

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORK SESSION

February 12, 2018

In Attendance:

Members Present: Mayor Janet Winkler, Commissioners: Larry Chapman, Jonathan Greer, Barry Mitchell, Rick Shew, Ann Smith and Bill Warren

Others Present: Town Manager, Rebecca Bentley, Director of WPCOG, Anthony Starr, Town Clerk, Tammy Swanson, and Town Attorney, Carroll Tuttle

Call to Order:

Mayor Janet Winkler called the work session to order, and Commissioner Bill Warren led the group in the opening prayer.

Strategic Planning Session:

Visit to Horizons Building:

Janet thanked the Board Members who were able to visit the Horizon's building last Saturday, Feb. 10th. Janet stated that there will probably be a decision made on the Horizon's building later tonight or at least by our next regular Board meeting.

Janet thanked Anthony Starr for being with the Board tonight.

Planning Session Discussion:

Anthony thanked the Board for having him. He reviewed his history with planning and with facilitating meetings. Anthony reviewed the ground rules for the meeting.

Rebecca reviewed the Town's history and finances:

Town of Hudson:

-Incorporated 1905

-4 square miles

-1-mile ETJ

-Population 3,944 – approximately 1,500 homes

-27 – full-time Town employees (also have some part-time and permanent part-time employees)

-26.3 Miles of street

-Planning Permits for 2017 – 45 permits

-Largest Employer is CCC & TI

-Largest Taxpayer is Shurtape

-Property Tax 60% Industrial - 40% Residential

-Town of Hudson represents - 5% of County Population and 20% of county school children are going to school in Hudson.

- **Fund Balance – Working Capital – What is in reserves (for unforeseen events)**

LGC recommends that we have at least 8% of unassigned fund balance.

February 12, 2018 Strategic Planning Session

Rebecca reviewed the changes in fund balance over the past 30 years.

Our Buildings and properties:

- Town Hall
- Garage
- Landscaping Building
- Recreation Center
- Pool
- HUB
- Hudson Optimist
- 43 Acres Parks
- 2.5 miles of walking trails -
- Dog Park

Rebecca's opinion of Major accomplishments –

- Keeping Sattler
- Patrol Vehicles – now nice fleet
- She discussed grants that have helped us to accomplish these goals.
- Tax Credit Apartments – worked with COG to get grants
- Passed Alcohol Referendum – has opened up a lot of commerce for us
- Recreation – have dedicated a lot to recreation. Have put new floor in gym, have renovated pool area, Upgraded walking path – acquired optimist park, and expansion of recreation center
- Dinner Theater
- New Town Logo

Rebecca commented that she is very proud of how far we have come.

Rebecca stated that we offer services in the Town of Hudson, and we do that with people and equipment. She commented that we have some very aged equipment that needs some attention. She commented that trimming the budget would involve trimming people or equipment.

- **Positives/Important issues for the Town:**

Anthony asked for the Board to talk about what they think some of the positives/important things that have happened and are happening for the Town. The Board answered as follows:

- Dinner Theater – Ann
- New Police Vehicles - Larry
- Recreation - Jonathan
- Alcohol Referendum – Bill
- Paid off debt – Janet
- Acquired Optimist Park – Barry
- The HUB (Rental) - Rick
- Shuford Mills Site – Help in working with legislation to clean up (Jonathan)
- The Installation of Public Wi-Fi – Bill

February 12, 2018 Strategic Planning Session

Saving Sattler – Janet

Expansion of the Butterfly Festival – Barry

Tourism – What we do in the downtown area – Ann

The new brand – Town Logo – Jonathan - How we can start to tell our story. (Jonathan discussed how important it is to tell the Hudson story with a branding).

Hosting events that brings people into Town – Bill (Pickin' in the Park, Car Shows, Arts Festival)

Bringing staffing salaries up to date – Janet

New Sanitation – New Bins – Barry

Negotiating with a private company to do recycling (Simply Green) - Larry

Sound system in downtown area – Bill

Board Vote on the Positives/Important issues:

(# of Votes – Topic)

6 - Alcohol Referendum

5 - Dinner Theater

4 - New Branding

3 - HUB Rental

3 - Tourism

1 - Police Vehicles

1 - Paid Off Debt

2 - Acquired Optimist Park

2 - Shuford Mills Site

1 – Recreation Focus

2 – Update of Staff Salaries

- **Obstacles, Challenges, Concerns for the Town:**

Anthony asked the Board to discuss things they think are obstacles, challenges or concerns for the Town.

Lack of Funds – Rick

Bedroom Community – Barry

Aging Employees – Janet

Leasing of the Horizons Building – Bill

Economic Development – Jonathan

Resistance to Change – Ann / Barry – the taxpayer is resistant to higher taxes

Using our Town wisely – we are landlocked and limited - physical size of Town - Rick

Aging and availability of buildings – Barry

Capital improvements – all of our buildings and equipment aging – Janet

Making the best use of the HUB – Bill (We need to make better use of what we already have.)

