

**Ann Arbor, Michigan**

**City Council Planning Session**

**December 2014**



## Ann Arbor, Michigan – Planning Session Summary

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The Ann Arbor City Council met in the Jury Assembly Room of the Ann Arbor Municipal Center on December 8, 2014 to conduct a planning session. The planning session was facilitated by Julia Novak from The Novak Consulting Group.

### **Welcome/Introductions and Expectations**

Julia Novak reviewed the purpose of the retreat:

- Set the stage for working together during the coming year
- Develop an understanding of Council priorities and direction for FY 16/17
- Articulate the 2015 policy agenda
- Articulate expectations for working together with staff

Julia then reviewed the norms that will guide the session:

- Listen with respect
  - Let others finish before speaking
  - Be attentive to the speaker
  - Disagree agreeably
- Be...
  - Positive and realistic
  - Candid and honest
  - Engaged and fully present
  - Patient
- Look for opportunities to agree
  - Remember “if” and “and”

Each member of the governing body had an opportunity to share their expectations for the retreat. Those expectations included:

- Come up with some common understandings of our general impressions for where we want the City government to go in the next year. Common values and goals and conversations that will improve our ability to work together.
- Excited to continue where we left off last year – listen, engage, participate, and eat
- Would like to narrow the focus to achievable goals. Want to keep the interest of the engaged community.
- Healthy conversations and good starting point. Hope that we develop a work plan as a second step. Identifying priorities involves stating the glaringly obvious, but there is a lot more that we need to do.
- Finding the middle ground. We come in with different values and diverse agendas – where can we agree?
- Want to walk out with a clear understanding of what we need going forward
- Learning experience. Productive and informative experience – to learn what lenses people use to look at problems and challenges.

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- We have big goals, but we need to be able to focus on the big goals while also thinking about the tactics to achieve those goals.
- Begin the process of resource allocation. Not adequate money or time for everything everyone wants to get done. How do we prioritize the work plans of City staff?
- Respect for priorities created by the preceding group. Appreciate bringing in the Sustainability goals – need to merge those two to do both process and policy.
- Learning more about the background and getting to know everybody else.

### Why I Ran and How We Will Govern

Each Councilmember was given a few minutes to share their reflections on why they ran for office and how they hope this Council will govern together.

Mike Anglin –

- Involved in trying to work on the greenway. Met activists during that time and was inspired to run for office. Believe in public involvement. Trust the public and trust the process. You win some and you lose some, but it is important to keep the public involved and continue to be transparent
- Be transparent about economic goals and resources
- Realistic and truthful about the handicaps we have are
- People are proud of living in a small town – we are a small Midwest town and that is why people live here. Can be frustrating to

Sumi Kailasapathy –

- Primary reason for running was to make sure our residents receive the services they deserve. Residents are cognizant of the fact that they pay high taxes, but they value the quality of life – not just services, but values we profess.
- Concerned about the impact of economic growth on quality of life issues. If economic growth is going to increase the tax base, we are subscribing to a trickle down methodology. But don't want to exchange economic growth for diversity.
- Greenbelt millage is being used to preserve, but we are also destroying greenspace and farmland in our own backyards.
- Plus the mundane stuff such as traffic calming, pedestrian walkways, no potholes, etc.

Jane Lumm –

- Refocus city spending and priorities. Felt the pendulum on the visionary and the ordinary had swung too far toward the visionary. Share the view of many in the community that basic core services - such as police, fire, infrastructure, and day-to-day resident services - were not the focus. It is all about balance. The City's priority should be getting basic services right.
- Elected officials should do more listening to residents rather than telling them what is important to them.
- Long-term interest in local government. Can help people and see the tangible results of efforts at this level of government.

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- Would like to see the Council's reputation of being transparent, open, and deliberative group is essential. Have a reputation for making balanced and reasoned decisions, making solid progress toward
- Debate rigorously, but respectfully – can disagree without being disagreeable

Mayor Christopher Taylor –

- Love the City and felt like the City is going in the right direction and want to be part of it. Find government service rewarding and interesting. Common effort is what I find satisfying.
- Goals are bifurcated: provide everyday services – that is foundational and we must always keep that in mind – and work on important progressive, quality of life opportunities – street trees, affordable housing, downtown, etc.
- Known for openness and candor, but also renowned for our decorum. Treat each other well and interrogate our own notions of what is right and wrong. If I can understand the people with whom I disagree, maybe we don't disagree as much. As long as we treat each other with respect

