

Charlottesville City Council Strategic Planning Work Session
Friday, May 19, 2023, at 4:00 p.m. -Part 1
Saturday, May 20, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. – Part 2
Hillsdale Conference Center, 550 Hillsdale Drive, Charlottesville, VA 22901

MINUTES

The Charlottesville City Council held a strategic planning work session on May 19 and May 20, 2023. Part One of the work session began at 4:05 p.m. with all councilors present: Mayor Lloyd Snook, Vice Mayor Juandiego Wade, and Councilors Michael Payne, Brian Pinkston and Leah Puryear.

Michael C. Rogers, Interim City Manager, stated the purpose of the meeting which was to re-examine the city's strategic planning framework to begin laying the foundation for the future of Charlottesville: Vision Statement, Mission Statement, Organizational Mission and Values, and Strategic Plan. He introduced Michelle Ferguson with the consulting firm Raftelis, who served as the meeting facilitator. Other members of the facilitation team were Catherine Carter (co-facilitator) and Julie Gieseke (visual facilitator).

Introductions

The session began with a welcome and agenda review. City Council and the following staff members introduced themselves:

- Interim City Manager Michael C. Rogers
- Deputy City Manager of Operations - Samuel Sanders
- Deputy City Manager for Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion – Ashley Marshall
- Director of Human Services – Misty Graves
- Director of Human Resources – Mary Ann Hardie
- Director of Information Technology – Steve Hawkes
- Chief of Staff/Clerk of Council – Kyna Thomas
- Deputy Clerk of Council – Maxicelia Robinson
- Director of Budget – Krisy Hammill
- Director of Economic Development – Chris Engel
- Deputy Director of Communications – David Dillehunt

Ms. Ferguson reviewed meeting norms and all participants shared their expectations for the workshop.

Ms. Carter led an exercise where members of the City Council was given an opportunity to share their belief statements about the future of Charlottesville, given the prompt “This I believe...”.

Strategic Planning Process

Ms. Ferguson stated that a strategic plan answers three questions:

- What do we know to be true today?
- What do we hope will be true in the future?
- How do we plan to get there?

Governing Body Roles and Effectiveness

Council discussed six key roles common to elected officials like City Council, how each member of the Council relates to each role, and how that contributes to (or detracts from) group effectiveness:

- Strategic/Vision – Big Picture Thinker
- Trustee – Steward
- Representative – Constituent Advocate
- Community Builder – Bringing People Together
- Decision Maker
- Oversight

Councilors ranked their individual comfort level with the six roles, reflecting minimal overlap in rankings and realizing that they lean into each of the roles at different times. They agreed as a Body on the following rank:

1. Representative – Constituent Advocate
2. Community Builder – Bringing People Together
3. Decision Maker
4. Oversight
5. Trustee – Steward
6. Strategic/Vision – Big Picture Thinker

Ms. Ferguson stated that Council should be mindful that the Constituent Advocate role can generate a lot of work for staff because it tends to be focused at the individual level as opposed to a community level, and that staff should respect that advocacy is a part of the Council Member role.

Environmental Scan Overview

Ms. Ferguson shared an overview of the Environmental Scan which included demographic data as well as input received from City Council, the Leadership Team, City employees, and residents. Some key data points were:

- The population of Charlottesville has increased 16% since 2000.
- 78% of community survey respondents positively rated quality the quality of life in Charlottesville.
- Residents appreciate Charlottesville's natural environment and parks and recreation opportunities.
- Residents are concerned about affordability and cost of living.
- Residents report a decline in their overall feeling of safety.
- 90% of residents want to see initiatives focusing on safety and police services in the future.
- 58% of residents possess a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance industries make up 39% of the city's employment.
- The unemployment rate has generally remained lower than the State average since 2012.

Stakeholder Engagement

Raftelis did a qualitative data review, which included input from interviews with City Council members, in-person work session with the City's Leadership Team, the employee survey, and the National Community Survey.

Some of the Strengths of the City were commitment to serving the community, dedicated workforce, natural environment, and quality of life.

Opportunities for improvement were reputation, internal communication, external communication, transportation and mobility, public safety, and workplace environment.

Challenges facing the city were: high expectations from the community, financial viability, and affordable housing.

Visioning: True Today – True in Ten Years

Councilors were asked to write responses to the following questions:

- What is true (precious) about Charlottesville today that you hope will still be true ten years from now?
- What is not true about Charlottesville (or doesn't exist) today that you hope will be true ten years from now?

At 6:59 p.m. Mayor Snook recessed the meeting until 9:00 a.m. on the following day.

Day Two: Saturday, May 20, 2023, 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Mayor Snook called the meeting back to order at 9:10 a.m. with all Council members present. All staff present on Day One returned for Day Two.

Ms. Ferguson stated that the end product for the day would be an outline for Council's Vision and Strategic Outcome Areas – those key things that must go well in the community in order to make the Vision become reality.

Council discussed things that they heard the previous day that they would like to be incorporated into the Vision. Some ideas were to be inclusive of people who are in a lower socioeconomic status, to demonstrate with action that Charlottesville cares, to maintain the notion of unity, and to highlight the city's strengths – recognizing the city's challenging past and present while also acknowledging its assets.

Mayor Snook talked about items such as increasing workforce development efforts and certain transit changes that will require a significant shift versus many smaller issues that could require slight shifts, and he stated that they should be careful about making too many large shifts at once, but rather try to figure which changes would require greater change and then ration the implementation.

Ms. Ferguson agreed that Council would need to prioritize short-term and long-term goals, keeping in mind limited financial and staff capacity.

Strategic Plan Framework

Facilitators listed potential strategic outcome areas using Council's answers to the following questions: What do we know to be true today? What do we hope will be true in the future? How do we plan to get there?

Potential strategic outcomes were listed in the areas of:

- Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Education / Partnerships / Achievement / UVA
- Service Delivery / Organizational Excellence
- Recreation and Amenities / Arts and Culture
- Neighborhoods - Sense of Place / History
- Economic Prosperity
 - Residents and City
 - Businesses
- Affordable Housing
- Transportation / Transit
- Community Relations and Trust / Police / Public Safety
- Environment and Climate

Councilors along with Mr. Rogers and Mr. Sanders were divided into pairs to work on an assignment to draft a Vision statement and directional statement for each Strategic Outcome Area to describe what success would look like in Charlottesville. Other staff worked on refining the Organizational Values and Mission Statement.

During the report-out participants worked to refine the Organizational Vision and Mission Statements, and the Outcome Area directional statements.

Next Steps/Parting Thoughts

The retreat ended with a discussion of next steps in the strategic planning process. Raftelis will work with staff to identify strategies and performance metrics for each Outcome Area, as well as work with Mayor Snook on wordsmithing. Each participant was asked to share a reflection about this strategic planning journey.

The meeting adjourned at 2:07 p.m.

BY Order of City Council

BY Kyna Thomas, Clerk of Council