

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Tari Renner
Members of the City Council

From: Lynn Montei

Subject: Summary of City Council Interviews

Date: October 30, 2013

In preparation for the City Council Retreat on November 15-16, I have conducted individual interviews with Mayor Renner and City Council members. Thanks to each of you for giving the experience your focused attention and candid perspective.

I inquired about your views and perspectives on these subjects.

- Council functionality
- Quality of working relationship and adherence to Guiding Principles
- Clarity, vision and alignment around priorities
- Performance on policymaking
- What makes you hopeful
- Impediments to progress and Council effectiveness
- Desired outcomes of the Retreat
- Topics the Retreat should cover

I will utilize this summary and my conclusions about the group's interests and intentions to prepare a draft Retreat agenda. The agenda will be reviewed and refined in consultation with Mayor Renner and City Manager Hales and then circulated to the City Council for your feedback about a week before the Retreat.

I'm also in the process of preparing a briefing paper on the results of stakeholder interviews I conducted over the last few weeks. I interviewed 7 community thought leaders, 7 employees (both union and nonunion) and a mix of department directors and members of the administrative team. The paper will be circulated prior to the Retreat.

In the summary that follows I've clustered comments by theme and, where possible, used the language of interviewees. The themes are listed by frequency of being raised, and the number to the right indicates how many individuals made reference to the subject. As of this writing, 9 of 10 possible interviews have been conducted.

Council Functionality	
Lost ground relative to Council cohesion	3
Unclear, unrecognized role of City Council	3
Many delays and indecisiveness	2
Decently functioning	1
Quality of Working Relationship and Adherence to Guiding Principles	
Relationships are of poor quality; there is little or spotty adherence to the Guiding Principles	8
Want collegiality so the Council can work together	4
Clarity, Vision and Alignment Around Priorities	
There is no vision and no clear direction for staff	3
The vision process seems to grind	1
Need to collectively enter strategic planning and action planning	1
The Council is easily distracted from its established priorities when a small number of people demand their issue be addressed immediately	1
Performance on Policymaking	
Elected officials are the policymakers, not implementers of policy; some aldermen want to get into the detail of implementation rather than set policy	2
Pleased to find common ground with the Mayor and some Aldermen	1
What Makes You Hopeful?	
New mayor: exuberant leadership, dedication and boldness; positive cheerleader; listening better; quality meeting management, good work with Liquor Commission	4
More meetings to discuss things more deeply	2
30-year Capital Improvement Plan	1
Idea of multi-generational housing	1
Impediments to Progress and Council Effectiveness	
Immature behavior; mean behavior; disrespectful behavior; arrogance; inappropriate and disrespectful treatment of staff; personal conflict rather than constructive conflict; use of comebacks or rejoinders that cast judgment	7
Absence of vision	4
Unclear understanding/definition of the role of City Council	4

Factions and alliances; marshaling outside forces without cultivating Council's collective understanding and direction	3
Dismissive attitude about previous work and priorities; lack of recognition of the continuum of policy; a fear that collective efforts will be disregarded	3
Getting used to OMA; guardedness and concern about media spin	3
Trust issues; perceptions of special-interest influence	2
Habit of moving from crisis to crisis	2
The weight of financial decisions; net costs are astronomical	2
Habit of deferring maintenance and underfunding pensions	2
Delays; indecisiveness; things bogged down	3
Closed-mindedness about any revenue enhancements	1
Territorialism with respect to Wards and departments	1
Absence of City Manager accountability (e.g., cleaning up downtown bar scene)	1
Inability of Council to have a productive dialogue	1
Inadequate quantifiable data in staff responses	1

Desired Outcomes of Retreat

Build a sense of trust and camaraderie; get more clear on the Guiding Principles; find a way to come together; embrace the 8 Guiding Principles; establish better relations and rapport; move beyond mistrust; improve the ability to be in respectful conversation	8
Frame the budget debate and options/trade-offs; get things out on the table; sort out all the issues	7
Achieve clarity and alignment around priorities; Build consensus around budget choices; determine spending priorities with SMART goals; reprioritize expectations of Council/City	7
Understand City Council's role and not delve into staff responsibilities of implementation and enforcement	4
Understand our sources of money to fund significant financial needs	3
Lay out the budget process and timeline	2
Work at a higher level on visioning; coalesce around mission, purpose and shared vision; become of one mind	2
Focus on the whole	2
Recognize the value of tourism, increasing murals and adding a Visitor's Center	1
Find a way to give staff the resources to do the job	1

Topics the Retreat Should Cover

Budget issues/trade-offs; address tough budget decisions	7
Prioritization	6
Explore revenue options to fund critical needs: taxes (e.g., utility tax), fees, borrowing	6
Pension liability	4
Role of Council/City Manager	4
A clear understanding of where we are financially	3
Downtown revitalization; vision for downtown	3
The calendar for budget deliberations, preparation, public input and adoption	2
Capital improvements: sewers and roads	1
How to obtain and utilize public opinion and input	1
Code enforcement	1
Engage the big issues as a whole rather than in isolation	1
In addition to getting a briefing on community leaders' perspectives of the City Council, share what we hear about the City Council	1
Other: modified ward system, East side highway, land development strategy, tourism downtown-murals and visitors center	1

Advice

Allow everyone to speak-utilize "once around the horseshoe"	1
Meet more often and have shorter meetings	1
Utilize a matrix to identify each Alderman's top 4 priorities	1
On the big issues and action plans, have the City Manager and Directors weigh in too	1

cc: David Hales, City Manager