



MINUTES
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2005, 5:30 P. M.
CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM
245 E. BONITA AVE.

PRESENT:

Mayor Curtis W. Morris
Mayor Pro Tem Jeff Templeman
Councilmember John Ebner
Councilmember Denis Bertone
Councilmember Sandy McHenry

City Manager Michaelis
City Clerk Rios
City Attorney Brown
Assistant City Manager Duran
Community Development Director Stevens
Public Works Director Patel
Parks and Recreation Director Bruns
Planning Manager Hensley
Building and Safety Superintendent Beilstein

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Morris called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

No one.

3. STUDY SESSION

- a. Staff presentation regarding efforts to improve the public experience with the City. Council/Staff discussion and interaction.

City Manager Michaelis stated that staff has given careful consideration to explore ways to be more effective in providing services and relating to constituents. He said each department has focused on steps they could take to improve their approach and be more aware of customer service adjustments.

Parks and Recreation

Director Bruns stated that the Mission Statement directly applies to the Parks and Recreation Department and will be used to build the foundation. She said four goals have been established to maximize quality customer service and improve the process: 1) Maintain clean and safe facilities; 2) maintain city parks, parkways, and medians; provide positive recreation and leisure opportunities for people of all ages; and develop well designed public parks and facilities. She stated that together with her management team, they have identified objectives and selected four primary areas to aid in meeting their goals: 1) The Request Partners software will aid in facilitating service order requests and measure timeliness of

response and resolution; RecWare Registration software will be utilized for scheduling the use of all facilities, including sports fields and city buildings; streamlining and simplifying the Recreation program registration procedure; and promoting community involvement and volunteerism. She said the only way to achieve goals is through ongoing communication with staff and the community that will be accomplished through regular meetings and training.

In response to Mayor Pro Tem Templeman, Director Bruns stated that Request Partner will be used internally to train employees for one year and would open up for community use to submit requests and complaints that could be routed to the appropriate person.

Assistant City Manager Duran said the software is web-based and has the capability for the public to track their requests.

Mayor Pro Tem Templeman inquired if there was a way for the public to view online the interior of a facility and get an estimate of costs to save counter time.

Director Bruns said that feature was not selected, however, Teddie Main is working on a brochure to enhance exposure and publicity.

Councilmember McHenry mentioned that the barrage of complaints received is that there are not enough fields or facilities available. He commented that the park restrooms are very clean and open.

Councilmember Ebiner commented that it is nice when counter personnel's registration procedures and especially the Recreation Leaders are complimented.

Director Bruns said the goal is to keep personnel well trained and informed.

Public Works

Director Patel stated that Public Works employees sustain and maintain the City's infrastructure system; administer the State and local regulations, and implement capital improvement projects that benefit our community by ensuring resident's safety. Staff recognizes that residents' perception of staff may be a difficult and negative experience as they encounter difficulties with street improvements and enforcing the many regulations required for a building project. Director Patel outlined the current practices and a proposal for enhancing customer service, and said by including staff in the planning process through training, steering committees, self-analysis surveys, discussions, and maintaining a positive attitude, staff will develop a common vision and clear understanding of the steps needed to reach the destination. He stated that he is in the process of hiring a Plans Examiner to use software that will streamline and track the Plan Check process to address problems and provide better customer service.

Mayor Pro Tem Templeman said he like the thought on the plan check process. He said Public Works crew has the opportunity to identify public safety issues and report the problem to the appropriate person. Director Patel said the Street Sweeper actively responds to road hazards and every crew member is trained in safety.

Councilmembers were impressed with the computer tablets as demonstrated to keep a legible documentation of all transactions.

Councilmember McHenry stated that communication is a challenge and each department requires their own set of conditions, which puts the onus on the applicant. He said staff needs to find a way to speed up the process, make it easier and as efficiently as possible to get to yes.

