

# City Council Work Session – December 14, 2020

## Annual Council Planning Session: Summary Report

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**Attendees:** City Council

**Facilitator:** Kerry Sheldon, Bridgeport Consulting, LLC

**Staff panelists:** Jackie Beaudry, Tom Crawford, Sara Higgins, Matthew Horning, Stephen Postema

**References:**

[City Council Work Session Agenda Packet](#), which includes [Detailed Agenda](#), [Thematic Summary](#), [Draft Ann Arbor Strategic Plan](#), and [Strategic Planning & Financial Forecast presentation](#)

“Report Out and Reflect” summary (see attached).

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### 1. Agenda review & norms.

4 norms from Kerry Sheldon, Facilitator

1. Be present
2. Ask for what you need
3. Speak so that you can be heard
4. Listen to understand

### 2. Why we're here.

Mayor Taylor: Recentness and best. Interpreting warm fuzzy. Lives in Burns Park, children went to Burns Park Elementary. Last day of school there is a campout; tents in park, parents, children, celebrating together. Enjoy what community built. May not be recent or best, but wandering through parks gives warm fuzzy feeling.

CM Grand: Go to City's bigger parks and stand in the middle and look at all of activity. Parks are so important to quality of life. Walk dog, look and see people playing basketball and tennis, trampoline w/ ball, picnic table, playground. Feel connected, seeing people of all agenda, hearing from public appreciate parks.

CM Radina: Grew up spending summers in northern Michigan, struck by how much he fell in love with summers in A2 even as a student. Things happening around town, outside, company of others, misses most due to current environment. Sitting out at York for coffee or wine. Casually running into people around town. Small town feel, captured in festivals and outdoor spaces. Restaurants. Ann Arbor Pride.

CM Ramlawi: Community. Ann Arbor exhibits well. During COVID-19 we witness and be socially responsible. Constituent requests. U-M. Technological. Vaccine for COVID-19 at U-M hospital. Rich, vibrant.

CM Song: Neighborhood; care for each other like family, quiet, humble, do their jobs day in and day out. Walking parents walk kids to school – 20 kids walk 4-blocks to school, kids sing, highlight of her day, Parents Day, roving playdates, didn't grow up with that experience. Reflects care from community, creative ways of helping each other. Volunteer work. Likes how A2 is home to folks who go above and beyond quietly normally and happily. Admire and cares for neighbors a great deal.

CM Nelson. Seen best of A2 in last few months. Husband got involved in project, 3-D printer, educated and techie, husband super excited, initiative for an idea, resources, and willingness to help.

CM Griswold. Sees A2 as a community where adversity makes us stronger people. Process that led up to letter being sent to governor for support for EPA. Impressed with community members who continue to provide expertise, CARD, ability to strengthen relationship. Painful and tedious while happening, there was personal growth and advantages for many involved.

CM Eyer. Quintessential A2 memories, one afternoon home, kids were out playing, received message from another mom...just saw son go by on his bike and wasn't wearing helmet. Eyes and ears everywhere. Ann arbor has a supportive network of moms and dads. Walkability of town, silver lining of life slowing down during COVID-19, she and her husband have been walking places that they never thought about walking to before, house to downtown, sit outside, have dinner, support a local restaurant. Experiences have shown her that she can do a lot more walking than she ever thought she could. Interaction with others while out walking.

CM Briggs: Community and caring. Challenge of COVID-19 is that we are inside our own little bubble. Someone in Ward 5 opened home to homeless, member of St. Mary's church, mercy house, members of homeless community that filter in and out. Saturday morning breakfast to-go, making meals and handing out the door in to-go containers. How normal the conversations were. Making food, support for someone with leukemia dying and members of community quietly fill in gaps and go above and beyond.

CM Hayner: Noticing a lot of collective actions where people who wanted to give to community. Commons, good time participating in work sessions. Leaves, site prep, coffee ground to create composting layer. Various ways and experiences coming together for common goal.

CM Disch. Reason her husband and she moved to Ward 1 was the walk to Argo Pond. Impressed by wooden boardwalk. Wondered about maintenance. Today at noon she walked with dog and saw City work replacing 5 or 6 slats on railing, stretch where boards were uneven, made it clean and beautiful. Attention to details.

