

City of Ypsilanti
City Council Goal Planning Session
Saturday, November 8, 2003
9:00 A.M.
Haab Building

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Farmer called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Haab Building, located at 111 N. Huron Street, Ypsilanti, Michigan.

Present: Mayor Farmer, Council Member Gawlas, Nickels, Richardson and Schulze.

Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Swanson and Council Member LaRue

Council Member Richardson offered and Council Member Gawlas supported a motion to excuse the absence of Mayor Pro-Tem Swanson and Council Member LaRue. The vote was 5 yes and 2 absent. Unanimous

Mayor Farmer opened the meeting and from that point on Dr. Joe Ohren of Eastern Michigan University and the Institute for Community and Regional Development conducted the 2004-2005 Goal Setting Session.

His summary and minutes are attached and made a part of these formal minutes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Farmer adjourned the meeting at 2:13 p.m.

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Institute for Community and Regional Development

MEMO

December 26, 2003

TO: Mayor and Council-members, Ed Koryzno, City Manager
Participants in the Goal-Setting Workshop, City of Ypsilanti

FROM: Dr. Joe Ohren, ICARD/EMU

RE: Minutes of the November 8 Work Session and Draft Action Plan,
Amended at the Follow-up workshop on December 4, 2003

I have summarized below the Minutes of our meeting on Saturday November 8th for review and reaction by the group at the follow-up workshop on December 4th. Karin did a wonderful job taking notes and the summary is probably more detailed than I have ever provided. It will be very helpful in reflecting back on our discussion and as a starting point for our follow-up work.

As you I have done in the past, the Minutes provide a narrative of our discussion of decision-making issues, progress to date on goals and action strategies, and appropriate changes to the Action Plan from last year. This essentially constituted our agenda for the day, building off the homework assignment that was completed in advance of the session to reach some consensus (note that I have included the questions from the homework to organize the presentation). I then have presented a revised draft of the Action Plan reflecting that discussion. Review the Minutes, be sure you feel comfortable with how we have characterized our discussion, and use this to surface other ideas at the follow-up session.

In anticipation of the December 4th session (**a homework assignment from the Professor**), go over the draft Action Plan and be sure you are comfortable with the revised language we used in two of the goals and in several new action strategies. Does it capture what we were trying to express? Then, as a step toward setting priorities, **indicate with a star * the two or three action strategies for each goal you believe are the most important to implement** in the next year. Be ruthless in assigning priorities—consider this a part of the resource allocation process; given our limited resources, what absolutely should be done, and what can be postponed or eliminated?

As we agreed, at the follow-up session we will create two broad categories of priorities—most important and less important—rather than try to rank order the strategies. But, this will help Ed and the staff know what Council considers to be most important as they assemble the budget for the next fiscal year and try to accommodate the tight fiscal constraints throughout the year. Following the Thursday evening session I will then summarize the discussion again and submit a revised Action Plan to the Mayor and Council and other participants in the goal-setting effort.

**Ypsilanti City Council Goal Setting Retreat
November 8, 2003**

Attendance:

Cheryl Farmer, John Gawlas, Bill Nickels, Lois Richardson, Sandra Schulze, Ed Koryzno, Shannon Stumbo Bellers, Harry Hutchinson, Jim Roberts, George Basar, Shari Gregory, Marilou Uy, Karl Barr, Jack Gilbreath, Megan Gibb, Charles Boulard, Bob Slone

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

Motion made and approved to excuse two absent Council members, LaRue and Swanson.

Motion made and approved to move audience participation to the beginning of the meeting.

Audience Participation:

Paul Schreiber requested that the group examine how Ann Arbor's owner occupancy rate is rising while Ypsilanti's is falling. He indicated that Ypsilanti should:

- ? focus on services and what brings people to the community and that the group work with community organizations such as Friends of the Pool;
- ? improve the City Website as a vehicle for improving communication and information sharing; and
- ? find ways to involve younger people in city meetings and decision-making.

