

City of Worthington

Community Visioning Committee

Tuesday, December 10, 2019 - 6:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.

Worthington Municipal Building, 6550 North High Street, Worthington, OH

Committee members Present: Joe Sherman, Matt Lees, Paul Cynkar, Don Mottley, Austin Mitchell, Beth Sommer, Cynthia Findlay, Graham Wood, Laura Abu-Absi, Jon Melchi, Kathryn Burris (On Conference Line)

Committee members Absent: Linda Mercadante

Others Present: Assistant City Manager Robyn Stewart, Management Assistant Ethan Barnhardt, Lauren Falcone (on conference line) and 3 visitors were in attendance

Mr. Sherman convened the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

MOTION

Mr. Mottley moved, seconded by Mr. Mitchell to approve the meeting minutes from the Community Visioning Committee meeting with the corrected date of November 25, 2019.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Sherman updated the committee on the contents of his monthly update to the City Council. He brought up how there were discussions about replacing Mr. Miner who recently stepped down and was in the at-large pool of committee members. He recommended that Council appoint one additional person, and that the newly elected Mr. Bucher make a selection from the pool of 54 applicants to the committee. He asked for a timely selection from the Council and he believes that onboarding can be a relatively simple process to get the new person up to speed.

Mr. Melchi clarified that Council established this Visioning Committee, making appointments by resolution and he would presume they would have to act on making a new appointment. Ms. Stewart said that was correct, Council will need to appoint the new person by resolution.

Mr. Sherman described the “A-Ha” moment from last week’s meeting and the discussion about the Bang the Table software and how they would stay on top of this. To help the committee, City staff and Poggemeyer have stepped up to help do some of the heavy lifting. He is really pleased with their willingness to help.

Community outreach is the next big piece and Ms. Brown helped out with writing the ThisWeek News article laying out the process, setting the stage to have the Committee go out into the community. He is eager to see that unfold.

He mentioned the postcard and the banner and how we walked Council through that. The only question he was asked was by Mr. Robinson who asked him about the timing of the community education piece. He explained that was our second phase and will see that in January.

Mr. Mitchell passed out a document that is the result of a conversation with Mr. Sherman that identifies two things which are providing a clear path for folks to get engaged in the work of the Committee and to provide some more focus and structure to key initiatives and activity areas. He is proposing to establish three working teams: Communications, Stakeholder Interviews, and the Speakers Bureau. This is not designed to create a small team to do a bunch of work, but rather to help think through these activities

and provide information back to the committee. The Vice Chair will provide administrative and governance support. They intentionally did not put a lot of detail into this. The teams can work amongst each other.

Ms. Abu-Absi asked about adding the analysis of information collected being under the Communications Team because it goes across all activities. Ms. Findlay agreed, explaining how as a whole group we would be into the analysis portion. Ms. Sommer said she saw this as considering the data when developing the questions.

Mr. Cynkar explained how the analysis of data is more important and it is almost important enough to be a separate working team with a standard format to be plugged into and that the committee is responsible for final analysis. Mr. Sherman responded there could be an external focused group and an internal group.

Mr. Mitchell explained how he wanted to leave this meeting with someone taking communications on and to develop a proposal of what it will look like. We want to give someone the chance to be thoughtful on how to structure this. He does not envision these working teams working in a vacuum. This gives people the opportunity to go deeper into some specific topics. He brought up how the stakeholder interviews are a big component of this process. Given the amount of work that is there, he wanted to create working team to answer key questions in this space and have them bring a proposal back to the Visioning Committee about how those will be structured. The Speakers Bureau will have opportunities to speak to and meet with a variety of community groups. We want to have another working team to help understand the opportunity there. When we are going out into the community, we want to give a good picture of what Vision Worthington is. There may be the need to add a community events team to focus on things like the Charette.

He asked the Committee if there was a consensus to begin with these three working teams and permission to move forward with leaders for each of the three. The group was generally supportive.

Mr. Sherman said his thought is that everyone has to pick one committee. It is key how we manage information and do all this and there is a lot of cross functionality/training. Mr. Mitchell noted that if someone is involved on one working team that will not preclude that person from participating with another team.

