

January 25, 2014 Annual Strategic Planning Summit Summary
Approved: February 25, 2014

CITY OF COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL

ANNUAL STRATEGIC PLANNING SUMMIT

Saturday, 25 January 2014, 8:10 a.m. — 2:35 p.m.

Maplewood Golf Club

SUMMARY

OF THE COUNCIL'S MAJOR AGREEMENTS AT THE MEETING

Attending: Mayor Margaret Harto, Mayor Pro Tem Jeff Wagner, Councilors Joe Cimaomo, Mark Lanza, Marlla Mhoon, Jim Scott, and Wayne Snoey; City Manager Derek Matheson; Management Team members Noreen Beaufriere, Richard Hart, Rob Hendrickson, Kevin Klason, Sharon Scott, Karla Slate, Scott Thomas, and Don Vondran; facilitator Jim Reid.

Guests: Sean Smith, Paul Max, Dave Lucavish, and Liz Fast

MAJOR AGREEMENTS OF THE SUMMIT

The major agreements of the City Council at its 2014 Summit were:

1. **Vision, Mission, and Goals:**

- a. The vision and mission statements were reaffirmed. Council members commented that the City's new branding will help advance the vision even further.
- b. The goal that addresses neighborhoods was changed so that it will now read: "**Neighborhoods:** Foster community cohesiveness, communication, and cooperation, and maintain neighborhoods that offer a variety of housing options that are diverse, safe, accessible, and well-designed."

2. **Council Priorities for Spending a Portion of the Fund Balance:**

- a. The Council agreed to direct Derek and the management team to develop a list of transportation, parks and recreation, and Town Center projects that the Council should consider funding with a portion of the recovering fund balance.
- b. During the discussion, Council members articulated the following interests, which may guide the management team in developing the project list: 1) one-time expenditures; 2) promote economic development; 3) ensure safety, particularly of kids; 4) benefit more than one of the three areas (transportation, parks, Town Center); and 5) set the stage for matching funds from other sources, including the federal and state governments.
- c. Council members also agreed that a 20-30% fund balance should be preserved. They authorized the management team to bring back a variety of spending scenarios, so the exact percentage of the fund balance to be reserved will be determined during the next discussion.

3. Council Priorities for Spending a Portion of Future Surpluses:

- a. The Council agreed that public safety is a very high priority for spending future budget surpluses. More specifically, the Council is interested in working with the Kent School District to fund a School Resource Officer (SRO) who would be primarily stationed at Kentwood High School. The Council is also interested in funding an additional officer for the Covington Police Department.
- b. The Council reached consensus that the funding of the SRO should be placed on a Council agenda as soon as possible, and that the City should immediately inform the Kent School District of the City's interest in working with the District to jointly fund the officer.
- c. Council members agreed that the funding of an additional police officer will be one of their primary interests in the deliberations about the 2015 City budget.
- d. The Council also expressed interest in developing a police department strategic plan in the near-term future. The plan the Council envisions would be similar to the City's transportation and parks strategic plans.

4. Town Center and the CIP and TIP:

- a. The Council agreed that Town Center projects will be a significant part of the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) following completion of the Town Center Study this spring and when the CIP and TIP are next updated.

5. Identifying Additional Revenue Sources:

- a. Council agreed to discuss at its 2015 Summit ideas for generating additional revenues such as the City establishing its own cable utility or applying the utility tax to the sewer and water districts that operate within the City limits.
- b. Council expressed concern about impacts to utility tax revenues from advances in energy efficiencies. Staff will monitor this issue.

6. The City's Role in Youth Athletics:

- a. Council members unanimously agreed that the City should begin to fund and manage youth athletics programs. This means the City will offer the programs currently offered by Covington Sports.
- b. Covington Sports will offer programming through spring 2014. At that point the City will begin to take over the responsibility. The Council agreed that funding for the first year will come from the fund balance, and beginning in the second year will come from the Parks Fund as part of the annual budgeting process.
- c. Council and the parks and recreation staff expect the City to "come out of the gate" offering the same quality programming as Covington Sports, and over time will continuously improve the quality.
- d. Council would like to see a kick-off event or jamboree.

7. Design Guidelines:

- a. Council agreed that the City should strengthen its design standards for building façade modulation in Town Center. The City’s interest is in providing clear and strong guidelines to the developers of private property in the Center. Both Council and staff expect this work to be completed within the next four months.
- b. Council also agreed to begin to address requirements for improving the quality and design of streetlights, crosswalks, and other public amenities within the public right-of-way. The Council agreed to begin that work by answering the five policy questions that Richard and Don posed in their memo for this summit (see page 55 of the summit packet/page 2 of the 17 January 2014 memo). Council also agreed to the suggestion that these questions be answered in the context of the Town Center and in a citywide context. New standards for the public right-of-way are likely to be considered first in the context of Town Center. Because it is a more complicated issue than the building façade modulation standards, the process of improving design standards for the public right-of-way will take more time.