Identify any barriers that you perceive are getting in the way or might get in the way of effective working relationships and decision-making here. For each barrier you identify, indicate what specific action might be taken to address it.

Several participants shared reactions to the survey responses on effective decision-making. More tension between staff and Council is noted in the responses than in past years, perhaps, it was suggested, because so much is being expected of staff and they are feeling overwhelmed. A concern was expressed about future bond issues because of continuing pessimism about the fiscal situation facing the city. Reflecting the tone of the morning, it was also noted that the City has been very successful in meeting past challenges, but the current lack of finances and staff has reached very difficult levels.

The group collectively identified what were perceived as the most critical barriers constraining decision-making and discussed what might be done to address those barriers.

Critical Barriers

- ? Staff/Council Communication
 - o Council members should give an "advance alert" to staff if they are going to ask a question in public to allow staff time to gather information; avoid surprises.
 - o If questions can't be raised in advance—e.g., they emerge during the Council meeting—then staff need to be given time to respond (i.e. "I'll get back to you").

- Council has to realize and accept the fact that staff may not be able to do everything asked of them.
 - Staff should alert Council to where stresses are – that would help with prioritizing.
- ? Prioritize needs
- Carefully setting priorities among competing tasks will create a clearer understanding of expectations and reality; that should emerge as part of the goal-setting process.
- ✍ Expectations should be kept high, but it is important to pay attention to the real constraints facing the City.
 - ✍ Expectations about quantity and quality of work need to be adjusted, as a result of the staff/funding problems, and those reduced expectations need to be communicated to the public.
- ? Communication with the Public
- Council needs a better way to communicate with the public so that it has more realistic expectations and understands the constraints.
 - Council and staff need to work to minimize public suspicion and distrust.
 - Past educational programs have been successful—e.g., the budget workshop with the auditors—and need to be continued, involving both Council and staff.
 - The Website needs to have more information on the budget issues and be better formatted for easier access.
 - ✍ Participants agreed that Website needs to be kept more current.
 - ✍ It was also suggested that Powerpoint presentations could be made/updated on FAQs related to the budget and placed on the Website. Dr. Ohren suggested that perhaps Karin could do this as part of her project.

Are the goals still relevant as a guide to Council action? Are these still the most important goals for the City? Are changes appropriate? Should new goals be added?

The group continued with general discussion about whether all the goals in the current Action Plan should be kept on the list; essentially, the question is, given the tight budget, should we eliminate one or more goals. The group decided that all six of the current goals should be kept in the Plan, in the event unforeseen funding becomes available. But, the group also recognized that the public may expect everything in the plan to be addressed, when this just won't be possible.

The group needs to do a better job of setting priorities, perhaps creating an A list for the highest priority strategies and a B list for those that are less important. It was also noted that the development and adoption of the Action Plan may provide Council with an opportunity to present information in a community forum and explain the constraints to the public. Council has not done much by way of sharing the Plan in the past once it has been adopted, although it guides staff decisions on the budget. But given the need for continued community education, this may be one more opportunity.

Given agreement that all the goals were still relevant, attention turned to the language of the goals in the context of the financial constraints. The group agreed to amend Goal 1 by broadening the focus; economic development will be deleted from the language of the Goal and become one of the action strategies, with the modifier “base” in the Goal changed to “capacity.”

The Goal will now read: “Continue to pursue a variety of strategies to strengthen the financial capacity of the City.” Participants also discussed adding long-term action strategies to Goal 1 since all of the current strategies seemed to be short-term. No changes were suggested for Goal 2 and there appeared to be consensus that there has been a lot of progress on Goal 3.

There was a great deal of discussion on Goal 4 related to home ownership, in part reflecting different views on whether the focus of the Goal should be on home ownership or on the broader concern for the quality of life in the neighborhoods. Most participants ultimately felt comfortable with leaving the language as is, in part to continue to emphasize how important the group feels it is to increase owner occupancy across the city. It was noted that now might be a good time to try and reconvert apartment homes into single-family dwellings, given rising vacancies and an ongoing plan update, and some discussion ensued as to how this could be done.