Mr. Mitchell asked who was interested in working on the Communications Team. Mr. Lees volunteered to chair the Communications Team. Ms. Findlay volunteered that she would like to work with communications as well.

Mr. Mitchell asked who was interested in working on the Stakeholder Interviews team. Ms. Findlay volunteered to lead. Mr. Melchi, Mr. Wood, and Mr. Sherman stated they would assist.

Mr. Mitchell asked who was interested in working on the Speakers Bureau Team. Mr. Cynkar offered to lead. Mr. Mottley, Ms. Sommer, and Mr. Sherman offered to help.

Ms. Brown introduced herself and how she has been with city for 18 years, coming on as the first Communications/Public Information Officer. Much of her work focuses on electronic communications and social media. She passed out handouts describing everything she works on and all our social media and websites. She explained how she manages our media relations work with reporters and on a lot of

special events. One of the things that has been really interesting is her work with our sister city in Sayama, Japan.

The other handout discusses our social media guidelines. We monitor discussions and we have guidelines about when we might remove posts which includes things such as profanity, threatening language, and advertisements. There is some discussion now around the First Amendment and if you might not be able to remove posts without violating a person's rights. On the City pages we typically do not need to remove comments. When she does need to remove something, she will typically do a screen capture of the comment and hide it from the site. About a year ago the City contracted with company named Archive Social that archives in real time and it will capture deleted comments. With this, we feel more protected if we receive a public records request regarding social media posts.

She also attached best practices from the Ohio Electronic Records Committee. It explains that it is really what the content is and if the content relates to our business as a public entity is what makes it a record. A lot of this will apply to the Bang the Table website because it will be collecting comments. She has contacted them to understand how they manage content on the site. We will need to understand it better to determine how to manage it.

Mr. Cynkar asked if she ever responds to community based pages that may be passing along inaccurate information. Ms. Brown said she often weighs the benefits of jumping into a conversation. If someone states an error regarding a City operated program, she can redirect people to the correct information. She does not want to jump into a debate. She gave a recent example about leaf collecting. There are a lot of times people jump in to defend the City. She explained how we now have the ability for the City to post as an organization.

Mr. Sherman asked as we go forward whether we need to give time to make sure the content we are posting passes the City's approval. Ms. Brown responded that the Committee does not need to get approval. She is happy to help with crafting processes and messages. We can also be of assistance in the mechanics of monitoring in the backend.

Mr. Lees asked about Ms. Brown's work with other groups. Ms. Brown explained how WIFA is under the umbrella of the City and she helps with messages and events for that group. She does work with other community groups such as the schools and libraries to get information out to the people.

Ms. Falcone brought up a question from Ms. Mercadante about how to achieve a multigenerational audience when reaching out to groups. Ms. Brown replied how you have to use old fashioned methods in addition to social media. Each tool reaches a different audience and different purpose. This includes information on the Village Green signs and the mailed newsletter. You cannot lose sight of those things. The electronic newsletter goes out every week or two with information to over 1500 emails. There are some persons who use email even if they are not on social media.

Dr. Bowers expressed his thanks for having him here to talk tonight and to the people serving on this committee. He explained how he has been a Worthington resident for 15 years. He is interested in this process in both his role with the schools and as someone who cares about the City. The Schools and the City have a unique, great relationship. He appreciates the City administration and the Worthington Police for their support. He conveyed how he looks forward to working with the newly appointed Police Chief Ware.

In the Columbus region, in contrast to other Cities, the lines between municipalities and school districts differ. The Worthington School District area includes Worthington, Westerville, Columbus, and Powell, addresses. They have a student population of over 10,500 students, and they serve those students in 19 different schools starting at the preschool level. They are required to serve students with disabilities at age three. Students then transition to one of eleven elementary schools, three middle schools and two traditional high schools. Additionally, since 1973, the Linworth Alternative Program has been an option. It has recently begun a name change to the Linworth Experiential Program. Those students come from both high schools and undertake more self-directed learning. They also offer the Worthington Academy Program with more self-directed online learning where students work with teachers but take classes online. This helps students see success.

