

# 2007 COUNCIL RETREAT RECAP

*January 11-13, 2007  
Union, Washington*

## THURSDAY, JANUARY 11

### General Discussion

Council discussion was informal, focusing on relationships and roles amongst the council members.

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 12

### General Discussion

Council continues its discussion from the previous evening.

### Sammamish Town Center

Community Development Director Gurol stressed the importance of keeping the process moving within the established timeline. To do that, Council needs to identify a preferred alternative by April 17, 2007. The selection of a preferred alternative will narrow the criteria and set the direction for staff and consultants in drafting the Town Center Subarea Plan and final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The preferred alternative is an elaboration on Council's vision statement. Data that supports that vision will be provided and will include a maps, tables and broad goals.

Much like the Comp Plan, the preferred alternatives will include different components and scenarios such as number of units, density, mixed use, etc. Elements that will be included in the preferred alternative are:

- **Market Analysis** (which goes out to 2030) from the private market perspective. The first draft was issued in November, followed by a second draft in December. This is intended to provide insight into what the private sector could produce as far as residential, commercial and office space.
- **Environmental Impact Statement** - this will be issued in January.
- **Public Involvement Summary** - consisting of synthesis of all public input to date and organized into key themes focusing on positive insight on what the public wants to see in the Town Center.
- **Traffic Impacts Analysis**
- **Fiscal Analysis** - what is the financial impact to the City, including revenue projections?
- **Growth Trends** that estimate number of units

The Planning Commission will review these documents review and in the fall of 2007 and forward its recommendation—incorporating some of its suggestions—to the City Council for its review, final decision and adoption in the spring of 2008.

There have been a number of opportunities for citizens to provide public comment including open houses and meetings of the Town Center Committee, Property Owners Forum, Planning Commission, and City Council.

The Planning Commission's role in the process was discussed further. Several council members expressed their desire for the Commission to be involved throughout the decision making process. It was explained that The Planning Commission currently has a significant work load; thus the decision to select two of its members to serve on the Town Center Committee as liaisons. Too much direct involvement by the entire Planning Commission could delay the Town Center timeline. It was recommended that the Planning Commission be invited to the first Council Meeting on May 19 at which preferred alternatives will be discussed.

It was further suggested that Council send a memo to the Planning Commission providing it with a clearly defined role in the Town Center process that should focus on the Commission identify key issues and components to be incorporated into the preferred alternatives. The Town Center Committee should also be reminded that its role is not to select the preferred alternative, but to recommend components to be included.

All interested parties will be invited to the March 19 meeting with an emphasis on having only one spokesperson per group. Providing written comment prior to the meeting will be encouraged; having individuals read letters will be discouraged.

***COUNCIL DIRECTION: Send memo to Planning Commission clarifying its role in the process. Letter to be drafted by Mayor Mark Cross.***

*(City Manager sent e-mail to the Planning Commission in this regard.)*

## **2006 Accomplishments**

Councilmember Petitti listed a number of the City's most notable 2006 accomplishments that included but are not limited to:

- Opened new City Hall after moving of staff, furniture and equipment
- Opened Community Sports Field at Eastlake and Skyline High Schools
- Managed construction of Ebright Creek Park
- Adopted street and park impact fee ordinances
- Coordinated Street and Park Impact Fees and Capital Facilities Plan updates
- Adopted the City's first Parks Capital Improvement Plan
- Coordinated Town Center Plan progress – public involvement, action alternatives for Draft EIS, market study
- Opened SE 24<sup>th</sup> Boardwalk
- Managed numerous Public Works capital improvement projects
- Developed 18 Year Transportation Capital Improvement Program Plan

- Public Works Maintenance & Operations handled weather related emergency responses – record summer dry spell, November flooding, snow event, December wind storm
- Building Division handled emergency response by assessing damage, simplifying the damage permit process, providing customer service
- Responded to 747 new Citizen Action Requests (CARs), including more than 100 traffic engineering and operation CARs and just under 100 drainage-related requests
- Installed robotic camera and recording system in City Council chambers
- Installed traffic cameras on two city arterial streets—at Last Lake Sammamish Parkway & NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street and at Sahalee Way NE & NE 37<sup>th</sup> Way. Cameras will be activated and connected to City website in 2007.
- Implemented Customer Survey for all permit applicants.
- Created Online Inspection Schedule for contractors and homeowners
- Reduced turnaround time for initial building permit plan review by 50%
- Implemented Over-the-Counter Permits for decks and small projects, expanded the Registered Plan Program\*, and initiated permit counter completeness checks to improve consistency.
- Developed Code Enforcement Priority list: 1) Immediate - health/safety, 2) Moderate - public safety and environmental hazard, and 3) Building setbacks, signs, right-of-way issues
- Received \$800,000 in grant funding for the acquisition of additional property for Beaver Lake Preserve.
- Completed 90% of new trail construction for Beaver Lake Preserve Phase I.
- Increased number of park/facility rentals and revenue from previous year; rental revenue exceeded \$140,000
- Hosted Summer Nights in the Park for the sixth year in a row. Sponsorship and grant money for the event exceeded \$12,000. Concert attendance averaged 1,200 per event.
- Received two grants to support teen-based recreation/prevention programs.
- Completed Negotiations for 10-year Franchise Agreements with both Allied Waste (Rabanco) and Waste Management.
- Completed and presented to Council the City's Fire Services Study
- Negotiated new 5-year School Resource Officer Contracts with Lake Washington and Issaquah School Districts, saving the City \$200,000 over the life of the contracts.
- Coordinated the Adoption of a New District Court Contract with King County
- Police officers coordinated two 4-day training sessions on how to deal with an "Active Shooter" (Columbine High School scenario) in a school setting training officers from the Woodinville, Lynnwood, Kenmore and Shoreline Police Departments as well as King County Deputies.
- Police Officers conducted a four day "Start of School" enforcement program during September. Eight officers were assigned among the City's 7 elementary, 3 Junior High/Middle Schools and 2 High Schools during the morning and afternoon school hours.

