



Ocala City Council Minutes

Thursday, January 19, 2012

Strategic Planning

151 SE Osceola Avenue
Ocala, FL 34471
www.ocalafl.org

Angel Jacobs
352-629-8266

1. Welcome

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Reuben Kent Guinn	Mayor	Present	
Mary Sue Rich	Council Member	Present	
John McLeod	Council Member	Present	
Daniel Owen	Council Member	Present	
Suzy Heinbockel	Council President	Present	

Municipal Officers/Others Present: The meeting was also attended by City Manager Matthew Brower, Deputy City Manager John Zobler, Assistant City Manager Catherine Cameron, Assistant City Manager Larry Novak, Chief of Staff Support Services Sandra Wilson, City Clerk Angel Jacobs, Fire Chief Bradd Clark, Chief Financial Officer John Lege, Public Communications Manager Jeannine Robbins, Police Chief Greg Graham, IT Representative, Facilitator Jean Freeman, the news media and other interested parties.

2. Strategic Planning Discussion

a. Development of Fiscal Sustainability Goals

Facilitator Jean Freeman reviewed and summarized the discussion from the first Strategic Planning session on January 18th. She reminded Council of the four topics of Fiscal Sustainability, Economic Development, Innovation, and Quality of Place. She requested that City Manager Matthew Brower explain the phrase "Quality of Place." Mr. Brower explained that the phrase "Quality of Place" holds much more power for visualization than the phrase "Quality of Life." Mayor Guinn commented on the lack of distinction between "Quality of Place" and "Quality of Life." Ms. Freeman asked if Mayor Guinn had another alternative. Mayor Guinn responded in the negative.

Council concurred that fiscal sustainability was an important issue to address.

Ms. Freeman suggested Council write a goal that deals specifically with their focus on fiscal sustainability. Council member Owen commented on the difficult decisions that must be made in order to maintain fiscal sustainability. Ms. Freeman voiced agreement and reread the mission statement.

President Heinbockel suggested that there may be some duplication in services within the City of Ocala such as Information Technology and Human Resources in the Police Department. Ms. Freeman commented that is a great point but reminded Council to focus on the larger issues and direct staff to handle that at their level.

Council member Owen expressed concerns of departmental retaliation, and backlash from unfavorable changes that work towards sustainability. Ms. Freeman commented that those issues may be resolved by determining Council goals of innovation and fiscal sustainability

President Heinbockel questioned whether submitting a budget that does not use reserve funds should be a high level goal. Ms. Freeman responded in the affirmative, and explained that fiscal sustainability could be a goal and one of the objectives is to not dip into the reserves. Council member John McLeod voiced agreement. Mayor Guinn commented the City could be falling apart while they are being fiscally prudent. President Heinbockel pointed out that is where the innovation would come in. Ms. Freeman commented she thinks they need to have a goal to address that issue.

Council member Owen questioned what is happening that is causing the City to reach into the reserve funds. He suggested they focus on whatever is causing that need. Ms. Freeman suggested they tell the citizens they are focusing on fiscal sustainability, and direct the City Manager to find ways to go about doing that. Mayor Guinn commented that dipping into the reserves is caused by declining property taxes, the economy, and the way the City is being run. Council member Owen remarked as the sources get thinner, they must focus on making changes. He stated their changes over the past three years have been very positive and emphasized the importance of innovation.

Ms. Freeman asked if the City is able to be fiscally sustainable. Council member Owen remarked if it cannot, there is no sense in being there. President Heinbockel remarked it is possible, but it may be painful for some people. Council member McLeod commented he believes fiscal sustainability is possible. Ms. Freeman suggested they add another goal so that staff knows to address both innovation and fiscal sustainability. President Heinbockel commented they are both important

Mayor Guinn stated the citizens expect a high level of service from the City and expect that to be maintained. Ms. Freeman pointed out citizens in any community want more services and lower taxes. Mayor Guinn commented that is not always the case, and certain citizens are willing to pay more for increased services, such as curbside recycling.

Mr. Brower commented on the use of the reserve funds and that changes were needed. He spoke about the blueprint to fiscal sustainability and remarked that reserve funds should only be used for rainy days. President Heinbockel voiced agreement and commented she does not see an end to the downturn in the economy. Mayor Guinn commented he believes the economy will recover.

Ms. Freeman suggested that Council come up with a goal to maintain fiscal sustainability, and noted they may add smaller objectives that stipulate when they would like to be fiscally sustainable by. Council member Owen commented on focusing on the greater good for these changes. Ms. Freeman recommended staff add goals and objectives to their legislative items. Mayor Guinn commented there used to be a spot for that on the agenda. Mr. Brower stated staff is currently working on revising the agenda and will add goal and objective information.