Overall summary: They are here representing the collective.

### **3. How We're going to work together.**

Ways of Working Together: Five main themes extracted from pre-interviews with individual Council Members: Respect, thoughtful deliberation, collaboration, effectiveness, trust

Council Members were assigned to spend 20 minutes in breakout rooms as described below. Each group was tasked with coming to agreement upon up to 3 short phrases, each describing a norm (way of working together), that they wish to propose Council consider abiding by. \

Breakout Groups:

1. Erica Briggs, Elizabeth Nelson, Kathy Griswold
2. Jen Eyer, Chris Taylor
3. Linh Song, Ali Ramlawi
4. Julie Grand, Lisa Disch
5. Jeff Hayner, Travis Radina

#### **4. Report Out and Reflect.**

The groups returned to the main session and shared the results of their conversations. Results are captured in the attached “Report Out and Reflect” document.

As a whole, Council then engaged in further discussion regarding the implementation of these norms. Highlights of this discussion are included below.

Social Media:

- What is the role of (negative, destructive, toxic) social media? In addition to voluntarily abiding by these norms, do we also take responsibility for calling out others’ inappropriate behavior?
- A sense that the norms described above should extend to social media as well; after all, our own conduct is under our control. Perhaps that should be the focus first, rather than naming/shaming everyday folk.
- Question: Who decides what’s appropriate? Risk of being “policed.”

Virtual meetings/pandemic:

- Long meetings, extending late into the nights, exacerbate the problem. People get tired, lose patience; norms can slip.
- People tend to behave differently via electronic meetings. Easier to build trust/rapport in person.
- Late additions to Council agenda cause meetings to go later, since advance discussion is not possible. (Agenda questions are due by Wednesday at noon.)

#### **6. Discussion and Agreement**

*Council Members; Kerry Sheldon facilitating*

Council discussed the next steps necessary to refine and put into practice the proposed norms they drafted. The group agreed that the next step would be for CMs Eyer and Griswold to incorporate these thoughts into their working draft of proposed Council conduct guidelines, which will be shared with the Administrative Committee for further refinement before being brought before the full Council for consideration.

CM Hayner noted his discomfort with the lack of appointments made to the Council Rules Committee, especially given the role he believes that body might play in this process. CM Griswold offered to meet with CM Hayner to discuss his concerns.

## **8. Moving Forward - Strategic Planning. Tom Crawford presentation.**

[Recent successes & challenges as well as trends and implications were reviewed with Council.](#)

Proposed Strategic Plan: brings in sustainability framework, organizational strategic plan, resident survey, and other prior work. Vision, mission, and goals don't change often. Goals were determined by Council as part of PBB exercises in January 2020. Questions to Council, do objectives match goals? Is the long-term target representative of success? CM Griswold wants to focus on data and metrics.

**Vision** - Councilmembers can send Tom Crawford any suggested changes. Tom Crawford suggested dropping accessible. Discussion ensued about this and the need to either change or define what safe means. In addition, there's a desire for the vision to be more inspirational. Question as to whether "welcoming" was strong enough.

**Mission** – No change from organizational strategic plan.

**Goals** – Adopted as part of priority-based budgeting discussion in January 2020.

**Principles/Values** – These are the things we will look at when we try to solve challenging problems. Consider alternatives to "safety" like "conscientious". Consider "stewardship" instead of "sustainability". There's a need to define what each term means as part of the document.

Feedback was sought on the objectives within each goal.

### **Goal A. Safe, engaged, vibrant community with strong neighborhoods.**

Consider "resilient" instead of "strong". Expressed continued concern with the word safe or need for more description. More attention to detail. Consider dropping "overall residents highly recommend living in Ann Arbor to others". Consider if there's a way to add something on engagement.

### **Goal B. A diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.**

Request to add economic diversity. Concern expressed about equity as it relates to transportation alternatives. Durham, NC has an equitable community engagement blueprint. Can we include language minimizing adverse effects?

### **Goal C. Environmental stewardship.**

A question was raised as to whether there should be an opportunity for councilmembers to provide feedback on frameworks and plans that come out of strategic plan? The answer was the initiatives and

strategies that will be implemented to deliver the objectives will typically come to Council if they are material or require significant resources.