City Manager Ben Yazici thank the City Council for its timely decisions and leadership that lead to these accomplishments. Along with acknowledging these achievements, we need to ask ourselves, "What can we do better"?

### **Capital Programs & Projects**

Given the City's 18-year finance strategy and capital improvements projects, does it make sense to contract for design and management services or to do it entirely in-house? Staff needs to know what Council's expectations are for new projects and completion timelines.

Policy issues include the timing of projects, scheduling, management, and contractor selection. Projects need to be environmentally prudent and cost effective. Discussion followed focusing on some concerns

about several projects. It was agreed that “wet weather” construction should be avoided. Design work needs to occur from October to May with the construction – earth work – done from April through September. Does the City need to impose penalties for missed deadline and award bonuses for timely completion?

Projects with which the City experienced a number of construction challenges included the 24<sup>th</sup> Street Sidewalk and Ebright Creek Park in which there were erosion concerns, hydroseeding failure, invisible mulch, etc. Problems can arise due to mediocre contractors, poor design and bad communication. We need to make sure that citizens do not perceive there is a double standard (private vs. public) and that when mitigations are proposed, that information is disseminated to the public.

Another concern expressed was that there seemed to be a pattern with some previous projects. There was a project vision, estimated costs which then increased, bids coming in higher than expected and then change orders resulting in claims from the contractor. The final cost is then dramatically higher than in the beginning. The goal is for the City to develop a process by which the City becomes a “world class” project manager. To do this, for example, we need to:

- Develop a way to reasonable estimate end costs while factoring in all the contingencies.
- Get it done when we say it will be done with the result looking like we expected.
  
- Estimate high and low about the same amount of time staying as close to the estimate as possible.
- Using the City Hall project as prototype, it was suggested we develop a process for evaluating what we can do better.

We also need to outline a process used to select contractors incorporating some “control language” not giving a contractor so much leeway to perform, particularly on erosion control and timing. In addition, the City needs to have the ability to “make it right” if the contractor is unable to do so. Although we cannot have total control over a project’s costs due to factors such as weather or concrete strikes, a process still needs to be developed to control expenditures while still providing flexibility and responsiveness.

Non-motorized transportation improvement projects were discussed. It was suggested that the City circulate information establishing the non-motorized projects criteria and that the public be given an opportunity to review the criteria prior to decisions. A flyer could be mailed to all residents outlining the criteria, which would include sidewalks for school access, sidewalks on major arterials and any other projects deemed a priority.

Discussion turned to project design and management: in-house or contracted? If projects are handled entirely in-house, it will take approximately 6-9 months to bring necessary staff on board. This is what staff is recommending because it will lead to project continuity and less time spent on bringing contracted employees up to speed. If more staff is brought on to manage capital projects, we need to sequence projects so there is not a cycle of ramping up followed by a period of relative inactivity. The work load needs to remain consistent by spreading out projects or slowing them down. Project management, engineering design and construction management are more cost effective if done in-house. The bottom line is doing the project most cost effectively with the highest quality.

We need to hire people at the right level, provide training opportunities, and retain them. Civil engineers are currently a highly desired commodity; hiring is extremely competitive. Some organizations are offering signing bonuses and relocations costs. The City might need to consider salary adjustments to make keep us in line with the current market. Hiring individuals who are well rounded and not task specific, who can

take a project from start to finish, could be a positive factor in attracting personnel. It was agreed that this would be a good topic for a future study session.

***COUNCIL DIRECTION:***

- ***Schedule study a session (February) to discuss and agree on a process for making the decision whether or not a capital project will be handled totally in-house or contract it out.***
- ***Schedule a study session to discuss retention incentives and hiring of engineers.***

## **Fire Services**

The City's current contract with Eastside Fire and Rescue (EF&R) expires at the end of 2007. The EF&R Board of Directors – consisting of representatives from three city councils and two fire district – is currently drafting a new interlocal agreement. This will be sent back to each member organization for a vote.

