



City of Olympia

City Hall
601 4th Avenue E
Olympia, WA 98501

Information: 360-753-8447

Meeting Minutes City Council

Saturday, September 15, 2012

8:45 AM

LOTT Board Room - 500 Adams St. NE

Mid Year Council Retreat

1. ROLL CALL

Present: 6 - Mayor Stephen H. Buxbaum, Mayor Pro Tem Nathaniel Jones, Councilmember Jim Cooper, Councilmember Julie Hankins, Councilmember Steve Langer and Councilmember Karen Rogers

Excused: 1 - Councilmember Jeannine Roe

2. [12-0558](#) City Council Mid-Year Retreat

Attachments: [1. Agenda](#)
[2. 2012 Retreat Notes](#)
[3. 2012 Priorities Mid-Year Update](#)
[4. Guidelines Proposed Changes](#)

Mayor Buxbaum opened the meeting and welcomed everyone at 9:00 am.

Others Present:
Facilitator Kendra Dahlen, FLT Consulting
City Manager Steve Hall
Assistant City Manager Jay Burney
Communications Manager Cathie Butler

The Council broke into small groups to discuss "High Performing Council Accomplishments."

After coming together and discussing the accomplishments, Council agreed on the following:

Working Well:

- Engage in proactive, ongoing communication – avoid unnecessary surprises and acknowledge them when they occur*
- After close vote, remain direct, respectful, connected in our communication – move on and affirm integrity of the process*
- Be realistic about what can and can't be achieved/ avoid making promises we can't keep*
- Treat all citizens with respect and acknowledge the emotions with which they often come to the Council meetings*
- Avoid triangulating with other Council members and staff*
- Manage expectations regarding Council's process and what's realistic*
- Committees are working well, moving forward together. The Downtown Project in Land Use Committee is example an of effective committee work*
- Avoided temptation to "get into the weeds" and remain strategic in decision making -*

- High functioning group that is working well in general
- Good ongoing progress - moving forward together!

Work in Progress

- Communication with one another:
 - Create more opportunity for interaction*
 - Discuss ideas with one another*
 - Agree on decision-making processes*
 - View disagreements as opportunities to expand on issue*
 - Learn from one another*
 - Share experience and expertise*
 - Awareness of public role as a councilmember and potential impacts of casual public comments*
- Communication with the public:
 - Pro-active and ongoing communication*
 - Learn from one another*
 - Share experience and expertise*
 - Clarity about projects, process, goals and context*
 - Explain framework for decision-making*
 - Improve methods of communication:*
 - Involve public as projects evolve*
 - Celebrate collective victories with community!*
- Managing workload:
 - Time management*
 - Overwhelming at times*
 - On-going learning and growing*

Councilmembers then acknowledged the following accomplishments for 2012 to date:

- Isthmus and Capitol Center Tower Decisions:
 - The Council's acquisition decision making process was clearly articulated, thoroughly considered and generally supported*
- Group Dynamic:
 - The council is working well together and continues to build on experience and strengths*
 - Fortunate to be where we are!*
- Smith Building:
 - Community needs will be well- served*
 - Needs were clearly articulated*
 - Communication with public was inadequate*
- Farmers Market Solar Panels
- Downtown Ambassador Program
- Walking Patrol Enhancements
- Alcohol Impact Area
- Public Safety Ballot Proposal Decision:
 - Represents community values*
- Squaxin Island Canoe Journey:
 - An example of the way things should work – great organization and good partnerships!*
- New Council Dais
- Neighborhood Association MOU
- Investing in Downtown Project is a Holistic and Multifaceted Approach :
 - Public Safety*
 - Development /Redevelopment Incentives*
 - Social Services*

Partnerships

- *Inspiring / Improving Relationships:*
 - Inter-jurisdictional*
 - Advisory Committees*
- *East Bay Plaza:*
 - Wonderful public space!*

Council acknowledged other items in progress:

- *Sustainable Budget – Finance Committee*
- *Community Development Improvements*
- *Communication and Community Involvement:*
 - Improve communication with public*
 - Celebrate accomplishments with public*
 - Build civic pride*