A question was raised about the nature of promoting a circular economy version focusing on diversion. Staff will follow-up with some additional clarification.

The issue of financial equity around solar energy was raised and encouraged staff to push DTE and others.

There was a request to note which objectives came from which City Plans. Further request to ensure that the final document is shared publicly.

Staff indicated the strategic plan is a living document in the sense it is periodically revisited. Every metric doesn't need to be perfect at this time since improvements will be iterative over time.

It was pointed out that human and natural systems are resilient to climate-related disruptions— we are all interconnected.

**Goal D: Well maintained and sustainable infrastructure** – not discussed in detail.

**Goal E: Creating a sustainable economy** – not discussed in detail.

**Goal F: Responsible & Responsible Government with Good Governance**

Council requested charts/graphs that indicated how we're doing on measures.

A request for A2 Fix It data for streetlights was made with a focus on streetlight repair and length of time streetlights are out.

Staff indicated streetlight performance is a metric that may be one level down from objectives.

Council requested the timeline for feedback. Staff requested by the end of the calendar year.

**Matt Horning reviewed present financial projections.**

Staff reviewed the budget timeline, rules surrounding budget adoption, and the city financial performance measures. The financial outlook was indicated to be grim.

Fleet rates increased primarily due to the green streets policy.

There was a request to share the recovery period from the past recession and get more information out on Headlee and Prop A impacts in addition to state revenue sharing.

Staff reviewed the priorities slide from the consultant and requested paying down the retirement system debt be added. It was pointed out that the city must also consider the DDAs debt obligations since the city is guarantor.

It was pointed out that economic development is missing from priorities.

Council members pointed out the need to consider "strong city services" as a high priority since they are basic services.

Staff indicated priorities help to solve conflicts when there are inadequate resources.

It was pointed out that when looking at a sustainable budget, it's necessary to look at base responsibilities.

**Next steps:**

Norms and strategic plan will return to the body. Council Administration Committee will review and then move to City Council. Further feedback regarding strategic plan objectives due by end of 2020 to City Administrator and to further inform budgetary process. Mr. Crawford to meet with interested Councilmembers.

CM Griswold to reach out to CM Hayner to meet regarding proposed rule changes.

CM Eyer and CM Griwsold collaborate with proposed rules changes to bring to Council Administration Committee.

When do norms apply and when to we abide them?

### Group 1

CMs Briggs, Nelson, Griswold

- Move past previous grievances
- Give each other the benefit of the doubt
- Treat each other with sensitivity

### Group 2

CM Eyer, Mayor Taylor

- Disagree agreeably
- Come prepared (e.g., avoid late additions to the agenda) and act with professionalism
- Respect others' ideas, expertise, and time (e.g., avoid meetings that last into the early hours of the morning)

### Group 3

CMs Song, Ramlawi

- Be patient with one another as we find our stride
- Share what we can as we learn
- Not allowing policy differences to become personal
- Don't allow short-term differences to get in the way of long-term success/goals (*while recognizing that genuine policy differences will probably show up most clearly in "short term" topics/decisions*)

### Group 4

CMs Grand, Disch

- Ground our opinions, decisions, and public statements about our colleagues in reason, data, and expertise
- Acknowledge that disagreements over policy are not personal insults
- Speak when we have something to add to the conversation
- Promote trust in city government and respect for city staff

### Group 5

CMs Hayner, Radina

- When possible, speak with "I" statements without assigning intent to others
- Seek to avoid pulling past conflicts into current circumstances
- Strive to recognize the lived and personal experiences/interests that we all bring to Council, and value the diversity as a strength rather than point of contention – reflective of our community
- Share (and accept!) our own and each other's experiences as colleagues – collaborate for shared success, forward movement



## Further Discussion

### Social media:

- How do we want to deal w/negative, destructive, toxic social media? Do we call out what we deem inappropriate? Suggest we articulate standards, expectations – the bar we set for ourselves and what we represent.
  - Who decides? Concern about being “policed”
  - Requires all of us to voluntarily abide by/apply these norms as relates to our own conduct – we all have choices about our own behavior
- Norms described above should extend to social media as well – our own conduct is under our control; focus here first (rather than naming/shaming everyday folk)