The group agreed to amend the language of Goal 5 to use the word “needs” instead of “problems”—again reflecting the progress to date on addressing past problems and looking forward to anticipating future needs. Participants felt comfortable with the current language of Goal 6.

Are we doing what is necessary to accomplish the goals? Are there other things we should be doing? Are there things we no longer need to do?

Discussion then shifted to action strategies, and the group systematically worked through all six goals and the corresponding action strategies in the balance of the session. The discussion is presented below in bullet format, and then reflected in the attached draft Action Plan.

Goal One

- ? Needs to address current challenges.
- ? Discussion of fiscal capacity should start with a look at services—what are we offering and what must we offer (an “is-should” analysis in the jargon)—and then examine finances to determine how to support those services we decide we must provide.
- ? Several participants suggested that we needed to find new ways to bring in revenues to reduce our dependency on Lansing.
 - o One possibility mentioned was developing City property along the river, Ford Lake, and Water Works Park, while another mentioned starting a business.
 - o There was some discussion about bringing in efficiency experts or consultants to help insure that we are delivering services in the most efficient way possible or perhaps recommending privatization of some city services.
 - o Another participant suggested that it might be appropriate to examine whether an income tax would be feasible or whether a Headlee override might be sought.
- ? The group agreed that the approach used for the street initiative several years ago might be one way to go, and it was suggested that a Blue Ribbon Committee be appointed to study the City’s financial situation and make recommendations to Council and the community. Participants recognized that this would require resources and take time, but it was viewed as a long term strategy to deal with structural problems in City finances to complement other short term strategies listed in Goal 1.

- ? Participants also encouraged greater involvement by staff and Council members in state organizations/associations to increase the City's influence and to advocate for action to address the City's needs.
- ? It was generally agreed that the City needs to create alternative budget reduction plans to accommodate differing percentage cuts (10, 25, 50%) in state revenue sharing expected by the beginning of December.
- ? In an effort to streamline the language of the plan, strategies one and three were combined.

The group broke for Lunch at 12:25 and reconvened at 1:05.

Action Strategies – continued

Goal 2

- ? Action Strategy 6
 - o Participants agreed that new emphasis needs to be put on informing employees about the fiscal challenges and explaining how possible cuts will be accommodated to try and reduce anxiety.
 - ✍ Restate to employees that the City is trying very hard to preserve jobs.
 - ✍ It was suggested that the City Manager speak with City Union leaders and get their ideas on how to help preserve staff positions.
 - o It was cautioned that doing this prematurely or incorrectly may worsen the situation and cause more staff anxiety.
- ? There was some discussion of changing the City's fiscal year to match the State's in an attempt to prevent "surprises", but it was generally agreed that this would be ineffective.
- ? It was suggested that Strategy # 2 needs to be lowered in priority or taken off the list and that strategy 7 be given a higher priority.
- ? Action Strategy 5 could become the basis for identifying core services

Goal 3

- ? No changes in the current strategies were noted. It was suggested that the neighborhood organizations could be used more effectively as a conduit for information sharing and communication.

Goal 4

- ? It was suggested that action strategy 3 should be a lower priority.
- ? With respect to the traffic calming efforts in Strategy 4, it was suggested that neighborhood groups could help create the proposals, but that anything done would have to be city-wide. There needs to be an official City position on what alternatives can be suggested (i.e. no speed bumps), and it was agreed that a 'Traffic Master Plan' would be a good idea. Perhaps staff can examine what other cities are doing and, at a minimum, the Traffic Committee can draft a proposed policy for Council consideration.
- ? Several participants noted that whatever the City chooses to do, it needs to be made clear that it is Ypsilanti people who speed and not just people from outside the community.
- ? This prompted some discussion about creation of an internal civil infractions court or contracting out speed enforcement; neither option appears attractive since the former would be costly to implement and the latter would run into union problems.