The current funding model has been in place since 2000, but assessed valuation has increased significantly. The new funding model needs to address equity in LEOFF retirement payments. EF&R is currently carrying all firefighters except those who work for Issaquah. It's only fair to pick up the Issaquah firefighters who have worked for EF&R; not the one who retired before EF&R was formed. One funding model proposes a single taxing entity district that is based on assess valuation (AV). Because Sammamish has a higher AV than other members, it would carry a large portion of the costs. AV along is not fair to Sammamish.

Another unknown are the impacts of annexation. If EF&R loses a portion of its funding base due to an area being annexed by another entity, the organization that annexed the area should be responsible for making up the cost difference. Language to that effect needs to be incorporated into the interlocal agreement.

We want to maintain positive relationships but need to protect our citizens. The City values the breadth and depth of sharing resources with all of its fire services partners, but the funding formula needs to be fair. Our representatives, Jack Barry and Lee Fellingge, need to express this to the EF&R Board verbally.

***COUNCIL DIRECTION:***

***Draft resolution that gives Council direction to our two EF&R representatives.***

## **SATURDAY, JANUARY 13**

### **Making Decision in Context**

Potential uses for the City Hall site were discussed including space for the new Sammamish library, a YMCA aquatic facility, community center, and a maintenance and operations facility located on the recently acquired Kellman property. Bellevue Community College has also expressed an interest in providing classes within Sammamish. Parking, access and circulation need to be considered in any potential partnerships that result in additional infrastructure on the Sammamish Commons site.

Infrastructure decisions are multi-layered; all criteria, factors, options and opportunities need to be identified. A process needs to be established by which decision will be made. One way of doing this is for

staff to develop a “Perk Chart” or decision tree that would assist Council putting big decisions into context as far as sequencing and timing.

The City is currently in the process of designing a Town Center concept. How does a library, aquatic facility, M&O facility, community center, etc. fit into the concept?

Discussion then focused on the library and its design. Does the City want to impose design criteria? The ultimate goal is to have a library facility that is sensitive to the site and have an attractive design that fits in with surroundings. The City needs to proceed with a “can do” attitude and negotiate with the King County Library System (KCLS) for the opportunity to influence the building’s design.

In order to explore other potential partnerships, such as one with the YMCA, Council needs input from the Parks Bond Advisory Committee regarding Parks Bond components. The timing of the bond can then be reexamined. Leadership and public participation is needed in identifying who, what, where, when, why and how. In addition, a decision making process needs to be put in place on how the City partners with other organizations to provide services to Sammamish residents. This would include a general philosophy, goals, policies and guidelines on how the City evaluates possibilities. When reviewed and accepted by Council, this document can be handed out to potential partners.

It was noted that the visioning component would assist this process greatly.

#### ***COUNCIL DIRECTION***

***Staff will proceed in working with KCLS staff to have the new library built at the Sammamish Commons site. Council’s goal is to negotiate with KCLS staff and ask that there be an opportunity for Sammamish to influence the building’s design criteria through representation on a library committee on which citizens, staff and council would participate. Draft agreement will come back to Council for review and decision. Negotiations will be handled by the City Manager.***

***The City Manager, Mayor and Deputy Mayor will draft a “Decision Tree” to assist Council with key issues coming up as well as the timing. This item can be listed as a potential agenda item.***

#### **Council Committees Revisited**

As its last annual retreat, Council agreed to dispense with committees involving staff time and support that met on a monthly basis. As items of concern were identified, Council would meet as a “Committee of the Whole” during a study session. Several council members indicated that as a result of this, they feel somewhat disconnected from staff and feel they need more information to make policy decisions. The majority feel that this system has been working. It was suggested that in lieu of reverting to small Council committees, an interim solution be implemented. After the quarterly budget report comes out, it would be put on the agenda for a study session. This could also include operational updates.

#### ***DIRECTION:***

***The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and City Manager will draft a schedule for Council consideration. If the schedule is approved, it will be disseminated to the public.***

#### **Customer Satisfaction Survey**

In an effort to improve customer service, staff is in the process of conducting a customer survey. This involves selecting approximately 50 customers who have gone through the permit process within the last 18 months, including builders who submitted multiple projects and those who submitted for single family. We

want to hear how they viewed the process, what their experience was with inspections, etc. The City budgeted for a consultant (Management Consultants) to review the permit process, which could bring out some additional issues. As a result of the survey, a flow chart or timeline could be developed outlining the permit process in a graphic format.

***DIRECTION:***

***Staff will proceed with the survey and present the results to the Council at a study session to be scheduled.***

**Other Items**

It was suggested that future agenda items be placed on the agenda “parking lot” at the end of study sessions.

**Consultant Summary**

Retreat Facilitator Dick Thompson noted that observing as an outsider, the City is doing a good job and Council should be appreciated for its leadership. Council and staff need to benchmark progress not through tracking hours and statistics, but rather by measuring whether the goals and objectives that are in the Comprehensive Plan are being met. Then focus on quality of delivery and how the City can do better.