The school district prides themselves on providing a wide range of experiences for students that offer choice and opportunity. They offer an International Baccalaureate program at Kilbourne. There are 19 AP classes offered. They have College Credit Plus which gives students the opportunity to finish their senior year with up to 30 hours of college credit and the school district pays for those classes.

There are also distinctively Worthington things such as the Political Radicalism class which is a unique senior only class with real debate on hot button political items. It is something that the Board of Education has had to protect because of some of the controversy generated due to the speakers.

The schools offer 32 varsity sports which is the most in Central Ohio. There are over 400 students participating in two marching bands this fall. There are robust theatre programs at both high schools. Worthington is about the experiences for the students, both academic and co-curricular.

Their mission is to empower a community of learners who will change the world. That community is defined as 10,500 students, 1,300 staff members, and the 62,000 residents making up the district. They try to spend a lot of time really talking to their kids about how they will change the world and to have them see what is possible. A weekly social media feature is put out showcasing a "Change the World" student.

He highlighted the District's vision statements which includes how they want to engage students with diverse opportunities, provide a safe environment intellectually, emotionally, socially, and physically. They work to provide consistent communication to promote dialogue with our community. That communication has both never been harder or easier today. It is critical to be responsible and transparent with community resources. Since they are tax funded, they need to be responsible.

He showed a map of the school district and explained how there are 2,300 students in the City of Worthington boundaries. 7,000 students are from the City of Columbus. They work with four different Police departments that respond to different things in the school district. Different parts of the school district have vastly different expectations for community engagement. An example of this is working with the Architectural Review Board in Worthington, which they do not have to do in Columbus.

Next, he overviewed the demographics of the school district. 24% of students qualify for Federal Free or Reduced Lunch, this number was 4% in 2000. 15% of the student population is enrolled in special education. 6% of students have English as not being their first language. The district is 68% Caucasian, 9% Black, 9% Hispanic, 9% Multiracial, and 5% Pacific Islander. The district is very diverse which is a

benefit to the kids. Sometimes the diversity creates challenges. When people ask why someone comes to Worthington, they come here for the diversity.

The Worthington Schools spend about \$163 million per year to operate the schools and most of the funding is locally sourced. They spend about \$11,000 per pupil on average. Much of this per pupil cost is based on the age and experience of staff. Teachers are paid by their experience level and education, which means that younger teachers are paid less. Olentangy Schools has a younger staff so their cost per pupil is lower than Worthington's.

A bond issue was passed in 2018 for debt to fund Phase One of their master planning. The District attempts to purchase five buses every year to stretch out the age of the bus fleet. Technology has become a tool that is expected, and an example is the 9,000 Chromebooks used in the district. Students are able to access their textbooks online and can have a physical copy on request. Maintenance funds are used for things such as furniture and band instruments.

Enrollment continues to grow. Currently there are 10,500 students and the latest enrollment projections show growth climbing to 12,000 students. Housing turnover with more young families moving in has contributed to more students coming into the school district. Because of the growth, they are running out of space. There are modular classrooms at Colonial Hills, Evening Street, Worthington Hills, Bluffview, and McCord. Part of this is due to how education has changed greatly in the past 20 years. From a classroom space standpoint, you can no longer have as many children in the same space. We need double the space for all day kindergarten (as compared to half-day kindergarten). There are now 14 classrooms that serve students with autism. We need more space with the way we educate students today and how enrollment continues to grow.

In 2015-2016, a task force was brought together to create a facilities master plan for aging buildings. Their goal was to deal with three issues: To create a plan for aging buildings, to balance high school enrollment, and to move elementary from K-6 to K-5. They are now building a new Worthingway and a new Perry Middle School attached to Phoenix to add students there. They're renovating both Kilbourne Middle School and McCord. They will open in Fall 2021.

Mr. Cynkar asked about what happens to Phoenix, Rockbridge, and Academy. Dr. Bowers replied that all three along with Perry Middle School will be on the site with a shared commons area, shared new media space, and Phoenix will be rebuilt. Academy and Rockbridge will stay where they are. All the middle schools are being built with more flexible spaces and with more light.