Community Development

Director Stevens reported that the Planning staff has met and identified four categories as the best way to be more internally consistent and decisive: 1) Facilitate inter and intra departmental communications through monthly meetings. 2) enhance records management by making all meeting notes of all meetings to be computer accessible to all staff; create a photo catalog of development standards; log calls to insure timely response and follow-up; and use Request Partner to track all projects. 3) Improve contact the public by encouraging better decision making as they move through the process; point them in the right direction; follow up on all correspondence; increase supervisory accessibility; provide additional hand-outs; look at wireless paging; offer refreshments to persons waiting through a lengthy process; monitor Plan Check process to ensure timely response. 4) Evaluate ordinances and procedures for updates.

In response to Councilmember Ebiner, Director Stevens stated that standards would not be reduced. The focus is to direct the applicant toward alternatives and solutions, and if they decide to go through the process, to understand the consequences.

In response to Mayor Pro Tem Templeman, Director Stevens commented that in some cases, when the professional does not communicate what he hears staff say, staff would follow up in writing to clarify any misunderstanding and find ways to complete the project economically and efficiently.

Mayor Pro Tem Templeman expressed worry that with heavy workloads Planners would be inundated with administrative tasks and not be able to provide service. He suggested clerical staff be trained to provide answers in a consistent manner.

Mayor Morris suggested hiring an Administrative Assistant with transcribing abilities to document transactions, and Planners could use dictating machines. Director Stevens said a quick note to the Clerk is easier and the clerk could type the entry.

In response to Mayor Pro Tem Templeman, Director Stevens said Jan and Gina are the first contacts and both have enough experience to direct citizens to the right person available. Both will be monitored to catch mistakes.

Mayor Pro Tem Templeman left the conference room at 6:58 p.m. and returned at 7:01 p.m.

Mayor Morris said the City Council is willing to make an investment to have additional staff, some administrative employee whose job it is to make work, not projects.

RECESS

Mayor Morris recessed at 7:04 p.m. to the regular meeting at 7:00 p.m. on September 13, 2005. The study session reconvened at 10:25 p.m. with all City Council and staff present.

Administration

Assistant City Manager Duran presented an overview of the Administrative Services Department approach to the "Are We There Yet" Project. He commented that he met with each member of the department individually to discuss the objectives. He added that the two primary goals for the department to approve everyone's attitude to be more helpful and to evaluate all processes and procedures to make sure they are necessary, efficient and clearly understood.

Mayor Pro Tem Templeman responded that he liked the idea of more cross training. Councilman McHenry commented that he liked the balance between improving process and people. He suggested training for first line staff in dealing with troublesome people.

Mayor Morris commented that he too liked the idea of evaluating processes.

Councilman Ebiner commented that the initial response to customers is important. He suggested items such as name tags or uniform phone protocol can make a difference.

Councilman Templeman commented on a phone problem he has experienced when calling into City Hall. He also suggested having a way for people to report graffiti to the hotline through e-mail. There was discussion on how graffiti is reported.

City Manager Michaelis commented that he views his role in this process as taking the concepts from each department and applying it to all employees. He added that his role is to support the Department Directors in their efforts.

City Manager Michaelis discussed the City Councils tasks in this process as making policy decisions, provide communication and setting priorities.

Mayor Pro Tem Templeman commented that an example of setting priorities is that he felt that at the retreat the Council consensus was staff should be more proactive with code enforcement. Mr. Stevens responded that it was his perception that given the current staffing that if staff sees something egregious they would react but in general follow-up on a complaint basis. Mayor Pro Tem Templeman also commented that maybe some projects that have been on the back burner for some time, such as the wagon remodel, could be reassigned to someone else. Mr. Michaelis responded that the problem is that every department has a full plate of projects. There was a great deal of discussion on the heavy work load of staff, the balance of Department Directors to manage projects and staff and setting of priorities.

4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 12:05 a.m.

Mayor of the City of San Dimas

ATTEST:

City Clerk