

COUNCIL RETREAT RECAP

January 21-23, 2010

Suncadia Lodge, Cle Elum, WA

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21

General Discussion

Council discussion was informal, focusing on relationships and roles between council members and City staff.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22

Long Term Financial Overview

Finance Director Lyman Howard provided a comprehensive overview of the City's finances. The challenge that currently faces Sammamish is that there is a structural imbalance in operating revenues and expenses that is not sustainable in the long term. It is projected that operating expenses will exceed operating revenues in 2015.

The City has been able to keep its costs down because it has a lean and efficient core staff and contracts for police services, fire services and other supplemental work such as engineering and planning on specific projects. Sammamish has the lowest per capita expense on the Eastside.

This financial challenge needs to be addressed in the next biennial budget cycle. Discussion followed focusing on potential revenue options that would eliminate the future imbalance in operating revenues and expenses:

- REET 3 (real estate excise tax) may be used for operating expenses, or it could be set aside in special fund to be used to build a capital project such as a community center.
- Bonds can be used for some capital projects.
- Sammamish currently has no utility tax. It's the only city of its size in the state that does not collect this. This could be collected on a temporary or ongoing basis.
- Levy lids may be lifted for a specific period of time in order to collect money that can be used for operating purposes.
- A local improvement district (LID) can be implemented for some capital costs with a focused "user/beneficiary" group.

Community Center

Parks and Recreation Director Jessi Richardson presented information about community centers based on the experience of other cities. Community surveys and citizens input to current council members show that Sammamish citizens do want a community center. We need to determine what the community's vision is for program and services and what type of facilities are needed to support that vision.

Finally, how will it be paid for? Achieving a high cost recovery requires planning for multiple uses. “Senior Centers” and other specialty use facilities are a thing of the past. Multipurpose models may include:

- **Recreation/Leisure Swimming Pool**—Considered an “attraction.” Also accommodates traditional aquatics programs such as swimming lessons and fitness. *Direct cost recovery is moderate to high (60-100%).*
- **Competitive Swimming Pool**—Traditional “box” design focusing on fitness/athletic: swim teams, diving, and water polo. *Direct cost recovery is low to moderate (40-70%).*
- **Youth/Teen Facilities**—Dedicated space or time or both. Special interest: fitness/athletics, music/dance, “hang out” space. *Direct cost recovery is low to moderate (30-70%).*
- **Fitness/Aerobics/Dance Facilities**—Studio space separate from gymnasium, workout facilities, drop-in and scheduled activities. *Direct cost recovery is moderate to high (50-100%+).*
- **Gymnasium/Athletic Facilities**—Athletic programs and leagues, workout facilities, locker rooms, drop-in and scheduled activities. *Direct cost recovery is moderate to high (50-100%+).*
- **Indoor Sports Arenas**—Athletic programs and leagues, locker rooms, training facilities, drop-in and scheduled activities. *Direct cost recovery is moderate to high (80-100%+).*
- **Educational/Leisure/General Recreation**—Arts and crafts, general programs, lounge/social areas, drop-in and scheduled activities. *Direct cost recovery is low to moderate (30-60%+).*
- **Banquet/Meeting Space**—Weddings, private parties, meeting rooms, commercial kitchen. *Direct cost recovery is moderate to high (70-100%+).*
- **Theater /Performing Arts Facilities**—Performance stage, drama/theater programs, sound and lighting. *Direct cost recovery is low to moderate (30-60%).*

Capital costs depend on what is built. \$30 million will get you approximately 80,000 sq. ft. facility, leisure pool and a competitive pool, athletic facilities, other standard recreation amenities. Land acquisition and parking structure are potential additional costs. Debt service on this kind of facility would be \$2.15 million per year over a 20-year period. Potential sources for payment of debt:

- General Obligation (GO) voted bond levy
- Councilmanic bonds – paid with existing tax revenues
- Utility tax dedication
- Other?