8. The Council’s Relationship with Advisory Committees:

- a. Members of City Commissions have recently requested that Council members attend their meetings to offer perspectives, opinions, and guidance. At the summit the Council members unanimously agreed that it is in the City’s best interests for the Commissions to operate without Council involvement or influence so that their recommendations to the Council are based on their own discussions, analysis, and opinions. The Council agreed that its members should not attend Commission or Advisory Committee meetings.

The Council agreed that Derek and the management team should work with the City Attorney to draft language that could be incorporated into the “Covington City Council Rules of Procedure, Section 5: City Advisory Committees.” Once the language is drafted, the City Manager will submit it to the Council for consideration.

- b. The Council also agreed that language should be inserted into the Commission and Advisory Committee’s “Rules of Procedure” that defines removal procedures of each Commission (not only the Planning Commission). Derek and the management team will work with the City Attorney to draft the language for the Council’s consideration.
- c. The members of the City Council agreed to not establish term limits for Commission or Advisory Committee members because the Council can exercise its right to not reappoint a member.
- d. The Council agreed to make a few changes to the questions asked of candidates for the Commissions, whether the candidates are seeking to be appointed initially or seeking reappointment.

Currently there are seven questions asked of candidates for the Planning Commission, the Covington Economic Development Council, and the Parks and Recreation, Arts and Human Services Commission. The Council agreed to add one more question for future interviews of people applying to serve on these Commissions or Committees. “Part of the Commission’s/Committee’s role is to be an ambassador for the City of Covington. How would you fulfill that role?”

Currently there are seven questions asked of incumbent Commission members who are seeking reappointment. The Council agreed to eliminate questions 2 and 7, and to add this question: "What do you recommend to improve the Commission's work and operations?"

MOST SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2013

As in past years, the Council cited the most important accomplishments of the previous year. By doing so, Council members provided the context and foundation for their goals and priorities during 2014. The biggest accomplishments of 2013 were:

1. Approving the hiring the temporary full-time parks staff person.
2. Moving ahead with the Hawk property, which will provide a mix of housing and tax revenues.
3. Building relationships with Maple Valley and Black Diamond through tri-city forums.
4. The positive, proactive, cohesive City Council.
5. Signing the contract with Republic Services for waste management.
6. Opening Covington Community Park.
7. The way the City has pursued higher educational institutions to partner with us and locate branches here.
8. Establishment of the Transportation Benefit District (TBD), which reflected taking responsibility for the City's finances.
9. Opening of Valley Medical Center's Urgent Care facility in Covington.
10. The City taking over Covington Days—Karla's role, which guaranteed success, the new sponsorship brochures, the new parade route.
11. Implementing the Police Volunteer Program.
12. Pursuing a single developer for Town Center and the Town Center Study.
13. Funding social services in the City's budget.
14. Maintained our excellent staff.
15. The Aquatics Center—we continue to exceed our business goals with the increasing attendance.
16. Developers expressing interest and making inquiries about the City and Town Center that signal renewed economic development.
17. The increasing interest of citizens in serving on the City's Commissions and Advisory Committees.
18. Our participation in regional forums has increased the City's profile and made the Council well known.
19. The renewed interest in SEATS.
20. The City's efforts on branding.
21. Success in the State Legislature, for which we thank our crackerjack lobbying team.
22. Excellent responses we've received from state legislators.
23. As we emerge from the recession, we are beginning to see the benefit of tough and good decisions we made during it.
24. Three Code amendments: clearing/grading; SEPA thresholds; development agreement approach/tax exempt status. Each is making the City's expectations and requirements of development clearer.
25. We are the only city in Washington State whose bond rating went up!

After citing the accomplishments of 2013, individual Council members mentioned these four items that were disappointing or need to be addressed in the near-term future. These items are:

1. The City needs to find a predictable, sustainable source of funding for roads.
2. The failure of the sales tax proposition at the ballot; it would have provided funding for transportation projects within the TBD.

3. Lack of resolution of transportation issues, including funding, at all levels of government. This makes it even more imperative that King County's proposal for funding Metro pass when it comes before the voters.
4. The City's inability to annex the Northern Gateway property.

FUTURE ISSUES ON THE CITY'S HORIZON

Here are issues the Council members cited at the end of the summit that are likely to be on the Council's agenda at sometime in the future:

1. Additional revenue sources
2. Transportation
3. Design guidelines
4. A public safety strategic plan
5. A volunteer coordinator and volunteer program for special events