



APPROVED

City of Ypsilanti
City Council Goal Setting Minutes
Saturday, January 26, 2008
9:00 a.m.
HAAB BUILDING, 111 N. HURON ST.
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

Council Member Filipiak	Present	Council Member Robb	Present
Council Member Gawlas	Absent	Mayor Pro-Tem Swanson	Present
Council Member Nickels	Present	Mayor Schreiber	Present
Council Member Richardson	Present		

III. INVOCATION

The Mayor asked all to stand for a moment of silence.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

"I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

V. INTRODUCTIONS

City Council and staff introduced themselves to the audience.

VI. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Mayor Schreiber read the rules for audience participation.

1. David Bates, 1208 Pearl Street, spoke in support of the pool remaining open. He stated that the Friends of Rutherford Pool have worked very hard to make swimming accessible to those in the city and township. He asked City Council to consider the role the pool plays in the community, which include providing a place for "get togethers" and for children to learn to swim. Mr. Bates suggested that the city work with Ypsilanti Township to rehabilitate the pool.

2. Kathy Thorburn, 1212 Sherman Street, spoke in support of the pool remaining open. She stated that the pool is a meeting place for parents and the community. She said the pool is used by a diverse group of people, including seniors. She added that the pool offers free scholarships and swim lessons.

VII. REMARKS FROM THE MAYOR

Mayor Schreiber stated that he attended a meeting called by the Friends of Rutherford pool recently and they understand that the pool is on its last leg. He indicated that testing for the pipes will be one issue that determines if the pool will reopen. He suggested the City take a more regional long range approach to enhance the pool by developing some type of regional authority with Ypsilanti and Superior townships.

VIII. MOTIONS, RESOLUTIONS & DISCUSSION ITEMS

Discussion of Goals for 2007-2008, with Dr. Joe Ohren, Eastern Michigan University. (See Joe Ohren's memo dated January 31, 2008)

IX. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

1. Ken Hobbs, Ypsilanti Firefighter, stated that firefighters take pride in the job they do, their building and the maintenance of their trucks. He said it will be difficult to take pride in their jobs if they cannot provide citizens with the quality of fire service and EMS they deserve. He opposed cutting EMS and reducing the force from four to three.
2. Leonardo Christian, opposed eliminating EMS. He stated that Ypsilanti EMS is usually the first responder to emergency calls and often arrives at emergencies before Huron Valley ambulance. He said many senior citizens depend on EMS and eliminating the service will affect many families. He urged City Council to make the right choices.
3. Mike Eller, stated that what City Council does is complex and not all cut and dry. He stated that police and fire services save lives and should be considered primary services and everything else secondary.
4. Brad Holman, DPW employee, stated that the main focus is providing city services. He stated that police and fire are most often seen by the community, however all of the city services work together collaboratively to provide a piece of mind to residents. He said city workers care and like serving the city. He commended City Council and staff for their efforts to balance the budget.

X. REMARKS FROM THE MAYOR

Mayor Schreiber stated that no one likes to talk about cuts, however due to the rejection of the income tax, citizens have asked Council to work within the budget we have. He stated that City Council is working hard to keep the city attractive and keep the city safe. He said it is important for Council and staff to have a town hall meeting in the recent future to communicate to residents what the future of Ypsilanti will look like.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Richardson moved, supported by Mayor Pro-Tem Swanson, that the meeting be adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

MEMO

January 31, 2008

TO: Mayor and Council-members, Ed Koryzno, City Manager
Participants in the Goal-Setting Workshop, City of Ypsilanti
FROM: Dr. Joe Ohren, EMU
RE: Minutes of the January 26 Work Sessions

As I did after our earlier work sessions, I have presented below the Minutes of our meeting on January 26, 2008, reflecting our discussion of each of the recommended reductions derived from our earlier meetings. The narrative follows the order in which issues were taken up rather than the order that the proposed reductions were presented in the summary sheet used as the agenda for the meeting (the summary is attached at the end for the record however). Not every proposed reduction was discussed further during the January 26 work session.

I have tried to be as explicit as possible in summarizing what I heard as the “consensus” emerging on each of the proposed reductions, recognizing that others might have heard things differently. As we noted at the end, ultimately the Mayor and Council will have to act on a resolution capturing these conclusions in early February.

During the meeting, participants also examined a spreadsheet provided by councilmember Robb who raised a number of questions about the assumptions used in projecting estimated costs as well as the rationale for specific line items in current spending. Several suggestions were made for changes, and participants agreed that the manager should prepare and disseminate a revised five year projection of expenditures and revenues as part of the budget presentation in the coming months. This will provide a clear and concise picture of the projected budget shortfalls in the next several years for participants and residents alike.