Operating and maintenance costs also depend on what type of facility is built. 80,000 sq. ft. facility would cost \$1 to #2 million in net annual operating costs. It would also depend on the mix of programs and services and well as policies (i.e. what programs and services are subsidized and what is the subsidy rate?) What source would the subsidy be recovered from?

- Utility tax?
- Levy Lid Lift?
- Other?

The next step in the civic facilities program is to define program and service needs. What is the community’s vision for programs and services? What type of facilities do we need to support this vision? How do we pay for it? Obtaining a clear vision will require community surveys, facility tours and public workshops.

A feasibility study will assist in determining how much it will cost and what combination of amenities will make it financially successful. A master facility plan will need to be developed, location and site analysis completed, and partnership opportunities explored. Once project funding is determined, design and construction can begin.

The City's 6-Year Parks Plan is being updated and will include facility options, community input, and results from "scientific" surveys. With the opening of the Recreation Center (old Sammamish Library) in 2011, the City will have an opportunity to learn from experience and test the market. This will enable us to define and refine our vision. Discussion followed. Comments included:

- A pool is needed sooner than later. Build a facility first, even if small (maybe even an outdoor pool), without a bond.
- Put the right amenities together for a bond that will pass.
- Study the Whitefish, Montana model.
- Explore all potential partnerships.
- What is the most effective way to provide the service now and into the future.
- Before surveying community, obtain costs (perhaps both capital and operating) of each "what" for the community center.
- Determine what works and what didn't for other municipalities that have community centers.
- Develop a decision matrix or decision tree to keep the project moving forward
- Have another council level discussion before getting the public involved.
- The former Bond Committee information can help jump start the process
- Need to acquire land now; it will help to determine the scope of the facility. Bigger is better; land not needed can be sold off at a later date.

Consensus was reached that:

1. A subcommittee consisting of the City Manager, Parks and Recreation Director, two council members, and the Parks Commission chair will revisit cities that have built similar facilities.
2. A "scientific" survey will be distributed to the public that will include cost estimates for each component.
3. Site analysis on potential locations will be included in the 2010 work plan.

Service Levels/Contract Model

The City's service model was discussed. Sammamish currently contracts with King County for police services. It also contracts with independent consultants on some engineering and planning projects. Fire services are contracted through Eastside Fire and Rescue and the City is receiving good service at a reasonable price. Plans are to stay with EF&R although the City will continue to examine if there is a more efficient way to do this since fire services represents the largest portion of the City's operating budget and has increased at a rate of 7% per year in the past. Staff is currently updating a study done in 2004 that compares the cost of fire services for the City of Sammamish with other comparable cities in the area. When that study is completed, Council will meet to determine if any action is necessary.

Water and sewer services are provided by two independent taxing districts: Sammamish Plateau Water and Sewer District and Northeast Sewer and Water District. Sammamish will continue to maintain a cooperative relationship with both districts.

Consensus was that the City's service model is working and has resulted in the City avoiding any staff layoffs during the current financial crisis. Sammamish will continue to examine the most effective way to provide core services now and into the future.

Parks and Recreation

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (PRO) was adopted in 2004 and is due to expire at the end of 2010. Staff is in the process of updating it and incorporating areas such as arts and culture, volunteerism, and special events that were not in the original 6-year plan. The Parks and Recreation Commission will be reviewing elements of the plan and forwarding them—along with its recommendations—to Council for Council's consideration and adoption.

The Parks and Recreation Commission is also holding a one-day retreat on January 30 before embarking on public outreach campaign of listening, gathering information and prioritizing that information. The Commission will meet with Council on April 19.

Parks and Recreation Director updated Council on the status of Soaring Eagle Park. King County transferred 29.99 acres to the City of Sammamish. Staff has been working the last 18 month to specify a stationery easement vs. a floating easement.