Dr. Bowers explained how they plan to come back in 2022 for an operating levy and bond issue. The bond issue would fund Phase Two of the master facilities plan which will likely include a rebuild of the academic wings of Thomas Worthington High School, a rebuild of Colonial Hills, and a rebuild of Brookside. The plan is to go back to the task force in 2021 to decide what goes to voters in 2022.

When voting for an operating levy in Ohio school districts, you are voting on a set amount of money that does not grow over time, even though it is phrased as millage. During the last reappraisal, valuations went up 12.5% but the tax base increase was less than 1%. With reappraisal, if someone's taxes go up, someone else's go down. There is inflationary expenditure growth and the need to add staff to serve the growing number of students. The School District has to go back to taxpayers for an increase or make reduction in services, which is usually the cutting of staff.

The State of Ohio funding formula is not designed to help growing suburban districts. Worthington is capped, meaning that even with more students the District does not get more money. The State cannot afford to give the district what the formula say they should get. This means that the burden for more funding is on the local taxpayer. They try to pursue reasonable levies in reasonable increments which has typically been every three years. They have been able to stay off from 2012 to 2018 and they have now changed to a four year cycle. There is a planned Phase Three bond issue that continues with the elementary school replacements. They have not planned past three phases, but there will be a need to look at more schools that are older. From a funding standpoint, they will be back every four years for an operating levy and bond issue.

Ms. Findlay asked about students in Columbus and the agreement with Columbus. Dr. Bowers explained how there is the Win-Win agreement between Columbus and other suburban districts, but Worthington not a part of that. The Worthington School District gave away land in the 1960s for what became the Anheuser Busch property which had been a strong tax base until the Tangible Personal Property Tax, which generated \$18 million per year, was phased out. The local community has had to make that up.

The master facilities planning done by the District affects city of Worthington and creates change. In order to balance the high schools, a feeder pattern committee came together and recommended moving Slate Hill as a feeder from Thomas Worthington to Worthington Kilbourne which will balance the high school enrollment. It balances the free and reduced lunch and ethnic diversity numbers. With Slate Hill it is almost equidistant from Thomas and Kilbourne. The second phase of the feeder pattern decided Bluffsvew, Brookside, and Slate Hill will go to Perry. Wilson Hill will go to Worthingway, joined by Worthington Park and Worthington Estates. Kilbourne Middle will be Colonial Hills and Evening Street. Families have the ability to open enroll if they want to go to a different school. Changes like these have occurred before.

Building results in change and there have been a lot of discussions with neighbors around Worthingway about where to build. There has been some discussion to do the rebuild of Colonial Hills on land purchased from Boundless at the old Harding Hospital Site. Colonial Hills is unique and rebuilding on that site is challenging and there are some who are not interested in change. We are not rebuilding in cornfields and it can be challenging to rebuild in neighborhoods.

The School District has 1,300 employees with 748 paying City of Worthington taxes worth \$1.9 million per year.

The relationship between the Schools and the City is very positive working together with each other. The relationship with the City administration is very positive. The Worthington Police Department is great, with them jointly funding a School Resource Officer along with the Schools. There are some unique things such as the pool which is on Worthington Schools property and the parking lot is the Thomas Worthington parking lot. The Arts Festival moved from the Village Green to the property at Thomas Worthington. School parking is used for Market Day. These may seem like small things, but they can create conflicts. The July 4th Fireworks are on property at Thomas Worthington. The City employs crossing guards, but the Schools pay for them. The Schools provide set up for the Taste of Worthington event. There are multiple Tax Increment Financing agreements with the City, and they try to be a good partner. Never have the Schools felt like they were left out of conversations.

For the Stafford Village property, the Schools want to see parking off the street. Some plans had parking off the street and they would like to see that so busses and cars can get down the road more easily.

Ms. Sommer asked about Stafford and if the Schools would see increased revenue. Dr. Bowers replied that he would have to get back with that answer on tax revenue. He explained that the Schools own Hartford Park which needs to be a better space. He would like to work with National Church Residences for a redo of the park.

