

City of Worthington

Community Visioning Committee

Tuesday, February 11, 2020 - 6:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.

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

Committee Members Present: Joe Sherman, Beth Sommer, Don Mottley, Catey Corl, Matt Lees, Kathryn Burris, Cindy Findlay, Jon Melchi, Linda Mercadante, Laura Abu-Absi, Graham Wood

Committee Members on Conference Line:

Committee Members Absent: Paul Cynkar, Austin Mitchell

Others Present: Assistant City Manager Robyn Stewart, Management Assistant Ethan Barnhardt, Lauren Falcone Poggemeyer Design Group (On Conference Line), and no visitors were in attendance

Mr. Sherman convened the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

MOTION

Mr. Mottley moved, seconded by Mr. Melchi to approve the meeting minutes from the Community Visioning Committee meeting of January 27, 2020 (As Amended).

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Sherman updated the Committee on his presentation to the City Council from last night. He gave them a summary of the last Committee meeting. He discussed the details of Mr. Boring's presentation and went over the document summaries and specifically the Worthington 360 document. He also touched on the Comprehensive Plan and the 2014 UMCH update. He explained how the Committee's takeaway was that the Comprehensive Plan is tactical. The Committee is above all that and it is not their job to rewrite the Comprehensive Plan. The past document summaries are important because they set the baseline for questions. There will be an opportunity to have the community involved but not in the way it was done in the past. He expressed how when their work is done, it will die on the vine if there are not champions.

He discussed the ways they are looking to get involved in the community and methods of spreading the word, including the postcards. The last subject he touched on was the interviews and how that process is currently underway. He tipped his hat to Cindy and others for what has been accomplished. He wanted Council to realize what they are taking on.

Council came back with several questions around dates and when things are going to be done. He touched on how they have three working committees and a weekly phone call set up to move the process along. He is pleased how we have a group of extraordinary people here. Burnout could easily happen because this is not your fulltime job. This effort is important for the City and everyone has a love for the City or else they would not be sitting in this room.

Ms. Burris explained how she is looking for a plan from the group on where the postcards fit into our whole communications plan and how much we have in our budget to be put into that effort. She is happy to get the postcards out there and keep track of them, but decisions need to be made about how much money can be spent on postcards and plastic stands to hold the postcards on a countertop. Fifteen stands could easily be placed around the community and priced out that would be about \$90. We also need to know how many postcards we want to put out there.

Mr. Sherman asked about other places to put postcards. Ms. Burris discussed placing them around the entire city. She suggested over in Linworth at the new shops, places like Dewey's Pizza, the banks going down High Street, the Whitney House, and barbershops. Ms. Sommer said some places have displays for general public information. The Chamber of Commerce has its own display space as well. Ms. Mercadante suggested CoHatch and various churches and temples. She noted that not many people attend the pastor's association. Ms. Sommer suggested another place people stand in line is at Pancake Day on March 14th. Mr. Melchi said that they had over 3,000 people there last year.

Ms. Burris said she gets the community news and Upper Arlington is taking surveys from the community all the time. One thing they are doing are pop ups before basketball games and other school events and that seems like a good way to reach a good number of people

Mr. Sherman said it is key to see the return on investment. He asked about the reaction at the Groundhog Breakfast to the postcards. Ms. Brown said the postcards were showcased at the event and she picked up about 25 that were left at the tables afterwards. Ms. Sommer mentioned putting them at annual Chamber meeting.

Ms. Brown offered to reach out to her contacts at City facilities about putting out the postcards. Ms. Stewart said we may be able to hang banners in City buildings if we want to make a bigger splash. Ms. Burris observed that Saturday mornings at the Community Center are very busy and that would be a great place for a pop-up. Ms. Brown said Friday nights are big too.

Mr. Sherman explained how he has mixed feelings about the Farmers Market considering 51% of visitors to the market are outside of the Worthington and the surrounding zip codes. He questions whether that will that be a good return on their time. We need to try going and see what happens which he is willing to take that on.

Ms. Findlay asked if the City owns a laptop that the Committee could take around to events. She said it would be helpful for people to participate and could catch the eye of children. Mr. Wood suggested creating a standardized way of doing a pop up in a box with a table, banner, and screen. He would love to participate in those outreach opportunities. Ms. Sommer said that could be part of the Speakers Bureau's work.

Ms. Sommer said we will need to ask permission to be visible at Pancake Day. Ms. Falcone said that is part of public involvement plan with having a "Show on the Road" that is asking questions and getting people to participate. Mr. Sherman asked if the goal is to get people registered. Ms. Sommer replied it would be to engage people and show them how to get involved.

