



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes - Final

City Council

Tuesday, January 30, 2024
8:30 AM

Council Retreat

Public Health & Human
Services
1005 W. Worley St.
Columbia MO.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at approximately 8:32 a.m.

Present: 6 - Buffaloe, Foster, Lovelady, Waterman, Knoth, and Proffitt

II. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The retreat began with the City Council and staff introducing themselves and sharing a one-word expectation for their time together.

III. AGENDA TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED:

Setting the Stage

The facilitator reviewed the agenda and meeting norms and asked each attendee to introduce themselves and share their expectations for the retreat.

Celebrating Success

Participants were asked to discuss and share something that the City accomplished in the past year that made them proud to be on City Council or to be a member of City staff. Participants were encouraged to discuss in small groups what truly made the City shine. Highlights of these discussions include:

- New fire stations and equipment
- New terminal at the airport
- New police chief
- Water infrastructure
- Moving toward a new water tower
- Roll carts and recycling
- Investment in staffing
- Smoother budgeting process
- Extended services in many areas
- Addressed homelessness
- New staff positions and investing in employees
- Productive and efficient Council meetings
- Increase in grants
- Ranked well in the Digital City Survey
- Improved employee compensation package
- Improved the relationship between Council and staff
- ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding
- Utility systems for customers
- Civic Academy
- Defined equity

- Short-term-rental and sanctuary city conversations are on the horizon
- Improved communication between Council and staff
- All employees have email addresses

The Dynamics of Doing the Public's Business

The Council is committed to transparent and effective governance as it serves the community in Columbia. Participants were asked to reflect on how community dynamics impact them as they do the public's business, thinking about it in terms of relationship, impact, and behavior. Participants worked in small groups to answer the following questions:

Questions for Council

- When public comment at City Council meetings is negative, or critical of you or the City, how does that input impact your decisions, interactions with Council colleagues or interactions with City staff? our decisions?
- When public comment at City Council meetings is positive, or appreciative of you or the City, how does that input impact: your decisions, interactions with Council colleagues or interactions with City staff? our decisions?

Questions for Staff

- When public comment at City Council meetings is negative, or critical of you or a member of your team, how does that impact you and your staff during the meeting, you and your staff at your staff meetings or how you direct your staff?
- When a member of City Council is negative or critical of you or a member of your team during a public meeting, how does that impact you and your staff?

Follow-up on Communication Expectations

At the City's 2023 Council retreat, participants agreed to the following communication guidelines, or expectations:

- Agenda items pulled from consent should be sent to the City Clerk by noon on Mondays to allow for distribution and preparation prior to Council meetings
- Responding to fellow Council members should take place within a day
- If all Council members are copied on an email regarding a specific ward, whoever replies will copy only the Mayor so she's aware that someone has responded
- If emails are received regarding citywide issues, the Mayor will respond but others may respond if they have the capacity
- The Mayor is open to meeting on a regular basis with Council members if they ask
- Requests for memos and FYI reports (i.e., two pages) are reasonable to ask for, but larger, more in-depth requests should be brought up under Other Business, and the majority of Council members will need to agree that it's worth spending the staff hours to produce
- Council members may call department heads directly to ask questions

Participants were asked to reflect on these guidelines and work in small groups to discuss what they have done to make sure these expectations are met. The City Manager ensured that all Council members are notified via text message of an emergency situation as soon as he receives the information, and he confirmed that notes are being taken during one-on-one meetings with Council members to make sure there's appropriate follow-up and feedback. Additionally, with the purchase of the SeeClickFix program, staff will be able to better communicate and review response times with Council members.

The Mayor indicated that each Council member has taken her up on having individual meetings, which has helped to inform staff. Staff also highlighted the productive conversations that stemmed from the permission they received to speak with the Mayor and Council members. Council members expressed greater ease in speaking with department directors and noticeably improved communications. Direct communication has had a significant impact and staff have been very forthcoming with information to enlighten and educate the Council.

Participants were also asked to reflect on struggles with communication expectations. The City Manager stated that a Council handbook is in the works, but the full onboarding process is still proving to be difficult. He is utilizing the Civic Academy notes to inform and educate, ensuring new Council members get the opportunity to meet with department directors. He is also being proactive with communication by making efforts to reach out to those who are thinking of running for Council. Even though these efforts have been a struggle, the City has a plan for moving forward.

The Mayor noted challenges in discerning the necessity of a response to some citywide issues and determining whether certain items fall within Council's control or not.

Staff spoke about struggling with the turnover of City Council members and remembering that not everyone has the same level of tenure and experience. Additionally, maintaining the sanctity of closed session conversations was mentioned as a struggle for some.

With Council, sometimes communication lapses occur in work session discussions where directions are given, but changes still take place afterward. Staff may communicate things that have changed but if they don't provide context, it can affect the level of trust between them and the Council. Lastly, there has not been a formalized procedure created for how updates are provided on major projects without becoming redundant.

Commitments

Participants were asked to think about a commitment they will each personally make to continue to improve communication and effectiveness.

Strategic Priorities

The Strategic Priority Team Leads shared a status report of where they are with regard to the work plan for each of the five Strategic Priorities. Each presenter shared what has been accomplished in the past year and what is still in progress, and how the Council's Future Aspirations are being integrated into the work plan. City staff also reviewed the plan and goals for hosting a Citizen Summit in April 2024.

In wrapping up the discussion on strategic priorities, participants discussed the internal process for updating the strategic plan and what that will look like, including the reengagement process and who will need to be involved. While there is general agreement on the outcome that everyone desires, the steps to implementation become difficult due to impediments in processes or other roadblocks that prevent progress from being made, emphasizing the need for staff involvement and buy-in as well as keeping open lines of communication.

Strategic Plan Update

Attachments: [Strategic Plan Presentation](#)

Staff discussed the Strategic Plan and gave an overview of the next steps and progress

reports from team leads. They discussed what the goal is, what has been accomplished thus far and what lies ahead.

Closing - Parting Thoughts

As the retreat came to a close, participants were asked to share a parting thought reflecting on the day.

IV. ANY OTHER ITEMS COUNCIL MAY WISH TO DISCUSS

None.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:15 p.m.