Graydon Krapohl –

- Love my neighborhood and love living in the City. Want to make things better and believe in public service. Believe there are a number of challenges coming up – providing core services while also looking forward and creating an environment where people want to be in the future.
- Even if we have differences, we need to find a common ground and keep moving the ball forward

Julie Grand –

- Experience on the Park Advisory helped me realize I had some ability in public service and could apply academic background, but it also energized me because I could see the direct impact it had on residents' quality of life. Looking forward to bringing this energy to housing, pedestrian safety, parks, etc.
- Real sense of contentment. I am from Ann Arbor – and I want residents to feel that sense of connection to the community. That doesn't happen by accident. It is our responsibility to take care of that sense of place – which means basic services, but also quality of life. Welcome new ideas, new people, and creating an environment where everyone can thrive.
- I can learn a great deal from all of my colleagues. Remember that everyone cares very deeply about the City, so even if we disagree, we know we agree on something.
- Respect one another, respect the public, and respect the staff.

Kirk Westphal –

- Want to make a contribution to my community. Have been involved before - in the planning commission, environmental commission, etc. Would like to keep the focus on the long term. How will we be handing off the City to the next generation – win in the long term means winning in the short term.

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- How a geographic area uses its land and how it gets around is so crucial to how a community succeeds in the future. Should explore all our options because we still have expenditures going up faster than revenue. Revenue is a biggie. Would like to be proactive rather than reactive.
- Would love to see follow through on past plans and proactive citizen engagement. Fewer people are staying engaged with local issues and volunteering. We are making progress, but we could do more – maybe formalize the connection to neighborhood organizations. Would like to create a citizen’s academy.
- Establishing a vision for downtown, neighborhoods, corridors, etc. And respect the work that has been done.

Stephen Kunselman –

- Engrained in me to run for office. Enjoy working for the public good. Have a lot of experience leading up to this point. Government is a book of rules, but I have learned that when we lose focus on public health, safety, and welfare, it confuses everyone and we go after goals that are not achievable. Local government should only do certain things. Saw the disinvestment in my community – there were things in this community years ago that were good. We are not supporting families as much as we are supporting students living downtown. We need to stay focus on what makes our neighborhoods – families. Not sustainable to be bringing students in from the outside.
- Ann Arbor is unique, but somehow want to accommodate big-City programs. That is not sustainable or achievable. Philosophy of local government summarized as follows: you have to leave the politics at the door after the vote.

Chuck Warpehoski –

- Care about the community and want to see Ann Arbor become the best it can be. That involves the basic services and the expression of our values (affordable housing, leaving a better City for our children). Fair amount of satisfaction from residents regarding day-to –day services (of course we can always be improving and responding). Moving above that baseline – how do we allocate our resources? We hear from a very narrow section of the population. But if we are only listening to the few people that show up to public meetings – we need to expand how broadly we listen. Need to listen to everyone and make as good of a decision as we can, but we need to beware of decision paralysis – take smart risks, do pilots, etc.

Jack Eaton–

- Deep interest in public service. There are limits to what any one person can do. Have a desire for good basic services and well-maintained essential infrastructure. That is fundamentally what local government is about. Especially happy they have had robust discussions and have found middle ground. Want to continue the effort to focus on effectively and efficiently delivering services and investing in infrastructure. As we emerge from the recession, need to be careful not to outspend. Need to be sure we have enough reserve for the next rainy day. Want to rebuild those things that were cut during sparse times, without being wasteful. If we watch the dollars, we can reach out and do some additional things to improve the quality of life.

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- Always respect each other's' views and being civil. Let the views of others improve our approach to an issue. Disagreement helps to improve policy and I hope the vigorous discussion continues.

Sabra Briere –

- A series of unintended consequences got me into this. The Planning Commissioner made me think about how people perceive their communities. A Kroger became the site of a proposed development, which brought residents together to fight an uphill battle to get traffic calming measures put in place. The neighborhood the requested historical status. All of these experiences motivated her to serve. We need to accept change and work together. Need to not lose sight of the basic services we provide, but also can't lose sight of a vision for the future because if you don't have a vision then you won't go anywhere. Find a balance between delivering the services and developing a vision that the community already possesses.