Mr. Wood discussed the different places they could go to do the pop up. Ms. Sommer mentioned several ideas such as the Picnic with the Partnership, First Wednesdays, the Worthington Arts Festival and the Concerts on the Green. She suggested putting something on the Village Green signs. Ms. Stewart said that the Village Green signs are run through the Parks and Recreation Department.

Ms. Abu Absi brought up the idea of incentivizing people to register with a raffle for a \$25 gift certificate. Ms. Stewart suggested doing a raffle for anyone registered to be able to win a gift certificate to a business in Worthington. Mr. Lees said you could use Facebook cards to promote the raffle.

Mr. Melchi asked if the Committee can accept gift cards or if we need to pay for them. Ms. Stewart said if there is an individual committee member who is benefitting there may be a problem, but these would be used for the community. Mr. Melchi suggested having a different sponsor each month. Ms. Stewart brought up that if we are looking for anything in exchange beyond publicity, we will need to run through a review. Mr. Melchi said he would work on this initiative.

Mr. Sherman questioned if committee members need to have some kind of a branded shirt on at events. The committee discussed various options for apparel and decided on a tee shirt. Mr. Sherman suggested Poggemeyer make a design. Ms. Falcone stated that they would put together a mockup.

Mr. Lees detailed how it was a positive soft launch for the website. He has seen discussions on social media around the City and it has been organically getting some traction. They are looking at how to bring it to the next level. He referenced the handout which provides details on how to promote Vision Worthington on social media. There are three graphics that Poggemeyer has generated to share. It is okay to begin posting graphics in the neighborhood social media pages. The City has begun promoting the website and they will share it with their partners for distribution.

Ms. Falcone explained how there has been a discussion about doing a “March Madness” initiative posing a different question every week to get people to come back, sharing fast facts and asking people to react. We cannot keep it up consistently, but it could be good for a short time period.

Ms. Corl discussed how it would be helpful to have a calendar timeline for content that could go hand in hand with different events the Committee is doing.

Mr. Lees explained how we initially want to get early registration numbers up. Once people are registered we will have their email addresses. A subcommittee is meeting to come up with content ideas to keep the website fresh and new. There are “Listening” committee members listed on the website and those people should interact with postings to acknowledge resident’s interaction.

Ms. Abu-Absi suggested it could be helpful to have something scheduled on a calendar with an assigned day to interact with postings.

Mr. Sherman suggested that the four committee members who are “Listening” rotate through all the committee members periodically.

Mr. Lees explained the social media guidelines and the intent to push conversations to the website so they can be captured. He detailed how Mr. Barnhardt is opening a discussion forum on the website for people to have an open dialogue opportunity. There will be an open discussion forum and then several other more targeted discussion forums.

Ms. Findlay brought up how on Facebook you are less anonymous than on the visioning website. If things are already heated on Facebook it will get worse. Mr. Lees replied if someone is nasty then they are going to lose access to participate. Ms. Findlay brought up the potential for people criticizing the visioning process. Mr. Lees said we need to let that conversation go on.

Ms. Abu-Absi brought up how she registered with her full first and last name. Mr. Lees said we want to be completely transparent and suggested all committee members please use their full first and last name.

Ms. Falcone discussed the public involvement timeline and beginning to schedule the SOAR analysis. Ms. Stewart asked how long the SOAR analysis would take. Ms. Falcone replied that it would take about two hours where people meet other people and form groups. It is a community building activity. People will meet at tables and see a quick PowerPoint to discuss what has been done up to this point before breaking into groups for the SOAR activity and then presenting back to the group.

Ms. Corl asked who comes to this event. Ms. Falcone responded that you want to invite everyone through the community engagement website and through the City's email database. It should also be posted on social media and a flyer can be created as an invitation.

Mr. Wood asked if we would do a registration in advance in order to know who is planning to attend. Ms. Falcone said we can do a RSVP.

Mr. Mottley asked when other communities hold these activities are they held on weeknights or during the weekend? Ms. Falcone said she has seen them done on both. Things such as offering food can be done to get people to attend.

Mr. Wood brought up the option of waiting until it gets warmer to have a better chance of success because it is more walkable. Mr. Sherman agreed that later could be better. Mr. Mottley suggested there being a survey question on the website to ask when would be best.

Ms. Abu-Absi recommended sticking to a strict timeline because this is an important step to drive the process. Ms. Falcone explained how it is more factfinding letting you drill down into focus groups.