January 26, 2008

Rutherford Pool

Several comments were made at the start of the session during public participation about the proposal to “mothball” the pool for the coming year while an examination was made of the scope and extent of needed repairs and potential sources of funding for the infrastructure improvements as well as operating costs. This prompted attention by participants to that issue as the work session began.

The Friends group indicated that they will continue to support pool operations for the coming year, as they have done for the past several years, with an explicit statement that this will be the last year that they will be able to do so. They are willing to establish a formal commitment to that effect, one of the concerns that had been raised in the past, and are sponsoring two public meetings in early February to generate support from community members to keep the pool open. The city was encouraged to pursue aggressively other partners—the county and Superior and Ypsilanti Townships, for example—to keep open what essentially is a community pool for the larger community.

Without knowing the extent of the repairs that will be needed—an examination of the drain and underground piping will be conducted in early March—the group agreed to postpone a decision on pool operations until later in the spring. Approximately \$40,000 is available for repairs and if the estimated cost of repairs exceeds that amount, then the pool will remain closed for the year while other agreements are sought.

The larger issue remains, however; if the city utilizes CDBG funds for repairs to the pool, a responsibility will be incurred to keep the pool operating in perpetuity (the planning director indicated that there is some uncertainty as to the obligation already on the city since CDBG funds were used in the past to repair the building). All agreed that the repairs to the roof of the building will need to be made in the coming months.

AATA

Concerns were expressed about the impact of the continued reduction in support to the bus system, given the indication by AATA officials that they will not continue the subsidy to city routes that has minimized service reductions the past two years. The city currently supports four trunkline routes connecting Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor, and a portion of the costs for three feeder lines, one to the south side of the city, one that extends out to Ypsilanti Township and one that extends into Superior Township. The city manager was asked to work with AATA to present alternatives or options for discussion and action by council, given the limited information available at this time. But, the group also agreed that the current budget commitment would be continued unless an alternative was reached.

Beyond the current budget commitment, participants also urged efforts aimed at developing a regional bus summit, bringing people from across the eastern part of the county together to discuss means by which the system could be supported and potentially expanded. The manager was also asked to prepare a report to council with details on a potential millage question to put before voters to support the bus system. Such a question would involve requesting voter approval of a Headlee override, allowing the city to impose an additional .9 mills on property (up to the 20 mill limit), with the funds to be devoted to the AATA contract (there is some question as to whether that can be done without a charter amendment). Finally, the manager was asked to find out the reason for an apparent reduction in the senior taxi service in the county.

Police

Participants discussed the possible impact on service levels of a proposed reduction in shift levels from five to four patrol officers (the 1/12/08 Minutes erroneously referred to a proposed reduction from four to three officers per shift). The Police Chief indicated that officers would be limited in their ability to attend community meetings, engage in active problem-solving with members of the community, and conduct directed enforcement efforts. Such a change could also impact the functioning of specialized units in the city. Participants agreed that no action should be taken that would jeopardize our ability to participate in the proposed regional police authority under discussion, but agreed to reduce police shift levels from five to four officers per shift in the coming budget year.

Fire

In similar fashion, participants agreed that no action should be taken on the fire budget that would jeopardize developing plans for a functional fire district. The Fire Chief explained how such a system would work, indicated some of the details of the planning to date, and the potential for long-term cost savings. Given current vacancies in the department, and the prospect of one or more departures in the coming year, participants agreed to freeze vacant positions and analyze the potential impact of overtime costs resulting from vacancies in the coming year as a budget strategy for FY 09. If overtime costs warrant hiring an additional fire-fighter, a recommendation will need to be made.

The Chief was also asked to explore opportunities for billing for services, as some fire units across the county currently do. These might be for runs on major thoroughfares through the city that involve nonresidents. Finally, the Chief was asked to explore the potential cost savings and impact of contracting out Fire Marshall services. One option would be to shift that responsibility to the state, as is done in some jurisdictions. An alternative might be to contract with an adjacent department on an as-needed basis. Currently, the Fire Chief is also the Fire Marshall, but the latter designation requires specific certification.

Legal Services/Prosecutions

While the city will rebid all professional services in the coming months as a means for reducing costs, as agreed earlier, the discussion centered on whether there are opportunities for reducing costs further by shifting prosecution from city to county, or on the other hand, by increasing reimbursement from defendants for the cost of prosecution by the city. The city attorney indicated that prosecution of city offenses results in a smaller net cost than that shown in the budget line item, and recommend that the city seek an increase in the reimbursement from the courts for the costs of prosecution. Currently, police costs are included in the request for reimbursement from the county, and he recommended that the costs of prosecution also be included. Preliminary discussions with court officials indicated that such a request would be viewed favorably. A proposed resolution to that effect will need to be prepared and presented to council for action.