The Beaver Lake Park preferred alternative has been selected and is in the SEPA process. Issues for ball field development are the impact of lights on neighbors and wildlife. People want it dark and quiet at a reasonable hour. Artificial turf, curfew for fields and ball field configuration and lightings need to be considered. Would there be a better rate of return at a different location? Eastlake High School, Pine Lake Middle School and Beaver Lake Park are all being looked at. Who is paying for the use of the fields? Equity of ball field usage is being dealt with by establishing policies so that Sammamish does not overbuild to accommodate users from outside the area whose local governments are not providing their fair share.

The Waterfront Park

Development of the park is within the \$2-\$5 million cost range. A revised preferred alternative has been presented that be built in phases. Council needs to approve the master plan before the City loses the land that is being provided by Redmond and before SEPA can begin. This needs to be prioritized in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. This will be coming back to Council for direction.

The Council would like to establish a better working relationship with the Parks and Recreation Commission as well as the Planning and Arts Commission. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor are encouraged to meeting regularly with the chair and vice chair of each commission. The commission would like to feel that it is being heard, would like clarification on why or why not its recommendations were accepted, and more guidance or definition on what their mission is on any given project. Commissioners also need to know that the Council will support and defend commissioners' roles if name calling or personal attacks occur during public meetings.

Comprehensive Plan

Community Development Director Kamuron updated Council on the process of amending the City's Comprehensive Plan. Deadline for amending the document is the end of June 2011; it may be extended to June 2014. Growth targets have been established and need to be adopted by Council. Other components of the plan that will be examined include:

- Assessor dwelling units
- Housing needs assessment – working with A Regional Housing Coalition (ARCH)
- Citywide cottage housing
- Height issues
- Transportation level of service
- Parks, recreation and open space
- Town Center

City Council will meet jointly with the Planning Commission on February 9 at which time there will be a public hearing. Council agreed to look at docket requests at the February 16 study session. Other Comprehensive Plan Amendments include proposing UGB amendments for the Aldarra/Montaine area, the City's portion of Soaring Eagle Park (29.99 acres) and Klahanie Park and associated parcels. Including data from the 2010 Census would be ideal if the deadline for Comprehensive Plan amendments is extended to allow this.

The Transportation Element of the Comp Plan was discussed including transportation concurrency and level of service. Council agreed that a more thorough discussion of these items as well as connectivity and specific projects would be appropriate for a future study session. One-on-one briefing for some Council members might be advisable. Other items mentioned included:

- Road issues outside city limits that affect Sammamish residents (Issaquah-Fall City Road)
- Park and Ride facility needed at north end of the city
- Citywide traffic counts – what do we expect traffic to be in the future?
- Synchronizing signals on 228th – change timing during the day; adding signals on the north end

SATURDAY, JANUARY 23

City of Sammamish Work Plan

The Work Plan is based on Council policies and the budget adopted by the Council. If Council member have questions on specific work items, they can contact the city manager or any department director for a more thorough discussion.

City Clock

Working with the Arts Commission and a budget of \$100,000, the City was considering three clock designs that were presented to Council following a juried selection process. Given the economic climate, Council chose not to fund the project at this time. When Town Center or a community center is completed the town clock project could be revisited. Other funding models could be explored such as Lake Stevens. As part of a development project, a town clock was installed by the developer.

Freed House

An overview of the history of this property was provided by Councilmember Michele Petitti and City Manager Ben Yazici. Again, given the current economic climate, moving the house is not an option. Deconstruction of the house was discussed. Consensus was reached that the best solution is to dismantle the property and use the wood to create something new, such as a park bench or picnic shelter with a commemorative plaque attached. Working with the Arts Commission, Finance Director Lyman Howard and Parks and Recreation Director Jessi Richardson will come up with some suitable options for Council's consideration. The Council needs to work with the Sammamish Historical Society and formulate an overall vision for other historic properties that need to be identified.

