

City of Webster City, Iowa Goal Setting Report 2017

Mayor:

John Hawkins

City Council:

Matt McKinney

Logan Welch

Brian Miller

Jim Talbot

City Staff:

Daniel Ortiz-Hernandez, City Manager

Karyl Bonjour, City Clerk

Zach Chizek, City Attorney



Facilitated by:

Jeff Schott

Institute of Public Affairs

University of Iowa

Council 5-15-17

**CITY OF WEBSTER CITY, IOWA
GOAL SETTING SESSION
2017**

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CITY OF WEBSTER CITY, IOWA

GOAL SETTING SESSION

2017

Introduction

The City of Webster City requested the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) to assist the city with goal setting. IPA agreed to organize and facilitate a process that involved the following steps:

1. Prepare a questionnaire to identify recent accomplishments, issues/trends/concerns, potential new initiatives/programs/policies and suggestions to improve organizational effectiveness.
2. Conduct a goal-setting session with the elected officials.
3. Hold a preliminary session with department heads.
4. Preparation of this report.

Goal Setting Work Session

City Council Members and the Mayor held a work session conducted by the IPA on March 9, 2017. In attendance and participating at this meeting were Mayor John Hawkins and Council Members Matt McKinney, Logan Welch, Brian Miller, and Jim Talbot. Also in attendance and participating in this meeting were City Manager Daniel Ortiz-Hernandez, City Clerk Karyl Bonjour, Assistant City Manager/Recreation & Public Grounds Kent Harfst, Administrative Services Director Beth Chelesvig, City Manager's Secretary/Deputy City Clerk Ann Smith, Street Supervisor Lanny Bauer, Water and Waste Water Treatment Plant Supervisor Tim Danielson, Electric Distribution Supervisor Adam Dickinson, Finance Director Dodie Wolfgram, Police Chief Shiloh Mork, Fire Chief Chuck Stansfield, Planning Director Karla Wetzler, Public Works Director Ken Wetzler, and City Attorney Zach Chizek.

A preliminary session with department heads was conducted by the IPA on March 2, 2017. In attendance and participating at this session with City Manager Daniel Ortiz-Hernandez, City Clerk Karyl Bonjour, Assistant City Manager/Recreation & Public Grounds Kent Harfst, Administrative Services Director Beth Chelesvig, City Manager's Secretary/Deputy City Clerk Ann Smith, Street Supervisor Lanny Bauer, Water and Waste Water Treatment Plant Supervisor Tim Danielson, Electric Distribution Supervisor Adam Dickinson, Finance Director Dodie Wolfgram, Police Chief Shiloh Mork, Fire Chief Chuck Stansfield, Planning Director Karla Wetzler, Public Works Director Ken Wetzler, and City Attorney Zach Chizek

Major City Accomplishments

The following were identified as major accomplishments by the city during the past two years:

Budget/Financial

- Continue to balance the budget without reducing service
- Council consensus at budget meeting to relieve Senior Citizen group of paying \$7,000 annually for use of City owned facility
- Strong audit results again

City Operations/Facilities

- Three key positions have been filled: City Manager, Fire Chief and Public Works Director
- Purchase of property/land on Ohio Street
- City Scene in monthly Our Hometown magazine
- Creation and implementation of the Youth Advisory Commission
- Council holding quarterly Town Hall Meetings
- Another successful city wide cleanup
- Mounted projector to the ceiling in the Council Chambers
- Loading and delivering of wood chips and fill material to local residents has worked out well
- Revised Employee Manual
- ACA (Healthcare) Module in place – addressed monitoring/reporting issues
- Having RAGBRAI come through Webster City as a pass through town in 2015

Economic Development

- The sale of 2 large pieces of real estate to agricultural manufacturer based locally (VeroBlue and the Nelson Farms)
 - VeroBlue making large investment in community
 - Sold Beam building to VeroBlue
- Businesses: Thrifty White Drug Store, Medical Clinic-Hospital, Webster City Financial, Mary Ann's expansion, Van Diest Supply expanding

