



MURRAY CITY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
Council Initiative Workshop

The Murray City Council Initiative Workshop was held on Tuesday, July 21, 2009, in the Murray City Center, Conference Room #107, 5025 South State Street, Murray, Utah.

Members in Attendance:

Jeff Dredge	Council Chairman
Robert D. Robertson	Council Member
Jim Brass	Council Vice Chairman
Patricia W. Griffiths	Council Member
Krista Dunn	Council Member

Others in Attendance:

G. L. Critchfield	Attorney
Michael D. Wagstaff	Council Executive Director
Jan Wells	Mayor's Chief of Staff
Tim Tingey	Comm & Econ Dev Director
Bill Finch	Citizen
Gary Merrill	Citizen

Chairman Dredge called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance. He explained that the meeting was the first Council Initiative Workshop (CIW) and it affords the Council an opportunity to discuss issues and determine the support for taking specific matters forward to staff. It is like a mini retreat. The background intent was to initiate interest from at least three Council Members before scheduling this event. He stated that he had done that for the topics under discussion that day.

Mr. Dredge asked Council Members to take the outline home to ponder and think about. Action can be taken at another meeting, however, the next step would be to ask staff to put together a presentation on some of the concepts submitted. Individual meetings with staff could also be held, followed up with a Committee of the Whole to discuss options in more detail.

Business Item #1

Five Year Strategic Plans

This idea germinated from the desire to legislate proactively rather than respond to mandated state legislation or staff created legislation for issues needing change, commented Mr. Dredge. He expressed his thought that it would be a more effective way to set policy, working hand in hand with the administration, with knowledge of the long range goals in order to decide to fund projects and set certain priorities for departments. If the Council had a general idea of the direction the City was heading, throughout

individual departments, then legislation and priorities could be set more efficiently. Currently, the Council operates very independently from the departments, and he assured the group his intention is not to cross over the line and tell staff how to run their department, however, by being more collaborative, then the Council and administration can work together to reach the goal of what Murray should look like in the future.

One simple example that can be extrapolated to other departments is to look at the aging population in Murray. Now, Mr. Dredge expressed, the Parks and Recreation Department programs are geared toward kids and has been for some time. With the aging population, he asked if there is a plan to offer more and expanded services, and facilities directed to the older residents.

Mr. Dredge told of a new sport called *pickle ball* which is all the rage among senior citizens. It is played on a court similar to a tennis court. Maybe this is the type of thing Murray should be considering as a City. There have been numerous requests from the youth for a skate board park and he wondered if that is part of City planning. He asked if something is being done to facilitate that park. This concept can be used in roads, in the library, and in all departments. Each department head is a professional in their area, and there is a need to look into the future to determine where we want to be in five years and what the Council can do to help achieve these goals.

Ms. Griffiths mentioned that the Library has been going through a comprehensive strategic planning process. The community and City staff have facilitated some of the sessions. She feels a great plan has been developed involving all the different segments of the community. Meetings with staff have taken place and the Library Board is considering some of the concepts it wants to incorporate into the Library. She suggested that a good facilitator is necessary to move the process forward.

Mr. Dredge referred to his outline for a proposed process, beginning with the Council and key executive staff members sitting down to determine how to facilitate plans. Since the Library has recently been through this, then what can be gleaned from it, he asked. He would like to have a standardized format that is used by all departments, with measures to see how items are being accomplished. This document should be considered when going through the budget process. The specific way to implement is not something Mr. Dredge wanted to discuss in this meeting, nevertheless, he would like to get some feed back on whether this course of action should be pursued. Finally, his suggestion is to get the word out for staff and department heads to begin thinking about the subject, however, he feels that it should not be initiated until the first of 2010, when the Mayor's position has been decided. The Mayor, whoever it is, will have their own feelings about the process and that should be respected. This is not the Council driving the executive side. It needs to be a collaboration on the future of Murray.

Ms. Griffiths mentioned the M21 Commission several years earlier. She participated in that, and many new products from the vision were developed. That was directed toward Murray in the 21st Century. She feels that this effort should include members of the community, as well as the executive branch, and Council. She

expressed her experience with strategic planning, which can be a very smooth process or a total flop. It is her belief that the process should be well defined with a good facilitator.

Mr. Dredge agreed that the department heads may want to seek some input from residents in formulating the plan.

Ms. Dunn indicated her concerns, the first one being the timing. She agrees that with the possibility of three new Council members and possibly a new mayor, any action on strategic planning should not begin until the first of next year. The second comment was that generally, a strategic plan would be led by the administrative side of the organization, with everyone coming together to work toward the concepts. The Council make up may change every two years and with that fact, it might be easier to have the plan initiated by the Mayor's office, but before even going into the process the Council and administration should agree on the format. She expressed her opinion that a discussion on the process is necessary before getting into the project itself.