Kellman House

An overview of the property's history and why the City purchased it was discussed. The City bought the property based on the value and potential use for the land, not the actual structure. Use of the Kellman house—located near City Hall and the new library—has generated a lot of citizen and private party speculation. An analysis was completed that concluded it would be extremely expensive to modify and bring the property up to the level at which it could be used by the public. A number of short term options were discussed; Council concluded it needs to focus on the long term and how it would fit into the Town Center Plan.

Council Rules

Conduct at Council meetings was discussed and agreement reached that there needs to be stronger enforcement for appropriate decorum. In particular, personal attacks against City of Sammamish commissioners should be discouraged. In addition to the Mayor, other Council member can intervene when appropriate and ask that an offending speaker stop being verbally abusive. Consensus was reached that incorporating language in the Council Rules would be a good reminder for citizens wishing to address Council during public meetings that they are expected to maintain appropriate decorum.

Council Office Hours & Communications

Having Council office hours on Mondays was suggested as a mechanism for citizens to voice their opinions on agenda topics to be discussed during Council meetings on Tuesdays. This could be a tool in providing another venue for citizens to talk with Council and defuse emotional discussions on controversial topics. It was agreed that starting in February, Council office hours will be the first and third Mondays, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Council members need to contact Executive Assistant Lola Nelson-Mills who will keep a calendar so that all Council members have an opportunity to participate. During the Farmers Market season, Council can interact with the public on Wednesdays at the market at the Sammamish Chamber's "booth."

Meeting on a regular basis with the City's Commissions was also discussed. It was agreed that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor will meet on a regular basis (monthly or every other month) with the chairs and vice chairs of each of the three commissions: Planning, Arts, and Parks & Recreation. Council as a whole will be with all the members of these commissions at least once or twice annually.

Council Committees

Re-establishing Council committees was discussed. In the past, Council organized itself into various subcommittees (Finance, Parks, Public Safety, Legislative) that met and reported back to the Council as a whole. Some staff and Council felt that often Council would want to revisit and discuss the topics as a committee of the whole. This defeated the purpose of the subcommittee and a lot of staff time was taken in going over the same subject matter twice.

Consensus was reached that Council will re-establish two subcommittees—Finance and Public Safety—and revisit their effectiveness after one year. Council members who will serve on the Finance Committee are: Tom Odell, Mark Cross and Nancy Whitten. Serving on the Public Safety Committee, which covers Fire and Police Services, are: Don Gerend, Tom Odell and alternate John Curley.

Long Term Finances

The discussion returned to the City's financial picture and the point at which expenses will exceed revenues. We need to consider what we want to build, how much it will cost and the cost to maintain it. Financial sustainability can be reached by not focusing on one-time expenditure surges. Some other items to consider include:

- Interim budget review
- Reviewing services we do or do not provide
- Service levels that can be reduced
- Projects that can be postponed

The Council's Finance Committee will vet ways to reduce expenditures as well ways to increase revenue.

Klahanie Park

Due to King County's financial situation, the County-owned park, is slated to be closed to cut expenses. Although located in Issaquah's potential annexation area (PAA), Issaquah has indicated it is not interested in taking over the operation of the park. The Klahanie Homeowners' Association (HOA) cannot assume responsibility for it unless it changes its bylaws. Sammamish has relayed to the County that it would be interest in assuming responsibility for running the park. If this park closes, Sammamish parks could expect overuse from residents outside the City. As part of the process in assuming responsibility for Klahanie Park, the Sammamish is asking Issaquah to take the property out of its PAA. Council consensus is to wait and see what happens with Issaquah and the Klahanie HOA before taking any further action.

Sahalee Golf Open

This seniors' tournament takes place in summer 2010. John James, as a liaison with the Chamber of Commerce, has agreed to serve as the City's goodwill ambassador. He will meet with Deputy City Manager Pete Butkus and other parties to discuss ways in which the City can be helpful.