Some of the common themes that emerged:

- Why
  - For the community...
  - Service...desire to serve people
  - Improve quality of life
  - Particular injustices...
- How
  - Mutual respect
  - Collaboration
  - Respecting the staff
  - Respecting volunteer boards and commissions
  - Deliberative
  - Avoid analysis paralysis
  - Consider all perspectives
  - Interrogate our own notions
  - Known for decorum
  - Conflict is ok, its expected and its respectful
  - Rigorous and respectfully

### Setting the Stage

City Administrator Steve Powers thanked the Council for setting aside time to provide direction to staff. The Service Area Administrators then updated the Council on 2014 accomplishments as well as identify work plan items for 2015 and budget issues for the FY16-17 budget.

Tom Crawford, Finance and Administrative Services Area Administrator, presented a financial snapshot. Mr. Crawford reviewed performance for Fiscal Year 2014 as well as projections for Fiscal Year 2015. It is important to note that the City's financial recovery is trailing the economy – while there is a modest surplus anticipated in 2016 that goes away in 2017. Some key accomplishments of the past year: reviewed key financial policies, completed budget for Fiscal Year 2015, implemented an app and a new

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website. Tom also discussed the goals he has for this area in the next year: balanced budget, review fund balance policies, prepare for GASB changes to retiree health care, and some refunding of bonds.

Sumedh Bahl, Community Services Area Administrator, then identified accomplishments for 2014. Accomplishments in the affordable housing area include converting public housing into a voucher program and completing preventative maintenance at affordable housing facilities. In addition, the Community Services Area accomplished the following: certified as a Redevelopment Ready Community, addressed downtown zoning issues, began first round of City-initiated annexations, opened skate park facility, partnered with Rotary Club to open a universally accessible playground, and the golf course was recognized for sustainable maintenance practices. In the next year, Mr. Bahl plans to update the land use master plan and the parks and recreation open space plan, address the nine items stemming from the Redevelopment Ready review, proceed with the second round of annexations, and launch an Administrative Hearings bureau. In responding to questions Mr. Bahl also updated the Council on the City's approach to deer management, the Allen Creek Greenway, and downtown parking.

Craig Hupy, Public Services Area Administrator, reviewed the major accomplishments of his area: removal of street trees, current wastewater contract is on track (50% complete), street construction projects completed, and many sustainability initiatives. In the next year, Craig plans to complete many street resurfacing projects in addition to continuing the City's crack sealing program and also multiple street construction projects. Also, he plans to review storm water rates to assist with the maintenance of street trees, complete the water treatment plant, begin laying the groundwork for a waste water study, and start estimating the impact of future development on services. Mr. Hupy then responded to questions and concerns regarding the City's storm water design policies.

Chief John Seto, Safety Services Area Administrator and Police Chief, discussed the major accomplishments of each division separately. Some of the highlights from the past year include: emergency management efforts, Civilian Emergency Response Team, code red emergency notification system, collaborative efforts to enhance the MAEBAS system, renovations to fire stations, Firefighter of the Year awards, additional FTE firefighter, fully staffed community engagement police team, graffiti removal program, and the 26-week campaign of traffic enforcement. In the coming year, the Council can expect the Safety Services Area to welcome a new Fire Chief, continue its collaborative fire response efforts, seek to fill three vacant police officer positions, review of training programs, reconsideration of accreditation, upgrading in-car video systems, and deploying body-worn cameras. The Chief then responded to questions and concerns regarding body-worn cameras, community engagement, and neighborhood watch activities.

Steve Powers, City Administrator, then updated the Council on the internal strategic planning initiative that will be used to guide the organization.

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## The Council Priorities

The Council then translated the City Council’s Priority Areas that were established in 2012 and modified in 2013 into the new Sustainability Framework adopted in 2014. The following table shows how the City Council’s Priority Areas fit within the Theme Areas and Goals of the Sustainability Framework. The City Budget and Fiscal Health Priority Area could either be incorporated into a larger definition of Responsible Resource Use, or identified as a “means” by which the City operates.

Sustainability Framework Theme Areas	Sustainability Framework Goals	City Council Priority Areas
<b>Climate and Energy</b>	Sustainable Energy	
	Energy Conservation	
	Sustainable Buildings	
<b>Community</b>	Engaged Community	Community Livability and Quality of Life
	Diverse Housing	Affordable Housing
	Human Services	Public Safety
	Safe Community	Economic Health
	Active Living & Learning	
	Economic Vitality	
<b>Land Use &amp; Access</b>	Transportation Options	
	Sustainable Systems	
	Integrated Land Use	
<b>Resource Management</b>	Clean Air & Water	Infrastructure Maintenance and
	Healthy Ecosystems	Transportation and the Urban Core
	Responsible Resource Use	
	Local Food	
		City Budget and Fiscal Health

Each Councilmember was then given an opportunity to brainstorm initiatives they would like to see the organization implement. The following list includes all of the initiatives suggested for each Sustainability Framework Goal as well as the number of votes received when the Council identified their 6 priorities. The items where four or more members of the Council expressed as a top priority initiative are identified in **bold** print.

