

CITY COUNCIL RETREAT
February 22, 2005

CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ABILENE, TEXAS
BASEMENT CONFERENCE ROOM, CITY HALL

The City Council of the City of Abilene, Texas, met in a Council Retreat on February 22, 2005, at 8:00 a.m. in the Basement Conference Room of City Hall located at 555 Walnut Street. Mayor Archibald was present and presiding with Councilmen Sam Chase, Anthony Williams, John Hill, Stormy Higgins, Kris Southward, and Councilwoman Laura Moore. Also present were City Manager Larry Gilley, City Attorney Sharon Hicks, City Secretary Jo Moore, and various members of the City staff.

Councilwoman Moore led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Archibald gave the invocation.

The Mayor gave the following informational report: Dyess Air Force Base hosted Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson on January 28, 2005 at which time the Senator was given a tour of the base and then held a press conference for the families of the servicemen and women who are deployed. The Mayor further noted on February 12, 2005 Dyess Air Force base hosted Senator John Coryn and most recently hosted Congressman Randy Neugebauer and his entire staff. The Mayor noted that staff from the City of Abilene's Fire Department were in attendance at the funeral of Sergeant Ray Rangel of Dyess Air Force Base.

The Mayor stated that he had attended a TML program on "How To Have A Successful Bond Election". City Manager Larry Gilley distributed bond election information to the Council. Mayor Archibald reviewed the bond election history.

The Mayor distributed a voter information guide from the City of Friendswood and the City of North Richland Hills "Steps To A Successful Bond Election". The Mayor reviewed the following steps to be taken to help insure a successful bond election:

- Instruct staff to prepare a master list of what they believe the needs are in the community that would be appropriate bond election issues.
- Staff to research those needs and bring a proposal back to Council.
- Citizens Committee input.
- Staff and Citizens Committee to work together.
- Council to call bond election.
- Educate voters.
- Election results.
- Summary – Keys to success.

The Mayor reviewed potential timetables for bond elections and the Council discussed various aspects of a bond election including how long preparing a list of potential issues would take.

Mr. Gilley stated one of the first issues would be identifying the cost of potential projects and that the potential project list could be ready by late June or early July.

Council and staff discussion included: 1) the cost of the public safety communications system possibly requiring a tax increase; 2) other costs outside of a bond election and how those costs will impact citizens and be financed; 3) how other cities handle impending large on going operation costs/bond elections; 4) most cities move forward with bond elections if needs exist; 5) surveying the community for the purpose of acquiring good data on what is wanted and possibly partnering with others; 6) the need to be very specific and clear on the issues and have citizen committees made up of members that can articulate and communicate well; 7) being to specific on bond issues would not allow for unknown needed changes; 8) the time now being right for a bond election and if no bond election is held debt will have to be issued that will affect the tax rate; 9) the expectation that the public safety communications contract will be finalized before February 2006; 10) where the City currently stands on bond indebtedness; 11) the need to look at the quality of life issues; 12) timing important for implementing surveys; 13) the need to move forward on the issues to be considered but a 12 month time frame may be aggressive; 14) how the strategic objectives coincide with a bond election; 15) status of indebtedness from the 1998 bond election; 16) today's meeting being instrumental in reviewing and implementing the bond election process; 17) staff looking beyond brick and mortar as potential bond issues and discussing the possibility of other issues (i.e. more technology).

The Mayor noted the Strategic Objectives would be reviewed and asked Councilwoman Moore to brief the Council on the findings of the City Management Sub Committee.

Councilwoman Moore stated the City Management Sub Committee comprised of herself, Councilman Williams, Councilman Higgins, and Larry Gilley met and discussed the Council Optimization and Staff effectiveness objectives.

Ms. Moore noted under staff effectiveness the lead component is staff's review of staff's efficiency. The sub-committee found much of what needs to be accomplished is tied to what is determined by the organizational review that is focusing on: Managed Competition, Rightsizing, Structure and Revenue. Ms. Moore noted that the City Manager, Larry Gilley has identified late March as the time that those reports will be brought to Council. Ms. Moore further noted the second objective under staff effectiveness is to establish a time table for a semi-annual review of City reports including the guiding documents such as the ACE, Wadley-Donovan and Moskin reports, which would be helpful in establishing the framework to assure the objectives are accomplished.

Ms. Moore stated under Council Optimization the committee met with two firms relating to surveys, the MuRF Systems, Inc. and the Non-Profit Management Institute at ACU. With each firm having some very different recommendations the committee decided to request from the Council and each department director a list of what they would recommend that the survey address. The committee felt that list would be beneficial in the committee determining which firm would be best. Ms. Moore asked the lists be submitted to her and Mr. Gilley by March 4th.

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City Manager Larry Gilley briefed the Council on the two firms the committee had met with and the basic approaches that each firm proposed. Both firms stated they could structure the survey format however the Council chooses (mail, web or phone).