- ? It was suggested that the city needs a better system for residential parking permits, reflecting the impact of EMU's parking, but no conclusion was reached.

Goal 5

- ? Action Strategy 2 can potentially be funded through bond capacity.
- ? Action Strategy 4 should be amended to reflect the name change; "UATS" needs to be changed to "WATS".

Goal 6

- ? Action Strategy 8
 - o There was some discussion of the possibility of getting EMU to share costs of a lobbyist who would work to benefit EMU and the City together.
- ? Action Strategy 5
 - o Concerns were expressed over EMU's Master Plan and how it is moving west, away from the Cross St area.

The Meeting was adjourned at 2:13 p.m.

The next Goal Setting meeting will be held Thursday, December 4, 2003 at 5:30 p.m. in the Hobbs Building.

Minutes taken by Karin Armour

CITY OF YPSILANTI
DRAFT ACTION PLAN 2004-5
November 8, 2003

Ohren's Note: I have reported the Action Plan in draft form with the changes we made at the November 8 meeting in underscored text. This includes minor edits to Goal 1 and to Goal 5, and new or revised strategies in Goals 1, 4, 5 and 6. As indicated in the cover memo, our next task is to identify which strategies under each Goal are **high** priority and which are less important.

Goal One Continue to pursue a variety of strategies to the financial capacity of the City

Action Strategies

1. Continue to implement the Water Street Project and anticipate and establish priorities for redevelopment projects such as:

Motor Wheel property	Lowell Street Exemplar property
Crown Paper plant	Superior Coatings
Kresge Block	Smith Furniture property
DPW/Farm Bureau Property	City Landfill
Gateway Area	Renaissance Building
DTE Building	West Cross Street area
Downtown and Depot Town Business Districts	Rail Initiative

2. Develop and implement systematic efforts to communicate the needs of the City to and secure the support of state and county officials, including such things as:
 - a. Nominate city residents and encourage the appointment of city residents to positions on county boards and commissions
 - b. Systematically communicate and share information with state legislators as well county commissioners from the area, inviting them to meetings periodically to discuss issues and sharing the city's action plan and needs
 - c. Participate with others through the MML and other organizations in statewide education and advocacy efforts on behalf of core cities and older urban areas

4. Aggressively pursue all relevant grant efforts to support development initiatives and maintain city funding to support and strengthen redevelopment efforts

5. Move aggressively to seek appropriate investment in the city, consistent with the vision that has been expressed in the Master Plan, while insuring that development standards are met

6. Continue to
 - a. insure that development expectations are clear and concise;
 - b. offer streamlined review and permitting processes; and
 - c. communicate access and service to prospective and current businesses

7. Appoint a Blue Ribbon Commission to examine city finances and services and to make recommendations to the Mayor and Council and to the community with respect to both service reductions or changes and revenue increases to address the city's budget challenges.

Goal Two Continue to foster an environment in City government where communication and information is shared and services are provided in an efficient, cost-effective, friendly and timely manner

Action Strategies

1. Continue to implement the plan for strengthening the City’s Web Page as an additional vehicle for communication and information sharing; commit the staff and other resources needed to implement the plan and maintain the Page
2. Assemble a “Technology Task Force” to develop a long-range plan for using technology to improve the delivery of city services
3. Emphasize in Council and staff communications with residents and others
 - ⚡ a “culture” of openness, a commitment by the City to information sharing and educating residents about the problems and challenges faced and the strategies to be employed to address them, and
 - ⚡ a “culture” of “community services” in relationships between the City and residents, neighborhood organizations, and others
4. Pursue technology improvements to equip City personnel to provide services in the most cost-effective fashion possible and insure support for and maintenance of that technology infrastructure over time
5. Develop a set of service standards within each department to guide the delivery of services
6. Continue to address employee fear and uncertainty about budget problems and potential budget reduction strategies
7. Utilize a variety of means to improve media coverage of community issues and to insure that residents are provided sufficient information to understand and address policy issues
8. Consider providing greater flexibility in schedule options and leave policy and improving the salary and benefit package, including a tuition reimbursement program, to improve retention of employees