Housing/Code Enforcement

- Brewer Creek 5 & 6 plans and construction
- Other major projects are moving forward such as housing subdivision and 2017 Water Distribution Improvement Project (James St.)
- Several abandoned homes demolished
- Selling the three city-owned spec homes
- Awarded money for CDBG Housing Rehab Program

Major City Accomplishments (continued)

Infrastructure

- East Second Street road and sidewalk project
- \$5M Bond initiative approved by Council for the revitalization of the main corridors into town from the East and West
- Naden Addition Street project
- Improvements to the Waste Water Plant(on-going)
- Water Treatment Plant electric service and transformers
- Underground wire with new LED street lights and poles along Superior Street
- Insulator change-out (Sweazey Substation)
- City financial participation in Fair Meadow Drive north of Van Diest Medical Center
- Extension of water main from Fair Meadow to Edgewood
- Part of the 600 block of Oak Park Drive and the 600 block of Hillcrest Drive water main and street replacement project.
- New sidewalk from Park Avenue to Maple Avenue on East Second (under contract)
- New walk bridge at Lyons Creek on East Second (under contract)
- New sidewalk from Ohio Street to Fair Meadow Drive on Superior Street this spring. (under contract)
- Sanitary Slip Lining in several areas in town
- Continue recycling of concrete and asphalt by grinding and reusing material for our needs (cost savings). Concrete for subbase for new streets and asphalt for water main breaks in street areas

Parks & Recreation

- Almost completed with ash tree removal project
- Riverside Wetlands project
- Resurfacing of Georgetown Road and Brewer Creek trails

Public Safety

- Maintained full staff at Police Department
- The start of I Am Responding cell phone notification system (Helps with dead spots that pagers not able to reach)
- All Fire Department officers went through Officer I class
- Sent member to National Fire Academy for Investigation Court class
- Grant received for 19 Pagers for Fire Department (Fire)

Issues, Concerns, Trends and Opportunities

The following were identified as issues, concerns, trends, and opportunities that may affect future city services, policies, finances or operations:

Budget/Financial

- Utility rates:
 - Electric Rate Study underway
 - Full public information into balances of all three base rate accounts
 - The City will continue to face criticism and be scrutinized for cost of utilities. It is difficult to explain to the general public the many benefits of the City having its own utilities. Residents enjoy and want more services that would be paid out of the general fund but do not recognize the role utilities play in helping to support the general funded departments and services.
 - Monies being taken out of Electric Fund to fund other than electric
- City receiving reduced revenues resulting in lack of funds for City Departments and needed projects
- How to pay for or who should pay for private water and sewer laterals when water mains and street surfaces are being replaced
- Future of Healthcare – what replaces ACA

Economic Development

- Prestage is coming and all current businesses are hiring. We need housing and people
- Opportunity for additional growth of VeroBlue (option on land)
 - VeroBlue coming in and paying the wages they are paying has really helped all the wages in the area to rise
- Need to hire economic development person
- Downtown revitalization – downtown shops empty
- Lack of commercial and industrial buildings and land for future growth
- Lack of young professionals coming to Webster City or lack of job opportunities that would attract young professionals
- More development along Highway 20 (commercial)
- Sufficient day-care opportunities for new families coming to our community
- Confidentiality regarding economic development prospects

Issues, Concerns, Trends and Opportunities (continued)

City Operations/Facilities

- Evaluate need for another community wide cleanup
- Manage snow removal from the downtown area in a more cost effective manner (by deciding if some streets can have snow pushed to the side and not trucked away) – potential cost savings
- Changes to Chapter 20- Collective Bargaining
- Several City employees will be eligible to retire in the next five – ten years
 - Succession planning has been identified in the past as an item of concern yet questions remain about how to plan and address this topic.
- Organizational development - both staff development and organizational staffing resources.
- With regard to professional development, outside of required training for certification in specific fields like law enforcement and wastewater operators, very little invested in broader development. You don't know what you don't know unless you discover what is out there.
- Technology, tube TV in city manager's office was replaced before new city manager arrived. It's not that we're merely behind with modern technology, and using it to improve effectiveness and efficiency of services. It's that as a City we simply don't understand what's out there, what it is, and put it off unless given no other alternative.
- Digital documentation could be improved through better programs and training or even archiving with better scanners and storage devices
- More residents setting their used furniture and miscellaneous items at the curb; if no one wants them, then they expect others to throw them away.
 - Should another direction be taken? An agreement with The Trash Man for services (set prices) to haul material away. The bill would go to the home owner for that service. At present time City is paying to pick up and dispose of these items. Should we (City) be involved in these
- Review snow emergency policy?
- Need to continue to examine our industrial sampling program and ensure our industries are being monitored.
- New industry influences – population, infrastructure – water, sewer, streets, electrical
- Security enhancements needed at city hall