Dr. Bowers brought up about a question that was submitted regarding the tax payments for The Heights. He explained that they realized about \$474,000 in tax payments and have six students there. For The District in Linworth they have seen about \$920,000 and 10 kids from that project. Those projects have been good for Worthington Schools. But the question is if they will they always be good for the schools, that is hard to answer. From a density viewpoint they do not see many kids. There may be backfill when empty nesters move into the new projects and families fill those homes. If it follows the traditional patterns, the numbers will rollercoaster overtime. Developers are betting people will not stay in their houses and will move to condos and apartments. If that happens, we will not see as much of a rollercoaster as people age out of houses, younger people will continually move in. The United Methodist Children's Home property is massively important to many people in Worthington. As a District, the Haden property in the northern part of the District takes much more focus as it may have 800 homes in it in the next ten years.

Ms. Findlay asked about all those students of which 70% that are not City residents and how do they pay for the schools. Dr. Bowers responded that everyone in the District pays the same property tax rate, it does not matter what municipality they are in. There is resentment in some pockets of the District because of the close relationship with the City of Worthington and they feel there is more attention focused here.

Mr. Cynkar brought up that during the recent election there was some opposition to multifamily dwellings, but it sounds like that is a non-issue for the District and it is a great tax return for the limited number of students. Dr. Bowers said when looking district wide, the price point makes a difference whether there are kids or not. He explained how he does not spend time worrying about UMCH and what might be developed. The Schools will react to whatever the City allows. Growth is good but it does provide challenges.

Mr. Melchi asked about the potential for a realignment of the elementary schools in Phase Two and if there is an impact from switching schools on students. Dr. Bowers said if they rebuild Brookside and Colonial Hills first, they will be rebuilt to a larger size with more capacity that could be filled from other places, so there will be a need to redistrict. He does not know if that would impact the middle schools because that would depend on where they come from. In regard to the question about changing schools, the research would say if students change schools in organized change there is no difference that he knows of. However, if the change is due to family challenges that result in frequent moves, there is research to say that is a challenge. Worthington has had very few transitions compared to most school districts. The message to the community is that growth is a good thing, but it will necessitate more change. People have historically moved to Worthington because they are not interested in a lot of change.

Mr. Sherman mentioned how Phase Three of the visioning effort will be a survey. He asked Dr. Bowers if there are any questions around the schools that would be beneficial for both the visioning process and the schools. Dr. Bowers responded that they would like to be a part of that conversation.

Ms. Falcone explained how they have the banner figured out for the visioning effort, but the issue is still with the post card. Ms. Burris had suggested adding some residential neighborhood pictures and a few other additions and deletions.

Mr. Wood asked about moving text around so that the "Get Involved" header is at the top.

Mr. Mottley brought up how this will become a 13-member committee again, which impacts the language on the draft postcard. Ms. Stewart suggested language that says it is led by a committee of residents or of fellow residents.

Ms. Brown suggested when talking about the QR code changing the language to scan.

Ms. Falcone brought up removing "All of these" and "None of these." Mr. Mitchell responded that the questions in general do not reflect the visioning process. Visioning calls for higher thinking. Ms. Abu-Absi said they struck her as being a little too broad, but she does not have any strong feelings about it.

Mr. Lees discussed language at the top, "What's your vision of Worthington's future? What makes it a great place to live, work and play? We want to know."

Ms. Falcone asked about the pictures. Mr. Mottley said these pictures are showing what everyone knows and showing neighborhoods might not be familiar. We should show places that make us a community that everyone can relate to. Mr. Mitchell suggested pictures with the schools or maybe Police and Fire. Ms. Brown suggested replacing the photo with kayaks to be a person on the bike path. Mr. Wood would rather have a Police or Fire picture instead of a city building. Ms. Stewart asked about a Police Officer on a bike picture. Ms. Burris said she wanted to go back to the discussion about something other than Old Worthington. She lives farther out and wants to feel like she is included in what people care about when thinking about the City. It would be good to have a park or residential area that people would recognize. It is not necessary for people to recognize the neighborhoods, they would recognize that it is not Old Worthington. Mr. Lees suggested pictures of the Community Center which is not in Old Worthington. Mr. Mottley suggested taking out the industrial building picture and add in a picture of a park.

Mr. Mitchell asked where this postcard would be utilized. Mr. Sherman and Mr. Lees said they thought it would be handed out in the community. Ms. Falcone said if it is put out quarterly, it could then be updated quarterly.