Goal Three Strengthen neighborhood leadership and organizations and open lines of communications between neighborhood leaders and elected officials and city employees

Action Strategies

1. Work collaboratively with EMU through the COPC program to
 - a. support leadership development for neighborhood leaders,
 - b. facilitate or subsidize neighborhood communication (e.g., newsletters),
 - c. establish new neighborhood organizations, “group” building, as appropriate,
 - d. include the business community in the context of neighborhood development and participation in decision processes
2. Host periodic “summits” of representatives of neighborhood groups and local officials as part of a broad community strategic planning process to encourage understanding of and attention to the needs of the city as a whole
3. Use neighborhood organizations and city Boards and Commissions systematically as conduits for information sharing, disseminating service information and securing feedback as a means of demonstrating the value of organizing
4. Host periodic workshops at the neighborhood level as vehicles for discussing specific issues and generating ideas for resolving problems

Goal Four Continue to pursue a variety of strategies for improving the physical condition of neighborhoods and increasing the rate of home ownership in the community

Action Strategies

1. Establish a systematic program to enforce standards, coordinating the efforts of the building official, the police department, the city attorney’s office and others to improve the physical appearance and condition of neighborhoods across the city
2. Update the master plan and the zoning ordinance over the next two years and consciously and systematically engage residents in the process
 - a. Consider reducing the extent of the community shown for multi-family uses
 - b. Promote homeownership and explore all the tools (e.g., limit the number of unrelated adults, nuisance charges) for encouraging homeownership
 - c. Explore the use of overlay districts, architectural controls, and historic districts as means for improving neighborhoods

3. Systematically study and identify impediments to home ownership and develop a plan for addressing those impediments over the next two to five years
4. Develop and communicate a citywide policy statement on standards and procedures for implementing traffic calming measures in residential neighborhoods.
5. Wherever possible develop partnerships with other governmental units and with other entities to implement strategies to improve the condition of neighborhoods.

Goal Five Continue to address the broad range of infrastructure needs across the City

Action Strategies

1. Continue to implement the street improvement project
2. Establish priorities for maintenance, rehabilitation and construction for city buildings and public parking lots
3. Identify funding sources to finance highest priority infrastructure investments including partnering with the DDA's to upgrade parking lots
4. Continue to work with WATS and YCUA among others on infrastructure improvements
5. Schedule infrastructure improvements or construction over the next three to five years, including replacement of existing and new improvements to the technology infrastructure

Goal Six Continue to strengthen working relationships with the University to address mutual problems and strengthen the community

Action Strategies

1. Continue to utilize student and faculty resources to address community needs and challenges through internships, class projects, independent studies, volunteer programs, etc
2. Include both EMU and City representatives in long range planning efforts conducted by both the University and the City to ensure that the needs/challenges/opportunities of both entities are taken into consideration
3. Continue the efforts of the several University/City Task Forces to discuss, explore and partner together on common issues, and consider opportunities for new partnerships as issues arise
4. Continue regular periodic meetings between key decision-makers to improve communication and provide greater opportunities for joint problem-solving, including the Regents when appropriate
5. Monitor the University's implementation of its master plan for the boundary areas where the campus meets the community – especially in those areas where the adjacent land is a residential neighborhood
6. Continue and expand joint service efforts and partnerships and seek new ways to work together to address emerging issues and opportunities
7. Partner with University officials to pursue and secure resources to implement the goals of the Cross Street study
8. Pursue joint advocacy efforts with University officials to secure mutually beneficial state appropriations and state policies
9. Continue and expand efforts to examine other university communities for examples of town/gown partnerships that have been used successfully to address common issues and challenges