Ms. Freeman questioned the goals for sustainability. Council member McLeod suggested that one of the goals be to no longer dip into the reserves. Mr. Brower explained staff is focused on adding to the reserves. Mr. Lege suggested the goal of finding a balance between revenues and expenditures. Mr. Brower spoke about the importance of vitality to sustain future growth. Council reworded the goal for innovation into a second objective. Council member Rich voiced her approval.

Ms. Freeman asked Council if they would like to address economic development in the third goal. Mayor Guinn responded in the affirmative and discussed the importance of economic development in Ocala. President Heinbockel voiced agreement. Council member McLeod suggested the City focus on creating an environment that encourages development from the private sector. Ms. Freeman emphasized the focus on the future. Mayor Guinn commented they are now getting into the goal of diversifying the economic portfolio. Ms. Freeman stated diversification is certainly part of that.

Public Communications Manager Jeannine Robbins suggested the inclusion of the term "leverage" to emphasize the way in which the City is willing to move out of the way for the private sector to build. Mr. Brower suggested a goal of making Ocala the economic epicenter for Florida. Mayor Guinn voiced approval. Council discussed the wording.

Council member Owen suggested including wording regarding Ocala's location in the state. Ms. Freeman questioned whether this is a vision or a realistic goal. Council member Owen stated he thinks they already are the epicenter, but they need to embrace it. President Heinbockel remarked they are the gateway in terms of location, and must work towards becoming the financial hub.

Ms. Freeman questioned who sees Ocala as the gateway to Florida. Council member Owen responded Cisco, Walmart, Magna, American Fresh Farms, etc. Ms. Freeman concluded that they are considered a commercial gateway. She suggested rewording of the goal. Mr. Brower emphasized the significance of the wording.

Ms. Wilson suggested "strengthen our position as an economic hub. Ms. Freeman noted the wording will change if this is something the City already is or something they are aspiring to be.

Council discussed the financial hub of central Florida and defined the language of the third goal.

Ms. Freeman questioned whether there were any more goals. President Heinbockel emphasized Ocala as a place to raise a family. Council member Owen recommended they add language to assure citizens they will maintain the feel and charm of the current Ocala. Mayor Guinn commented on the size of a city in relation to its appeal to potential citizens.

Council determined a fourth goal that would address the quality of place. Executive Director Development Services Marc Mondell emphasized the importance of the sense of place citizens feel inside the City.

Council took a short break.

Council concurred on the following goals: 1) finding a balance between revenues and expenditures to ensure long-term fiscal sustainability; 2) maintain a culture of continuous innovation or create system that recognizes and rewards innovation; 3) being the economic hub of north central Florida by leveraging location and resources; and 4) protect and advance the quality of place.

b. Development of Strategic Priorities Continued

Ms. Freeman questioned what strategies Council would like to see within each goal. Council member Owen asked if they should be focusing on a timeline. Ms. Freeman responded Council should focus on the end of fiscal years as a date of completion, but what is most important is that Council thinks these are all things that should be attended to in 2012. Council member Owen

questioned what it would take for staff to reduce dipping into the reserves by 20% by the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Lege responded they currently do not know what the outcome of the blueprint for sustainability is; there are more factors at play than simply setting a number. Mr. Brower asked what strategy Council would like staff to take over the next three years.

Council member Owen discussed options for expanding the population of the City of Ocala. Mr. Brower stated the enterprise fund will be balanced by increasing customers or increasing rates. Council member Owen stated they have the ability to expand throughout Ocala, which would decrease costs for everyone. President Heinbockel added in doing so, they will increase the customers and give them a better product.

Ms. Freeman suggested the strategy to achieve both goals 1 and 3 be to increase the customer base through in-fill. She recommended Council use this in their action plan.

Council member Owen remarked they have to look at the Planning Department because their zoning makes developing in Ocala too complicated. He suggested they have different zoning stipulations for areas like the Magna site versus areas where White-Challis is building. He spoke about over-complicated development in the City.

Ms. Freeman challenged Council to give some thought to strategy. President Heinbockel asked if the 2035 Vision Plan addresses that issue because the high intensity areas will have different zoning rules than the lower intensity areas. Mr. Zobler responded in the affirmative and noted those changes will simplify rules in both types of areas. Council member McLeod commented he does not believe they have time to wait for those changes. Mr. Zobler stated these changes will be coming this year. Council member Owen spoke about a specific shopping center where two oak trees threw off the entire parking lot. He voiced concern about negative feedback.

Ms. Freeman questioned what strategy they would use to balance the budget. President Heinbockel stated the people that are doing their jobs know how to innovate best, and innovation would be constantly asking yourself, "Is this the best way this can be done?" Ms. Freeman questioned how they would measure that innovation. Council member McLeod stated he would like to hear what ways staff thinks they can be better. Mayor Guinn gave the example of PVC's innovation. Council member Owen suggested they take a Jeff Halcomb attitude. Ms. Freeman suggested they set a more tangible goal. Mayor Guinn stated Council may not be able to directly see the differences, but Mr. Brower will report back to Council.