Uncertainty in Legislature – Jonathan

Finding Grants and monies to support needs – Ann

Overcoming perceptions of the Town – Rick

Attracting young families – Barry

Using our new logo in marketing better – Janet

Being more progressive – Bill

February 12, 2018 Strategic Planning Session

Intergovernmental relationships (i.e. County) – Jonathan

Best use of all of the facilities we have – Ann

Aging Town – Ann

Housing issues – old and dilapidated housing – Janet

Jonathan asked about industrial sites that are available.

Rebecca stated that there are several sites available for industrial growth; however, because we do not have control of the water and sewer system, this can be difficult to grow. Rebecca commented that Lenoir has been good to this point about working with us for extending lines. She commented that grant funds are available for extending lines.

Ann stated that the EDC is actively marketing the vacant Shuford site and the Anderson site. Ann commented that we do have a good working relationship with the EDC.

Jonathan asked about the 5-10 year needs – Rebecca commented that our 5-10 years needs equate to approximately \$1.5 million dollars. The roof of the HUB is in this number.

Ann stated that she would like to see us take the HUB and possibly the Horizons building and make them better money makers for the Town.

Bill stated that we need more marketing of the Town to attract more families. We need a billboard of our new logo.

Bill commented that we need to be more progressive in our thinking – bringing in events to bring people into Town.

Rick commented that we need to decide what we want Hudson to be known for.

Barry asked about zoning for new housing.

Rebecca commented that we have a lot of older neighborhoods.

Anthony mentioned that 40% of the housing stock in this area was built prior to 1980.

Board Vote on Obstacles, Challenges and Concerns:

(# of Votes – Topic)

4 - Lack of Funds

2 - Aging Employees

5 - Economic Development

1 - Resistance to change

1 - Size Limitation of Town

3 - Capital Improvements

February 12, 2018 Strategic Planning Session

- 2 - Making Best Use of HUB
- 1 - Finding Grants to support needs
- 5 - Marketing better
- 1 - Intergovernmental Relationships
- 1 - Old dilapidated housing
- 2 - Leasing of Horizons Building
- 2 - Best use of all facilities

- **Opportunities, Projects, Priorities within the next three years:**

Anthony asked the Board to discuss opportunities, projects and priorities they see for the Town in the next 3 years.

-Create a center of economic development within the Town - Ann If we mention better use of HUB and possibly leasing Horizon's building. Incubators. Rick added that since we are center of county we have a lot to work with.

-Growing relationship with arts council - Bill Art classes, dance classes, JAM Classes, brings a lot of people in. A challenge to that is the hours the HUB is open. We need to discuss possibly giving out some keys when needed. Bill stated that the arts attract people to towns.

-Best use of facilities - Janet This comes back to conversations about leasing Horizons. Our Police Dept. needs additional space. She commented that we need to think about all our buildings, and the best effect on use of our taxpayer funds.

-Expand on existing events – Barry He discussed some of the potential changes for our current events. -- Sippin' in the Park, Butterfly Festival - Letting people know that the HUB is available.

-Branding – Rick (have opportunity to rebrand ourselves) Rick stated that with this we need to identify who we are.

-Succession Planning for staff – Janet She stated that we are going to have to address this in the upcoming budget. Anthony stated that salaries are becoming an issue. He stated that at the COG with some of their jobs, he is seeing major inflation.

-Partnerships outside our community – Barry (Public and private)

-Thinking about other businesses – Rick He stated that we need to work together with other municipalities to get the job done. Barry commented that we are so small, we need to work with people outside our Town. Grow tax base with new businesses – Rick Recruit!

-Become a destination and not a pass through – Ann Ann commented that we have to get noticed by the young people.

-Tackling the old dilapidated structures – Jonathan (Revitalization – Code enforcement) Jonathan asked about the success of the Town's façade grant program. Rebecca commented that we have had no takers. Rebecca stated that the grant is 50/50 up the \$5,000 (\$2,500 is the highest portion to be paid by a business.)

-Better communication with our taxpayers – Janet She stated that if we are going to earmark our funds, we need to let our people know.

-Growing relationship with Caldwell Community College – Ann Ann stated that the college is great for the entire county, but it is in our community and we need to own it. Rick stated that Mark Poarch is a very community oriented president.

Board Vote on Opportunities, Projects, Priorities within the next three years

February 12, 2018 Strategic Planning Session

(# of Votes – Topic)

- 4 - Create a center of Economic Development
- 2 - Best use of facilities
- 2 - Branding the community
- 3 - Succession Planning for staff
- 4 - Grow tax base with new businesses
- 4 - Become a destination not a pass through
- 2 - Better communication with taxpayers
- 2 - Grow communications with community college
- 2 - Grow relationships with arts council
- 3 - Grow current events
- 1 - Partnerships outside community

Anthony asked the Board Members to give their main “take-away” from what they learned at this work session.