Returning to a discussion about the images, Mr. Sherman said Police and Fire needs to be on here. Ms. Stewart suggested a pictures the City has of police officers and firefighters in front of a fire truck.

The Committee voted to use layout two and use a photo of the Community Center instead of the Municipal Building.

Mr. Mitchell passed out papers related to Mr. Boring's presentation and his responses to follow-up questions. He explained how Mr. Boring is willing to come back on January 14 to follow up on specific items. If we are proposing to bring him back, he expressed there are a number of focus areas he would

happily dive into. We need feedback on what topics the Committee is most interested in hearing about for potential deep dives.

Mr. Sherman asked if the Committee wanted him to come in on January 14, and if we should set him up for the end of January time frame based on the things that have not been covered yet.

Mr. Mitchell explained that an alternate option is to have him provide a report. Ms. Stewart suggested having a report at the next meeting in January and then following-up at the next meeting.

Ms. Lees gave an update on Bang the Table and how Mr. Barnhardt with the City has offered to help with running the back end of the website. We want to launch around the January 14 meeting.

Ms. Findlay asked if the communications group needs to meet beforehand. Mr. Lees responded yes.

Mr. Lees explained how right now everything with the Communications Plan is revolving around Bang the Table. The ThisWeek News article will come out next week which is the next big communications effort. When the website is launched, there will be a press release put out and social media cards will be ready to be pushed out. We will work with the City to distribute through their communications channels.

Ms. Falcone said she will finish the FAQs and add them to the Communications Plan. The draft Public Input Plan is still in development and will outline every single time the Visioning Committee contacts the public. For the past document summaries, they are finishing those and are going to send them to the City for their comments and notes. She wants to have that out by the end of the month for review before the next meeting.

Mr. Sherman asked if it was realistic to have staff comments in that time frame. Ms. Stewart said she was unsure. Mr. Sherman said to aim for a soft goal on January 14.

Ms. Falcone explained how the key stakeholder interviews are trying to get information from key people in the community. Ms. Findlay remarked that since they are doing working groups, they can do a deeper dive and provide feedback for the next meeting. Mr. Mitchell said that the goal at the next meeting is to have a draft set of questions prepared.

Ms. Findlay brought up how we do have a lot of key stakeholders on that list, but she does not have a lot of confidence that people not on the radar are going to show up to a charette. She wondered if we need to consider another way to reach out to people and literally knock on doors and talk to people who are not at the forefront and create another touchpoint. We can grab people who are your average homeowner. Mr. Sherman suggested it is worth pursuing, but he would not do that in January. The Farmers Market could be a place to talk to different people.

Ms. Abu-Absi sees value in doing that outreach, but to her it is later in the process when we have the tools developed. She views the key stakeholder interviews as people who are very involved and have heard a lot of different perspectives.

Ms. Findlay conveyed how she was concerned about missing some concerns. She has been struggling with how we capture those people from the beginning. She does not know where in the process to fit that.

Mr. Lees asked when public input plan would be drafted. Ms. Falcone said that it should be by the end of next week. Mr. Lees said that is the piece we are missing. We need to have the full plan or else you are

just doing one-offs in a silo and not getting anywhere. We need to know where you are going with the questions you are asking.

Ms. Falcone said you will be surprised with who participates. When Bang the Table is operating, you will be able to see who is not participating and have the chance to reach out to them.

Ms. Sommer said she thought the Speakers Bureau's mission is to identify all the different areas to touch different people. When she worked on the Worthington Library levy, she talked to lots of groups. You go to every single meeting and encourage people to participate.

Mr. Wood said that those people are opting into something. Ms. Findlay is discussing people who are not opting into anything, but they do have opinions. We need to find the people that are not opting into any groups and figure out how to reach out to them.

Ms. Falcone commented that the Speakers Bureau will be huge. Mr. Cynkar said we will get some people who want to participate in the survey from there.

Mr. Sherman said his sense is to let the working teams put their groups together and we can see how their work and the draft Input Plan work together. The January 14 meeting should be a sit down working meeting.

There was a consensus to extend the January 14 meeting to 8:30pm.

The meeting adjourned at 8:39 p.m.