Councilmember Cooper provided an overview of proposed revisions to the City Council Guidelines and Procedures. He said revisions address the following areas of operation:

SHARED LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- *Appointment to committees*
- *Selection of committee chairs*
- *Appointments to inter-local boards*

SHARED POLICY AND COUNCIL BUSINESS RESPONSIBILITY

- *City Manager performance review*
- *Council agenda scheduling, review and approval of items and priority*
- *Scrutiny of Consent Calendar as proposed by City Manager*

PROCEDURAL

- *Clarify Committee of Chairs role and necessity*
- *Establish Retreat dates*
- *Evaluate annual meeting schedule – election week*
- *Forwarding committee recommendations*
- *Inclusive agenda setting process for all members*
- *Considering referrals within 90 days*
- *Special Recognition – 1 per meeting*
- *Preferred time for Executive Session (early, not late)*
- *Televised Study Sessions (as practical)*
- *Councilmember reports (be succinct)*
- *Councilmember questions directed to staff for response*

Councilmembers recommended that further discussion of proposed revisions occur at a later date when all members are present. December 2012 or the City Council 2013 Retreat are potential timeframes for consideration of revisions to Council Guidelines and Procedures.

Councilmember Rogers left after the morning session.

IMPROVING COUNCIL BUSINESS

Councilmembers discussed the following:

- *Agenda Development*
 - Criteria for agenda setting:*
 - Time sensitive deadlines and decision-making timeframes drive timing, priorities, and topics*

Status (ready to go) – items must be complete and ready for agenda inclusion
Balance and consideration of time allocation and availability at a given meeting
Staff develops first draft of agenda for review by Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem

- Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem agenda considerations:

Timing of decision-making on issues and related impacts to involved parties or projects

Who needs to be involved?

Pros and cons of complex situations – how to best proceed to achieve results

Balance of limited time with number and complexity of issues

Feedback to staff for additional information and revisions

- Councilmember Involvement:

Opportunities for additional members to participate in agenda setting:

Substitution when Mayor or Mayor Pro Tem are absent

Schedule one Councilmember to participate as observer

Councilmembers request agenda items

- Objectives for Council Agendas:

Communication

Policy direction

Transparency

Trust

- Ceremonial Opportunities

Volume of requests overwhelming

Balance and prioritize requests

Align participation with relevant experience and interests of Councilmembers

Recognize that the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem are often the preferred participants

Share the ceremonial opportunities among Councilmembers and with staff when appropriate

- New Ways of Doing Things

Work in progress – working well together and making great progress on priorities

Council Study Sessions:

- Balance the challenge of too many Study Sessions with need and value of Study Sessions

Communication with the public is high priority:

- Build relationships

- Educate and “tell the story”

Actions that achieve visions, goals, objectives

- Empower citizenship

- Celebrate success!

Community Development:

- Foster new culture of proactive planning and community development

- Support pro-active engagement and problem solving:

Anticipate “hot spots”

- Encourage community partnerships

RETREAT THEMES

- The City Council is making good progress on long and short term goals

- The group dynamic is very good – the Council is working well together

- Councilmembers wish to have more occasions to get together:

Opportunity to learn from one another

Opportunity to discuss ideas and issues

Improve communication with one another

- *The Council achieves many of the traits of a high performing Council and is working on others:*

The Council will continue to re-visit high performing criteria in subsequent retreats

Of particular value for future retreats : Notes from City Council Retreat, February 3 & 4 2012, pg 4 "What can and can't we influence? How do we support one another?"

- *Communication with the public is a high priority and an area for ongoing improvement:*

Involving and communicating with the public is not as robust as desired

Important to admit our mistakes and move forward

- *2012 Accomplishments have exceeded expectations!*

- *The Council is "inventing" new ways of conducting business*

- *Managing the workload to achieve balance is a challenging work in progress*

- *Councilmembers greatly appreciate the quality, integrity and productivity of staff!*

Potential Topics for 2013 Retreat

- *Improving Public outreach and communication – clearly tell the story*

- *Conduct a Smith Bldg Case Study – of process, public engagement, and decision making*

- *Revisions to Guidelines and Procedures*

- *Improving Council Business – Follow-up from Mid Year Retreat*

The report was received.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1:18 pm.