the topics on the attendees' wish list. Items not covered included traffic calming for the residential area, cybersecurity, sustainability, public art, and plans for unused greenspace.

APPROVED THIS 22nd DAY OF JUNE 2020



Jonathan Eimore, Mayor

ATTEST:



Gina Hill, City Clerk