Building Inspection

With the departure of the Building Department director/building inspector, a short-term decision has been made to contract with Pittsfield Township for inspection services. This action is currently revenue neutral since the savings from the director's salary line are being used to offset the short-term agreement. The planning director has been designated interim building director and will examine and recommend alternatives for providing inspection services as part of the budget discussions in the coming months. Currently, specialized inspections—electrical, HVAC, plumbing—are under contract and there may be an opportunity to assemble a package of services including building inspection.

Historic District/Planning

While many concerns were shared at an earlier work session about the need for continued support for the HDC, staff indicated that currently an intern is assigned to provide administrative support for the council. This will be continued in the coming budget year, and the HDC will have to take on more responsibilities in implementing the district regulations. Other planning tasks will also be on a reduced scale, given the departure of a planner in the past week and earlier agreement to reduce staffing levels here.

DPW/Parks

An interim appointment has also been made in public works, given the departure of the director in that department. Responsibility for park maintenance for the two big parks—Riverside and Frog Island Parks—will be shifted to the CDC being created in Depot Town. No one in DPW will be permanently assigned to park maintenance, although one individual will be tasked for park maintenance on an as-needed basis during spring and summer.

The staff was asked to explore expanded opportunities for an Adopt-a-Park program, encouraging community members near smaller parks to take responsibility for park maintenance (this is currently being done in some neighborhoods across the city).

Memberships

The total budgetary commitment for all memberships amounts to less than \$20,000, and there was general agreement that participation in most organizations provides a benefit worth that cost.

Lobbying

Participants generally supported the value of having a contract for lobbying services, noting the benefits obtained in the past. As is the case with all professional services, the city is rebidding the lobbying contract. The manager was asked to discuss a reduced negotiated rate with the current lobbying firm as one approach to reducing this budget line.

Next Steps

Following discussion of specific reductions, the manager clarified the next steps for participants. He will prepare a resolution for action by council for the next council meeting (February 5, 2008), and upon adoption, he and the staff will begin developing the broad parameters of a budget for discussion with council and the detailed departmental data necessary for the budget resolution itself. As in the past, the budget will be submitted to council in late spring, with formal action required in early June prior to the start of the 2009 fiscal year on July 1, 2008. In the coming weeks a plan will be developed to engage the community in a discussion of the proposed budget to solicit reaction on the budget priorities that have emerged.

Summary of Proposed Reductions (Excerpt from Minutes of 1/12/08)

Police proposed reduction—reduce police staffing to three per shift instead of four. There may be opportunities for savings associated with reorganization within the police department or reassignment of existing officers from special units or services. Reduce public service hours.

Fire proposed reduction—reduce fire staffing to four per shift instead of five. There may be opportunities for savings from a change in shift strategy or the elimination of EMS over the long term. In the short run, vacant positions can be frozen.

Public Works proposed reduction—reduce the number of parks, and hence park maintenance costs, by identifying a small number of core parks to be preserved and maintained while the others are sold or donated to adjacent property owners. Shift all remaining appropriate general fund costs to special funds. Freeze current vacant positions. Complete an analysis of the residential parking permit program to determine whether additional fees should be levied for implementation.

Planning and Community Development proposed reduction—reduce staffing in planning, building and housing by one. Consolidate department head positions and reduce the time devoted to staffing boards and commissions. Consider contracting out major planning and zoning tasks such as the update of the master plan. Focus ordinance enforcement efforts only on those deemed most important to maintaining healthy neighborhoods or in response to complaints.

Administration proposed reductions—

1. **Recommended reduction:** rebid auditing services to reduce costs.
2. **Recommended reduction:** rebid legal services to reduce costs.
3. **Recommended reduction:** consider reducing staff through consolidating positions to the extent possible consistent with auditing requirements. Explore further possible cost savings resulting from contracting for assessment services, either through another government or a private vendor, or shifting to part-time employees to address peak-load needs.
4. **Recommended reduction:** mothball the pool for the next two years while work continues to build a sustainable source of funding. Repair the roof of the building proper, and use for alternative public purposes as needed.
5. **Recommended reduction:** rebid lobbying services to reduce costs.
6. **Recommended reduction:** consider eliminating membership in NLC and SEMCOG.
7. **Recommended reduction:** continue reduced AATA funding at 2007-08 levels and recommend a fare increase or a dedicated millage.