Council member Owen commented he knows the goal is broad, but he believes it is necessary. Mayor Guinn spoke about innovation in the Police Department. Ms. Freeman suggested the City be able to describe the goal in order to show staff how to get there. Mr. Brower spoke about the benefits of innovations such as a strategic hiring freeze. He stated they have an organization that needs to innovate to achieve specific goals such as economic stability.

Ms. Freeman commented goals need to be measurable. Ms. Robbins suggested they expand out the goal to include innovation that benefits the community or that has internal impact. Mr. Zobler remarked they could include language about innovation that addresses technological inefficiencies. Assistant City Manager Larry Novak suggested appropriate use of technology to improve efficiencies while maintaining cross-controls. Council discussed possible language changes to the goal.

Mr. Brower summarized the discussion into the goal of recognizing and enforcing innovative culture. Ms. Freeman revised the goal to maintain a culture of continuous innovation to improve

or enhance the services provided by the City. She stated a better goal may be to establish a system that recognizes and encourages innovation. President Heinbockel voiced agreement. Council member McLeod stated he approves of either option, but he would like to make sure that the idea gets to everyone from the guy at the bottom to the guy at the top. Ms. Freeman commented this sounds more like a goal than a strategy. Mayor Guinn stated he trusts staff to put this goal into practice. Council member McLeod suggested they move forward.

Ms. Freeman stated the goal 2 strategy is to utilize appropriate technology, implement programs to be more efficient, and create system that recognizes and rewards innovation. Council directed staff to consider language revisions.

Ms. Freeman asked if Council had any goal 3 strategies in mind. Mr. Brower spoke about rebranding. President Heinbockel voiced agreement and stated that also falls under goal 4. Council discussed the language for the goal 3 strategy.

Ms. Freeman concluded the goal 3 strategy is to implement the 2035 Vision Plan branding the identity of Ocala and continue marketing the historic downtown.

3. Lunch

4. Strategic Planning Discussion Continued

a. Development of Strategic Priorities

Ms. Freeman asked Council to consider limitations for pursuing the strategies for goals. Council discussed exceptions to strategies for goals such as raising taxes. Mr. Brower spoke about the difference between taxes and fees, and suggested fees remain separate from the discussion as they cover the cost of operation.

Council determined that for strategies to goal 1, they want to maintain core services at current level without raising taxes.

Council determined they did not have any restrictions for goal 2.

Ms. Freeman asked what other stipulations need to go into goal 3. Mr. Brower gave suggestions for strategies in goal 3.

Council determined strategies for goal 3: job creation (promoting the incubator and the recruitment of businesses), maintain infrastructure, enhance amenities, and user-friendly regulations. Mr. Brower noted that the last three may be included in the first.

Ms. Freeman asked Council to consider strategies for goal 4. Mayor Guinn spoke about promoting safety. President Heinbockel emphasized the importance of a united Ocala. She spoke about supporting education and encouraging reading in the youth of Ocala.

Mr. Brower suggested a focus on elevation of the main corridors. Mayor Guinn commented on the benefits of the corridors and suggested they focus on improvements. Council member Owen spoke about the promotion of Ocala.

Council determined strategies for goal 4: reduce crime and the fear of crime, remove barriers through inclusion, unification, support education, and elevate the focus on main corridors of Ocala.

Ms. Freeman asked if Council is happy with their discussion of strategic priorities. Council member Owen commented the difficult part will be implementing these goals.

Mr. Brower advised Council of staff's intention for discussion of Council's priorities, and stated a follow-up to the information will be available within two weeks. He noted the 2012 budget will be developed around these policies.

b. Discussion of Critical Issues

Mr. Brower questioned whether there were any core issues Council would like to discuss.

Mayor Guinn commented that he feels that the session has been helpful. Council member Owen commented that this has been the best session in his eleven years on Council. He stated he looks forward to the future, and even during the hard economic times he feels Ocala is in great shape. He suggested Ms. Freeman return next year to follow up on these goals. Ms. Freeman thanked Council for including her in the discussion. Council member McLeod thanked staff for all of their help. President Heinbockel thanked staff and Council and feels that the two day session went well.

c. Wrap-up

Mr. Brower asked Mr. Zobler to change the date of the discussion on February 14th so that President Heinbockel will be present. He noted he invited members of Senior Management to be present at the discussion.

Ms. Freeman expressed appreciation to Council.

5. Adjournment

Adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

Minutes Approval

Suzy Heinbockel
Council President

Angel B. Jacobs
City Clerk