Mr. Dredge agreed that everyone's input is of value and his thought is to go to the administration and let them know that the Council would like to see some future plans, and how they will be implemented. He continued that the Council would like to determine how it can help. He confirmed that it may not be the role of the Council to decide how that is carried out. He said that Ms. Wells communicated to him that this would be a positive step on the part of the Council. He liked the suggestion by Ms. Griffiths to involve the public. In addition he pointed out that a five-year plan may not be necessary in some departments, such as, Treasurer or Finance.

Ms. Dunn observed that in private business, strategic planning is an important thing and in many government entities there is a movement to operate more like business. Many strategic plans are so dependent upon finances and that is difficult for a city due to the demands of, and reactions to the legislature and economy. The revenue picture is an unknown many times from year to year. She asked Mr. Dredge if he was directing the strategic plan more toward budgeting or practices.

Mr. Wagstaff emphasized that the Council's job is policy making. As Mr. Dredge has outlined the strategic planning, the question is not, do we construct pickle courts, rather, it is more whether the City is planning for the aging population. The financing will enter into what the department has the ability to do, however, the policy still stands. The idea of involving more than the Council in planning aids the process of implementing the policy.

Mr. Dredge commented that a good example is the City Power Department. He asked, rhetorically, if there is a stated goal, plan or long range policy is to have more *green* resources. Is this the first priority even though that is, perhaps, more expensive in the short term. If this is the Council's goal, then the Power Department should not be looking at another coal-fired plant. This needs to be driven by the executive side, however, knowledge of the direction the Council desires to go needs to be communicated.

Ms. Griffiths suggested that the City needs to look at both short term and long term plans. The recreation center was part of the planning of the M21, for example, so there have been some good results to this process in the past. She feels that much analysis and research needs to be completed to devise the right procedure. She was impressed with the research Dan Barr did for the Library. She asked Mr. Tingey to comment on his experience in this area.

Mr. Tingey said that a committee was organized representing many community interests, such as Intermountain Medical Center, Salt Lake Community College, Murray residents, Library Board, School Board, and people involved at the Library. They first looked at the strengths of the City, things people like about Murray and from this broad picture, narrowed it down to what the Library could do to strengthen that broad picture. It was a funnel approach with a lot of good input.

Ms. Griffiths said that the M21 Commission also involved the business sector, which was important and helpful. It is her feeling that first the composition of the process should be developed, and suggestions made to the administration.

Mr. Dredge stated that at this point he would like it known that this current Council feels a five-year strategic plan would be a positive step and that staff could begin to think about how this could happen.

Ms. Dunn commented that this Council seems to agree on the need for this, however, there could be two to three new Council Members and their opinion is unknown, so it may be preliminary to decide for them.

Mr. Dredge said that he agrees with that observation, however, it is not good to put business on hold until the new members are on board. If the new Council decides it is a bad idea and does not want to proceed then that may stop the process.

Ms. Griffiths offered that perhaps in the final process the former Council Members perspective can be considered and utilize the benefit of their experience. Over time certain ideas and perceptions are developed.

Mr. Dredge stated that he would like to let the staff know that the current Council, and hopefully the next Council, sees some wisdom in future planning in an overall way. Things requiring action will come before the departments, however, working together to reach a goal is more effective.

Maybe rather than bold mission statements that are typical of strategic planning, each person has a goal or idea of something they desire to accomplish. For example, she was a proponent of transit oriented development and she is pleased that it became a goal of the Council, which has striven for that concept, and progress has been seen in its advancement, Ms. Griffiths remarked.

Mr. Dredge noted that any idea is more effective as a stated goal, and then by working with professionals the plan is developed, and becomes reality. He confirmed that it will not work in every department and every situation. Looking at the budget, for example, if it is the goal of the Police Department to grow by five people over the next five years, to have a gang squad or narcotic's unit, then that helps to know how to respond to budget requests for officers. He would ask the Chief if the new officers are going into patrol, or going to meet the City five-year plan in forming the gang squad. As part of the five-year plan, it is agreed in advance that this is a worthy plan.

Because it is stated that these are discussion items, Mr. Dredge asked how a decision is made in the future.

Mr. Robertson commented that at the end of five years, there needs to be a way of developing further. The plan needs to progress on and develop on ahead. Mr. Dredge commented that annually the plan should be reviewed and modified as necessary.

Mr. Brass said that the five-year plan done a few years ago has now elapsed.

Ms. Griffiths confirmed that circumstances do change, and modifications are needed. One example is this economic downturn.

Business Item #2

Property Maintenance Ordinance

Mr. Dredge stated that this topic goes back to the first get-together as a Council when there was discussion on what things members wanted to accomplish in office.

As an overall statement, Mr. Dredge commented that the aging community includes the age of the population, as well as, the housing stock and age of businesses. Everyone has said that it is important to put into place measures to help maintain the area properties so that they do not become blighted. A perfect example is what has happened on Woodrow Street. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the doctors office that went in, everyone can agree that the properties were purchased, the area became blighted, and a bigger problem occurred. Every district has neighborhoods of older, smaller homes with aging people who have lived there many years. Properties may become rentals with owners not maintaining the home and grounds. All of these situations combine to decrease the value of the entire neighborhood.