### Climate and Energy

#### Sustainable Energy

- Identify and strengthen premiums for sustainable building design (1)

#### Energy Conservation

- Fund community-facing climate action plan objectives (1)
- Invest in/take control of additional infrastructure like power and internet (1)
- Empower residents to save money on heating bills and transportation

#### Sustainable Buildings

- Use of proven alternative energy systems



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## Community

### Engaged Community

- Double number of citizens engaged in local government volunteering or awareness (according to National Citizen Survey) (1)
- Develop comprehensive neighborhood engagement system that integrates neighborhood watch citizen participation, adopt-a-park, adopt-a-storm drain, neighbor mutual aid, etc. (1)
- Make it easier for residents to participate/give feedback
- Continued community engagement
- Engaged community → improve the FOIA policy
- Community - University of Michigan relationship

### Economic Vitality

- Dedicated development organization
- How do we help the local economy and keep money here?
- Invest in Ann Arbor entrepreneurial culture/environment

### Diverse Housing

- **In fill allowing for affordable housing (4)**
  - Develop accessory dwelling unit policy
  - Accessory dwelling units
- Increase housing choice for future residents who don't want/can't afford cars (3)
- Improved oversight of blight (2)
  - Blighted and nuisance property enforcement
- New development → focus on affordable housing
- Balance housing and existing neighborhoods

### Human Services

- Qualified homeless services – direct resources based on qualified recommendation
- Shelter – need to address soon – resident population issue – keep chipping away at affordable housing

### Safe Community

- Five fire stations open (1)
- Increase Fire Department staffing (1)
- Safe Community – Added police staffing to implement robust proactive policing program (3)
  - Increase Police Department staffing
- Added police staffing
- Review police training and policies regarding use of force, bias prevention, de-escalation of conflict and dealing with mental illness (1)
- Increase community outreach opportunities for police, fire, other staff
- Improve street lighting in neighborhoods (both too bright and too poor)
- Enhanced crime reporting (1)

### Active Living & Learning

## Land Use and Access

### Transportation Options

- **Fix the damn roads (6)**
  - Fix the roads
  - Fix the roads

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- If State does not act on road funding, consider increased local funding
- Local streets
- **More bike lanes and sidewalks (7)**
  - Protected bike paths
  - Combine to maintain and expand safe crosswalks and sidewalks
  - Increase bike lanes; improve pedestrian/crosswalk safety/pilot buffered bike lanes
  - Change road engineering guidelines to prioritize pedestrian and cyclist safety
  - Clean air → improve and expand bike paths and side walks
- Traffic calming (3)
  - Traffic enforcement and traffic calming
- Continue to expand regional transit (3)
- Achieve consensus re: train station location and design (2)
- Prioritize: Train station, connector, commuter rail, RE-imagine Washtenaw
  - Collaborate with University of Michigan re: North-Central South Connector
- Infrastructure rehabilitation
- Re-imagine Washtenaw – not ready for this year
- Robust and multi functioning transportation infrastructure

### Sustainable Systems

- Use of greenbelt dollars to fund Allen Creek Greenway and library lot (1)
- Preserve green/open space within the City as well
  - Preserve natural habitats – preserve open space
- Improve designs for and increase maintenance of storm water detention and flow systems

### Integrated Land Use

- **Connect Huron River to downtown and neighborhoods (4)**
  - Create Greenway master plan and/or effort to develop anchor park
- Remove administrative functions from Council (site plan review) (2)
- Update master plan elements that need it (2)
  - Rewrite the Master Plan
  - Specific zoning emphasis on residents infill strategy
  - Create TOD overlay zoning to provide premium incentives for affordable housing and/or transit-friendly development on key transit corridors
- Dog park

### Resource Management

#### Clean Air & Water

- Achieve with state Admin. improved I-4 closure standard

#### Healthy Ecosystems

- Maintain the sewers (3)
  - Update sewer and water systems
- Maintain the watersheds (1)
- Amend stormwater ordinances
- Implement deer management plan
- Better compliance with City stormwater standards