- Rick stated that he we have a good group – a lot of agreement.
- Barry stated that there is no negativity with the group – some things we need to go forward with cautiously. Feels this is a group wants to get things done.
- Janet stated that she feels we all know where we’re going and what we need to do to get there.
- Bill stated that it is very beneficial to have a progressive Board – Not looking into the past but forward.
- Jonathan – not interested in status quo– Board does not want Town to become stagnant. We want to improve.
- Ann – we all realize that we need to make some changes to make our tax base grow. And we all came up with good ways of doing that.

Anthony stated that this concludes the work session – it has been good. He encouraged the Board to give staff clarity on what the Board wants in the future. He commented that this will make the working relationship better between Board and the Staff.

Janet thanked Anthony for conducting the work session for us.

FYI for Upcoming Meetings:

Janet stated that she wanted to bring the Board up-to-date on a couple issues that are going on in Town, and that will be discussed in the near future.

- **Offer to Purchase Property:**

We have been approached by a taxpayer that wants to give the Town 3.86 acres of property in Town that has walking path located on it – it is in a floodplain so it cannot be built on. The tax value of the property is approximately \$23,000. The taxpayer has asked for \$1,900 for a survey that has already been done on the property. Rebecca also commented that this move will help us to protect the walking track property.

Carroll stated that there will need to be additional surveying of the property, because the survey done previously does not include the entire property.

February 12, 2018 Strategic Planning Session

Rebecca stated that since our walking path is already on the property, we already maintain the property.

Bill asked about the fees for additional surveys.

Rebecca estimated that it would probably cost approximately \$4,000.

Rebecca suggested that we could pay for the portion that is already done.

- **Horizons Lease:**

Janet stated that the new Commissioners have now walked through the Horizons building, and we do need to give Dr. Stone an idea of what we want to do. Janet stated that Dr. Poarch has written a letter of support to Darrell Pennell, Chairman of the School Board about Hudson leasing the building.

Ann stated that it is her understand that the School Board would like to have representation from the Board and from the College about the building.

Rebecca asked if there is an option for purchase in the lease.

Carroll stated that there is not an option to purchase in the lease.

Rebecca asked if we want to put a lot of money in a building that we do not have an option to purchase.

Rick stated that he remembers Dr. Stone mentioning there could be an option to purchase.

Janet stated that she would not include that option without a dollar amount for the purchase.

Carroll commented that the building could possibly be given to Caldwell Community College, and he asked if that might be an option.

Rick and Ann stated that they are both skeptical of that happening.

Bill stated that he understands the incubator idea; however, he would like for it to be a multi-purpose building.

Carroll commented that the only restriction on the lease is that the building cannot be used as a school.

Rick commented that Dr. Stone likes us coming back with ideas of how to use the building.

Janet suggested that we say in our letter to the school board that we would like to possibly use the building as a small business center; however, we may need to move Town administration in this building as well.

Ann stated that in the beginning, we had said that we want to put a small business center in the building, and she feels we should work in this direction. Ann stated that she would not feel good about changing course at this point in the game.

February 12, 2018 Strategic Planning Session

Janet stated that in this coming year, we do not expect this building to turn revenue over for us. We will have expenses in this building. She commented that in operating the Town, we have immediate needs.

Janet stated that Dr. Poarch's letter is very generic.

Rebecca stated that our letter could also be generic.

The Board discussed the amount of room that will be available at the building.

Janet stated that she wanted to ask each Board Member if they would support the idea of writing a letter to the School Board showing support of the Town leasing the Horizons building. Janet commented that the letter would be in the same fashion as Dr. Poarch's letter. This topic will be discussed by the School Board's Facilities Committee at the end of this month.

Ann Smith - in support

Bill Warren - in support

Rick Shew - in support

Larry Chapman - in support

Barry Mitchell – feels a lease still needs to benefit us –we don't want someone dictating to us since we would be responsible for the building. Ann commented that if we look at what we have talked about in this work session, this is a good option for the Town. Barry stated that he wants to make sure we are protected in this.

Jonathan – expressed concerns about the future with the building – we could be making improvements to a building we do not own or may not be able to buy.

Carroll stated that there could a first right of refusal option added, plus an option to purchase. Carroll commented that they have not responded to the draft of the lease he created. It is a 10-year lease with the option for either party to end with a specified amount of notice.

The Board Members commented that the letter to the School Board could say that our vision for the Horizons building is to create a Small Business Center.

Dr. Stone had suggested that the lease be \$1,000 annually; however, the Board suggested that \$100 per year be offered.

Ann stated to keep in mind, we are at the mercy of what could come to the Horizons building if we do not lease the building.

The Board asked that Carroll draft a letter to the School Board and a lease for the Horizons Building based on the information that has been shared.

Adjournment:

Motion: (Larry Chapman/Bill Warren) to adjourn the meeting. Unanimously approved.

Tamra T. Swanson, Town Clerk