Mr. Dredge asked how to effectively face this situation on behalf of the neighborhood, while not stomping on property rights, when a piece of property is blighted. The Council has begun to put into place programs that may go hand and hand with a property maintenance ordinance. The desire to provide down payment assistance, and the desire to provide loans for funds for property repairs can dovetail in nicely with some of the plans that Mr. Tingey already has. This is a component of the whole plan to help with the aging residential homes. The idea is that this should not be

viewed as just a big stick to single out residents. Some people egregiously violate the rules and a forceful ordinance should address those situations. Mr. Dredge feels this is a smaller problem.

He stated that the larger issue is with elderly people on a fixed income that cannot afford to take care of the property. Legislation that mandates a certain standard, with people who cannot afford repairs creates a problem. He asked how that is to be addressed, and added that a funding piece needs to be included in the ordinance to help in these circumstances. He also suggested service organizations that are willing to go out and help. From his own experience in Boy Scouts, there are many Scouts looking for Eagle Projects, in addition to Rotary and Kiwanis clubs.

Mr. Dredge does not intend to talk specifics, he defers to Mr. Tingey and his past experience, however, it is important not to have an unenforceable law on the books. Currently, there is not enough Code Enforcement for the laws already instituted. Looking at this from that perspective, a plan may never be put in place to maintain Murray and improve it. Mr. Dredge asked for comments from the other Council Members.

Mr. Brass stated that there is a funding mechanism that was put in place when Fireclay was conceived. It takes part of the low income housing requirement and provides funding for use throughout the City. If Fireclay ever reaches its potential, that fund will be millions of dollars. He does not dispute this need, however, he asked about the enforcement. Many tickets are written now, and at some point something else needs to be done. Mr. Brass asked what can legally be done and what do Council Members want to do. He commented that people cannot be taken out of their home, and water cannot be turned off, therefore, what can be done to enforce the infraction.

Mr. Dredge confirmed that he does not have those answers, but his chief question today is, since this has been discussed for some time, is the Council ready to direct staff to give answers and proceed with further options. Mr. Dredge stated that his discussions with Mr. Tingey result in the desire to move slowly and complete each step in the proper manner.

Mr. Tingey confirmed the need to have tools in place to address these issues. The programs need to be in place to assist people on fixed incomes who are having financial difficulty completing repairs.

Mr. Brass explained that as the economy worsens, this problem will affect others, too. Affordability will be an issue with those who have lost jobs. Mr. Brass understands moving slowly, however, the Council has discussed the matter for six years. With more and more rental properties the issue is growing. Lincoln Street may become a multimillion dollar slum. The City needs to address this soon, in an intelligent manner.

Ms. Griffiths told of a property in her neighborhood that has been allowed to

steadily get worse and worse to the point where cars are parked on the lawn now. The lawn is not watered and the hose goes into a mobile home in the driveway. She does not know the situation but it is a source of problems that cause neighborhoods to deteriorate. One home has been abandoned. Another one has become a duplex from a single family home. Devaluing all the homes around is the result.

Ms. Griffiths asked if it is legal for the City to clean up the property and place a lien on the title if owners refuse to clean it up themselves. Mr. Brass stated his belief that an ordinance to that effect is in place under national building code. Ms. Griffiths explained that in the county if bushes interfere with other owners property rights then they can be removed. She stated this matter needs to be addressed too.

Mr. Dredge declared that the City has a quality staff with knowledge of our current ordinances and access to what others have done. If the Council is ready to move forward on this, then the staff needs to come to the Council with a proposed plan on how to address this matter. There needs to be a process to get to where the City should be. In some cases, if the law is in place, it may just be necessary to identify the steps on what will happen until the property is liened. The Council needs the will to say it is time to enforce.

Mr. Brass said that this is an item that can be put on a Committee of the Whole agenda, with a specific time frame, and discuss and make a decision. There was once a little home abandoned east of 1300 East, with a caved in roof, rat infested, and full of debris, and the City still had a very difficult time taking that through the ordinance. It is a laborious process.

Mr. Dredge recounted a comment made by Mr. Critchfield, in summary, stating that when an ordinance is put in place, the vast majority of people follow it, there is the exception and that creates the problem.

Ms. Griffiths stated that we do not want scenarios with little old ladies hitting the news, however, something needs to be done. Others agreed.

Mr. Dredge said that there are many people in the City willing to help. The standard needs to be established, and a way to help some maintain the standards needs to be determined, and then the manner to deal with others should be decided upon.

Ms. Griffiths suggested that she could put together a diplomatic message for the Council news article in September. It is important to create more public awareness of codes in place, with compliments for those who do take care of their yards. Accentuating the positive, and mentioning the Beautification Awards may be helpful. In addition, the condition of one's property affects those in the neighborhood, as well.

Mr. Dredge has talked with a number of people about putting together a property

maintenance ordinance or enforcing what is in place and everyone has agreed on the need for this action.

Mr. Dredge adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

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Janet M. Lopez
Council Office Administrator

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