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## Responsible Resource Use

- **Rebuild forestry staff (5)**
  - Urban forestry
  - Fund urban and community forestry management plan
  - Amend and update natural features ordinance
- Improved infrastructure maintenance (streets, sewers, parks) (1)
- Maintain parks and recreation
- Expand composting season
- Public art – emphasize public funding as part

## Local Food

- Preserve local farmlands

## City Budget and Fiscal Discipline

- Close the gap on unfunded pension liabilities (3)
- Determine how we earn enough money to fund all vetted capital/service improvements (1)
- Evaluate intergovernmental consolidation opportunities (1)
- More community events funded by the City
- Pension plan changes for new employees
- Update stormwater fee system to reflect impact of new systems maintenance (i.e. managing rain garden maintenance)
- Leverage maximum money for infrastructure (roads, rail, transit)
- Outsourced work - are we sourcing work optimally (high consulting costs)
- Determine the level of service delivery in each area relative to peers/nationally
- Plan contingencies – where do we cut in next downturn?

Each Councilmember was then given six dots to use to identify their highest priorities, through that process five initiatives floated to the top. Councilmembers were then divided into teams to:

- Develop a clear and succinct name for the initiative;
- Articulate the problem being solved, and
- Identify what success would look like.

### 1. Repairs/reconstruction of roads

- Problem(s) to be solved: Address deteriorated street infrastructure
- What success looks like:
  - Sufficient funding for ongoing maintenance (i.e. pothole/pavement repairs and maintenance)
  - Sufficient funding for road reconstruction
- Dashboard
  - Reduction in insurance claims against the City for property damages
  - Roads that are rated better than fair
  - Roads that are reinvested in their mid-life cycle, not at point of failure

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2. Rebuild forestry program
  - Problem(s) to be solved: Decline of our urban forest
  - What success looks like:
    - Well-maintained, publicly owned tree inventory
    - Public acceptance of funding method
    - Public involvement through volunteer participation in tree management program
    - Decrease in damage claims against City
    - Achievement of other goals identified in the plan
3. Allen Creek Greenway
  - Problem(s) to be solved: Inadequate non-motorized connections within the community and to the Huron River
  - What success looks like:
    - Greenway Master Plan (incorporating MPROS Master Plan) with funding analysis and source (City, UM, nonprofit engagement)
    - Anchor Park
    - Railroad and N Main Street crossing
    - Engagement and DTE/Michcon site
    - Assumption that Greenway/mixed use Produce Street to River is ultimate goal
4. Safe systems for auto, pedestrian, and bike users
  - Problem(s) to be solved: Mismatch between design for auto transport system and desire for more walkable/bikeable community
  - What success looks like:
    - Increase in per capita use and decrease in rate of vehicle pedestrian and vehicle/bike rider accidents
5. Accessory Dwelling Units
  - Problem(s) to be solved: Lack of affordable housing, hardship of aging in place, and lack of economic diversity in population
  - What success looks like: Passage of a zoning ordinance that expands ADU options with broad-based public support

### **Working Effectively Together**

The Council then engaged in a discussion on how they can maintain the focus on these five priority initiatives. There was a consensus that the City Administrator should push back when, in their good faith effort to develop policy, individual Councilmembers make requests that are a significant burden on resources. Instead, those requests will go through Council. In addition, the Council agreed that they would work through the City Administrator or Service Area Administrators and not go directly to other staff.

### **Next Steps**

The five Council initiatives will be translated into work plans by the staff and shared with the Council.

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### Closing

As the session closed, each person was provided an opportunity to share a parting thought for the evening.

- This has been useful – seeing where it fits in and consensus around five initiatives – so staff should be able to move forward. Happy with the result as well as the conversation and the spirit room
- Useful exercise. Always enjoy the company of my colleagues
- Hope that a year from now the roads are smoother
- Healthy because it makes you realize that despite of areas where we disagree, there are areas where we definitely agree
- There is enough consensus and municipal government is all about finding common ground
- Appreciated the spirit of this meeting. The collaborative ethic was alive and well. Less confusion for staff going forward.
- Very helpful , not just the specific initiatives, but the commentary and stories behind was very informative
- Well run meeting. Learning a lot and appreciate being welcomed. There is renewed excitement
- Intrigued by how much this has to do with infrastructure. How communities invest in their infrastructure really affects quality of life now and in the future.
- Really good meeting. Used time well, good conversation, good result. There is an element in these types of conversations that is never there during normal meetings – how can we keep this space open for the kinds of conversations we had tonight.
- Really glad that Steve Powers is here with us tonight.
- Good learning experience. Thank you!