Mr. Melchi brought up spring break and Passover and how we want to stay away from those dates. Ms. Falcone mentioned the closer you get to graduation and getting towards the beginning of June it becomes more difficult. We need to be mindful of the dates to get the most people possible. We also need to think about venues.

The Committee discussed what dates would work best for the SOAR analysis and asked staff to look at availability of venues for that event and report back.

Ms. Findlay discussed the City Council interview tool and how the questions try to keep the focus on residents' input to City Council. There are questions about the best way to aggregate the answers and who would do that. Ms. Abu-Absi volunteered to take on that task.

Ms. Sommer asked if the interviews should be one on one with the person each Councilmember appointed. Ms. Findlay explained how it was discussed at one point about having two people interview Councilmembers but having been through the stakeholder interview process, they thought that it should be manageable one on one.

Ms. Findlay suggested going through the changes to the stakeholder interview questions. She discussed how she likes question 13 that asks what success looks like for the City Council. It was suggested to take question 6 out. Mr. Sherman said to pull that question because it is asking Councilmember's visions. Ms. Falcone emphasized how you need to stick with the constituents because you do not want this focused on Councilmember's visions. This is an educated and engaged population and she got some interesting questions about transparency and motives from the stakeholder interviews she conducted. Ms. Corl asked about the potential points of contention and getting a background of what they think are the issues. Ms.

Mercadante said that is why there is a committee because Council wants to consider the community perspectives when making decisions on the big issues.

Ms. Findlay moved on to discussing question 7, explaining how there are a few varying perspectives on the question and the perception of development. She thought it would be interesting if different Councilmembers perspectives varied from what they heard from each other. Mr. Melchi suggested steering them towards a general topic because it could go haywire. Ms. Corl recommended that you could build a list of topics that are relevant and the challenges where the community is not aligned that might need to be resolved.

Mr. Wood said that maybe the question here is more about why we need a visioning committee. Ms. Findlay responded that development is the big elephant in the room. When asking them generally what they are hearing from the community, it may vary considerably. We want to stay away from specifics as much as we can.

Ms. Falcone explained how it could show disconnect between what they think residents are saying and what the residents are actually saying. Ms. Mercadante suggested that is what the committee is supposed to be bringing back to them. Ms. Findlay recommended that the aggregation of thoughts is almost more for the committee's edification than the vision. Ms. Abu-Absi said that this tool is useful in getting their sense of what things will be covered in the educational forum and SOAR analysis. Because they are community leaders, they are hearing a lot of things. She explained that if we call out development specifically, we almost have to call out other specific issues. The question is whether we want to get into specific issues. Mr. Mottley suggested to keep things general.

Mr. Sherman proposed asking, "What are your constituent's impressions of future development for Worthington." It is one broad statement that they can talk about generally. There is real divisiveness in the community and Council, and we need to be careful.

Ms. Findlay will refine the tool and get it out to the committee tomorrow.

Mr. Sherman said he told Council that committee members would be approaching them to get these interviews done before the end of the month. Each committee member is responsible for setting it up with their Council person.

Ms. Falcone sent out an aggregation of the committee interviews she conducted recently to Cindy's team and she will send that out to everyone tomorrow. Interestingly, none of the committee members were born and raised in Worthington and everyone comes from very different backgrounds. However, everyone was on the same page on their ideal community. The most popular way of getting information is from word of mouth. Everyone had similar impressions of Worthington and a majority moved here for the schools. When talking about development questions, there are some differences, but everyone wants to preserve what is good in the community and make sure any development that is done is done positively. There was a consensus that everyone wants to see decisions made.

There were some questions that came up to ask residents such as, if the City had to reduce services, what would they be willing to give up, and if an out of town guest were visiting, where would they take them outside Worthington and why.

In the other stakeholder interviews, there were a lot of positives. However, she heard comments that Poggemeyer was in someone's back pocket and that is why they were hired. There is some distrust and concerns about transparency out there to overcome. She has about six to eight more interviews to conduct. Some people are excited, and others are skeptical, but everyone wants to be heard. She said someone asked about people under the age of 30 on the committee and how they want to hear from younger people, because that is who the vision is being built for. They are tired of listening to all the older people. She also heard some concerns about what will happen with this document and where the City will go with it. She will not produce the aggregate responses until she has completed all the interviews.

Ms. Stewart gave a Speakers Bureau update. She and Mr. Cynkar met with the Schools to brainstorm on how to best engage with students, staff, and parents. They have the business cards ordered, but she is not sure when they will be delivered. Mr. Sherman asked for recap on what was said at the meeting with the Schools.

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.