Following Mr. Gilley's briefing Council and staff discussion included: 1) what information the survey firms provide; 2) two philosophies on the types of surveys include random surveys, which are not scientific and a more specific format which is more reliable; 3) phone call surveys versus web surveys; 4) different issues needing different levels of liability; 5) the mechanics of surveys; 6) comparability and the costs involved in adding levels to a survey; 7) demographics; 8) offering incentives to citizens to return their opinions; 9) determining what will be achieved from the survey then choosing the survey format, and; 10) contracts over \$25,000 requiring approval of Council.

Mayor Archibald reiterated for Council to submit their questions/approaches for a survey to Councilwoman Moore and City Manager Larry Gilley by March 4th. The Mayor requested that Mr. Gilley send a reminder to Council on March 2nd of this deadline.

Council recessed for a break at 9:40 a.m.

Council reconvened at 9:55 a.m.

Councilman Hill stated the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Sub-Committee comprised of himself, Councilman Southward and Councilman Chase met with individuals in the community and discussed one element of the Comprehensive Plan Strategic Objectives, the development of infill strategies. Councilman Hill addressed steps already taken in determining how infill is developed. Mr. Hill noted there are neglected neighborhoods in Abilene with empty lots where it doesn't appear there are many opportunities for re-investment in those neighborhoods. Dialogue coming out of annexation issues, schools and school enrollment has made the Comprehensive Plan discussion concerning infill very important. The City provides a lot of public assistance toward infill and the municipal courts role in infill needs to be recognized and addressed in the areas of code violations. Councilman Hill further noted how infill is important to the fiscal responsibility of the community and that there are a lot of reuse land opportunities with leadership needing to be provided to develop this land. Councilman Hill addressed the McDougal project (private dollars) in the city of Lubbock and the benefits of the project in the increased taxable value to Lubbock. Mr. Hill stated in the area of infill that Abilene doesn't need to be comparing to peer cities. Councilman Hill stated the Comprehensive Plan sub-committee met with some developers and that a lot of agents were identified as players in the infill dialogue: neighborhood associations, churches, public entities, and developers. Councilman Hill noted the opportunities the city has to have developers assist with infill development. Councilman Hill further stated the committee and developers, Bruce Bixby, Dale Scroggins and Scott Senter looked at two primary issues: 1) land acquisitions are difficult and the committee discussed the need to explore the possibility of having the city assist with land acquisitions to help mitigate the cost of bringing forth infill projects, and; 2) the possibility of a public/private partnership concerning infrastructure. Councilman Hill discussed the possibility of the City targeting infill in neighborhoods and establishing a quasi non-profit land bank based on a point system.

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Councilman Hill emphasized if the City decides to do land acquisitions the importance of finding a way that is fair to every developer, that can be used to get the land back off the books, in order to not have anyone say the City showed preference to one over another.

City Attorney Sharon Hicks explained the land acquisition process.

Council and staff discussion included: 1) the city manager providing the Council with the Office of Neighborhood Services activities report for the past year; 2) neighborhood liens; 3) clear title analysis; 4) the McDougal land acquisition project in Lubbock; 5) developers making a profit; 6) possibly appointing a sub-committee to look at establishing a land bank with creative financial incentives; 7) staff to inform Council of the outcome of a Supreme Court hearing on the Imminent Domain Case; 8) where in the inner city are there large areas of land for development; 9) staff to study the possibility of a land bank and quickly develop incentives, and; 10) the possibility of creating a Developers Board.

Mayor Archibald asked that the Council place on their calendars a trip to Lubbock on March 21, 2005 to view the McDougal land acquisition project, Lubbock's development of school projects, downtown development, and Lake Allen Henry (water resource).

Council and staff discussion included: 1) visiting with the City of Lubbock concerning their "Police Car For Every Police Officer Program"; 2) staff suggesting Council consider visiting other places such as Ft. Worth, Dallas, and Houston due to the success of their projects; 3) the possibility of identifying low home ownership, vacant lots, etc., but the monumental task that would be involved in that process.

Councilman Hill left the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

Councilwoman Moore left the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

Council and staff discussion continued concerning infill and developing a land bank with: 1) developers having information that Council and staff do not have; 2) the land bank being a good idea, but the developers need to be involved in establishing that process; 3) the possibility of asking developers to work within a specific time frame (i.e. 60 days) to keep from extending the process; 4) the belief that the developers will move quickly; 5) the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Sub Committee to prepare a list of developers to involve in the process, with the City Manager determining the appropriate staff to meet with the developers; 6) developing land acquisitions and infrastructure strategies prior to developers and staff meeting; 7) brainstorming with more developers before "developers" committee is created, and; 15) the fact that the Planning & Development Services Department are currently working on incentives for infill.

Councilman Williams left the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

Mayor Archibald stated the Water Sub-Committee and Economic Development reports will be presented at a later date.

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Council discussed setting future workshop meeting dates for either the last of March or the first of April where the City Manager will brief the Council on the Task Force Committees organizational review reports.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Jo Moore
City Secretary

Norm Archibald
Mayor