Issues, Concerns, Trends and Opportunities (continued)

Infrastructure

- Wastewater plant upgrades or new facility needed soon
- Complete a full survey of all streets in Webster City, as to condition of surface and curbs
- Aging infrastructure that includes streets, sanitary and storm sewers, water mains, park shelters
- VeroBlue Fish Farm stressing city infrastructure
- Completion of Highway 20 to I29 and beyond will increase traffic and visitors
- Adopt Iowa SUDAS specifications for City Street, water and sewer projects or at least what you would adopt.

Housing/Code Enforcement

- Nuisance property ordinances and enforcement actions tied to them need to be evaluated
- City code changes related to nuisance properties -faster action
- Code and nuisance enforcement always a challenge and will continue to be so. How do we address the more complicated issue of restoring community pride and finding ways to assist families who lack the financial means and/or skills to maintain their home?
- Housing shortage for new business in our area (Prestage)
- Lack of quality low to moderate income housing
- Need for additional housing
- New lots should be available this year for new homes to be built in the Brewer Creek Additions.

Public Safety

- The development of Prestage plant and strains put on Public Safety as a result including a need to increase in the staffing at the Fire Department and Police Department
- Fire Dept - trend of lower interest in volunteerism. Level of commitment to respond to calls has decreased. Recruitment and Retention.
- Fire code enforcement not happening in commercial occupancies
- Dual occupancies in downtown commercial/residential
- Fire dept equipment very outdated/needng replaced (E34, Extrication tools)

Parks & Recreation

- Bike trail to Kendall Young Park
- Wilson Brewer Park building repair and revitalization

Issues, Concerns, Trends and Opportunities (continued)

Community Engagement/Character/Communication

- Promote community engagement
- Social media's growing negative impacts on community and City Government.
- As a City organization, we are our own worst promoter. We're not good at story telling. We always are generally reactive and on the defensive at times, especially as social media posts spread like wildfire regardless of the facts and circumstances. From one perspective, it's not that we don't care. Some of us wear their hearts on their sleeve. It's more a matter that there isn't enough time with the multitude of other tasks to spend thinking about how the City is perceived, what is portrayed in the outlets to the public, and look at it from an outsider's perspective.
- Better ways to communicate with other departments and the public
- City App for notifications, Facebook, Twitter, Mass texting by computer and small brochures (front and back only) in the utility bill to help explain what is happening in their neighborhood throughout the year. Up to date information "now", not two weeks from now.
- The culture and language difference. What can or what should we be doing better
 - Social disconnect between different cultures and ethnicities
 - Immigrant community is scared and unsure about future. The relationship with the immigrant population needs to extend beyond the utility and customer relationship. While there are groups in the community such as ACE (All Cultures Equal) who help as a resource and gathering center, the role of the City is not clearly defined which can result in the City always generally reacting to issues and concerns from a segment of our population rather than being proactive.
 - Spanish (multi-language?) on all city notices and web sites.
Spanish or multi-languages options on webstercity.com
 - Influx of Hispanics and other ethnic groups with new Prestage meat packing plant

On-Going Commitments/Obligations

The following were identified as on-going city commitments and/or obligations for the upcoming 24 month period:

- Continue to promote economic development and housing development in Webster City to attract businesses and residents and expand the tax base
 - Expand efforts with Iowa Area Development Group and Corn Belt
 - Move forward with investment opportunities using USDA Rural Development funding
 - Brewer Creek V and VI development
 - Attract additional developers to construct affordable rental housing
- Continue to effectively manage city finances/budget
 - Continue to monitor impact of state property tax legislation on projected future loss of city revenues
 - Continue to identify investments that will lower City operating expenses
 - Electric rate study
- Continue to address infrastructure issues:
 - Continue street repair program
 - Continue major repairs to water and sanitary sewer lines (including slip lining)
 - Continue underground installation of electric utility lines
 - Continue to implement street lighting plan
 - West Second/James Street resurfacing/sidewalk projects
 - 2017 Water Distribution Improvement Project (James St.)
 - New sidewalk from Ohio St to Fair Meadow Drive on Superior St
 - New walk bridge at Lyons Creek on East Second
 - Waste Water Treatment Plant study, include waste water rate study
 - Make a decision regarding wastewater treatment plant and financing
- Continue community improvement projects;
 - Code enforcement
 - LMI projects
 - Program addressing abandoned housing properties
- Continue to support Historic Committee's efforts to expand Wilson Brewer complex and raise more money for year-around use
- Evaluate programs to promote downtown revitalization, including façade improvements and second story improvements
- Promote having a yearly city festival
- Review sign ordinance

New Priority Projects, Programs, Policies and Initiatives

The City Council reviewed potential new projects, programs, policies and initiatives for consideration and selected the following as priorities for the upcoming 24 month period (listed in priority order):

- 1 (Tie) Full-time Economic Development Coordinator as city employee
- 1 (Tie) Evaluate code/nuisance enforcement procedures
- 1 (Tie) Joint communications initiative to assure every entity is compatible in emergencies
- 1 (Tie) Develop marketing plan for city
- 1 (Tie) Develop program to improve security at City Hall

A complete list of all programs and initiatives considered by the Mayor and City Council members is attached as **Exhibit A**.

Final Comments

It was a pleasure to once again assist the City of Webster City with this goal setting process. I was very impressed by the level of leadership and teamwork exhibited by the participants in the session.

It is important to note that the prioritization of projects and initiatives is not “cast in stone.” They can be modified as new circumstances may occur.

Due to time limitations, discussion of organizational effectiveness initiatives was deferred to a subsequent session.

Jeff Schott
Institute of Public Affairs
University of Iowa
March 9, 2017

Exhibit A

City of Webster City Goal Setting Session – 2017

SIGNIFICANT NEW INITIATIVES OR PROGRAMS CONSIDERED

- Water rate study
- Develop long-term plan/financing mechanism for handling storm water
- Evaluate code/nuisance enforcement processes:
- Reevaluate owner-occupied housing rehab program for older houses
- Review City Codes and possible recodification
- Bike Trail to Kendall Young Park
- Develop a community outreach and communication strategy
- Weekend parking fines be eliminated for behind (north of) main street
- City council candidates have first dollar accountable record for all donations
- Change the way we do clean- up weekend – new ideas
- Open burning one week in the spring and one week in the fall for yard waste only.
- Full time Economic Development Coordinator as City employee
- Increase energy savings programs for electrical and water users
- Renovation of park shelters and buildings in West Twin Park
- City wide Wi-Fi to accompany utility services
- Joint communications initiative to ensure every entity is compatible in emergencies
- Ensure hotel/motel tax dollars are spread out to a larger group and limiting the groups who continue to apply to supplement their yearly budget
- Tax abatement for new home construction
- Conduct an annexation study
- Conduct feasibility study for a new hotel/motel
- Look at the possibility of increasing the fire department's fire protection district to include surrounding townships (possible more income)
- Start conducting annual commercial occupancy fire inspections
- Promote Webster City as a SAFE town. Fully staffed emergency services
- Encourage local employers to raise their pay scales - tie to incentive programs (tax abatements, lower utilities or low interest loans to expand their business.
- Increase funding for staff development and training that could include college tuition reimbursement for leadership, management programs
- Develop a marketing plan for the city based on the goals and objectives
- Review Snow Emergency Policy
- Develop program to improve security at city hall