

**City of Worthington**  
**Community Visioning Committee**  
**Tuesday, July 14, 2020 - 6:00 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.**  
**Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams**

Committee Members Present: Don Mottley, Paul Cynkar, Beth Sommer, Kathryn Burris, Austin Mitchell, Jon Melchi, Catey Corl, Laura Abu-Absi, Graham Wood, Cindy Findlay, Linda Mercadante, and Joe Sherman

Committee Members Absent: Matt Lees

Others Present: Assistant City Manager Robyn Stewart, Management Assistant Ethan Barnhardt, Public Information Officer Anne Brown, Lauren Falcone Poggemeyer Design Group, and no visitors were in attendance

**Mr. Sherman convened the meeting at 6:01 p.m.**

**MOTION**                      *Mr. Mottley moved, seconded by Mr. Mitchell to approve the meeting minutes from the Community Visioning Committee meeting of June 9, 2020.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

*Mr. Sherman explained how the recent SOAR events and Focus Groups have been a really good use of time. He is also really impressed with the big ideas and key questions that came out of the Wednesday morning communications meeting last week. His message going forward is, we have five more committee meetings like this, and we are still on our October target date for the finishing of this project.*

*Mr. Barnhardt provided an update on the statistics for the VisionWorthington.org website and the Facebook ad that is currently running. Mr. Sherman expressed that he thinks the Facebook ad should continue through the next committee meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July. We can then make a decision and discuss whether to continue the same ad or come up with another approach. The committee agreed with that approach.*

*Ms. Falcone brought up how people are not necessarily participating on the website, which is interesting considering that Facebook ad has reached so many people. People are looking at Facebook but that is not translating over to the website. Mr. Sherman does not know what to make of it because the website is interactive, but people are not interacting. Ms. Abu-Absi wondered if the group has considered a website refresh. There is so much information and places to go, she wonders if we can highlight a couple of the main places with conversation which could offer more incentive for people to engage. When she goes to the website, she is still a little unsure where to go. Ms. Findlay stated that has been considered, but the thing that has driven the most people to the website is when we go on Facebook and push a specific link to a specific activity. Being able to weigh-in on certain topics has generated the most engagement. Ms. Burris noticed when she looked at the website there are sections that have not been used at all. Some things might not be necessary to keep up that have not made a connection with folks. Ms. Findlay suggested that committee members might want to take a fresh look at the site in terms of the volume of comments and the comments with the highest value that will translate to our end vision. Ms. Falcone suggested we need to get people reacting to the SOAR results. Mr. Cynkar asserted that he does not think anything is wrong with the website. The phase we are in is collecting information and getting ideas. People begin engaging when things are narrowing down and are able to prioritize issues. Mr. Mitchell*

*suggested that there be further discussion about keeping tiles refreshed by the Wednesday morning communications group.*

*Ms. Burris provided a summary of all the different comments on the website over the various different topics. On the poll question about how people heard about the website, 42% responded they heard from the City, and 26% heard from social media. She wanted to highlight some of things she thought were said more than once and where there were commonalities. Overall there was a universal desire to preserve historic traditions in Worthington. The split is that people want to keep the small town feeling but also want to move ahead. There are two schools of thought on that which came up over and over again. People expressed they are interested in promoting ethnic, cultural, and age diversity but there is the question about how that is done. Some said that attracting different businesses could provide different opportunities to develop a better diversity of workers and residents. Another big item is that housing options are so limited, but some people do not see that as problem. Everyone agreed if we are making changes, they do not want large big box apartments. A lot of people said they leave Worthington to go shopping, for entertainment, and for dining. They will take guests somewhere outside of Worthington. A big point is that the pool is deplorable. Since nobody and everybody owns the pool, there is no real ownership in the end, and nothing gets done. As for parks and greenspace, a lot of people say we have enough, and we should improve what we have. But some say that more would be nice. Sidewalks came up a lot and people think it is a priority to have them in Old Worthington and for sidewalks to generally be more consistent. A common theme that was agreed on is the need for better connections between the mall and downtown. People are longing for that when looking at comments. With economic development there are many schools of thought, but most people thought that doing business in Worthington is very challenging. People were concerned that economic development would make a dramatic change in the ambiance of the city. Others thought it was necessary and could be done appropriately to maintain what we have but develop more. Density is a really hot word but never really defined. There is a lot of concern that density means the loss of greenspace and the natural environment, bringing lots of traffic. The City needs to be clear about what ideas of density they are considering. Another consensus is that the word creative was used a lot in the context solving issues and creating better situations. We need to think outside of the box and embrace compromise.*

*Mr. Cynkar explained that the Speakers Bureau has had a hiatus over the last few weeks. With the focus groups that took the place there were many of the same people engaging in these. The last couple had a lot of new folks that have not been in any of our meetings before. There is one group they have tried to schedule and have not been able to set dates. The question is what we want to do next. The schools still have issues they are working through and we have not been a priority for them. The question is whether there are other groups we can engage with such as the churches. He explained how they have contacted and been engaged with the political action groups such as Building Worthington's Future and Project Community Park Worthington, and we have gotten good input from them. Ms. Sommer asked if the principal at Linworth would see the value in getting a small group of Linworth students together to participate in a presentation. Mr. Cynkar said he thinks that a good way to do it would be to contact individual principals, but the direction from Dr. Bowers was that this needed to be set up through Vicki Gnezda. We can ask whether she cares if we reach out to principals directly. Ms. Findlay explained that she reached out via email to some student service clubs from a list of advisors on the school webpage. She asked them if they have any students who might fill out a survey or participate in a focus group. Mr. Melchi asserted that if the superintendent gave us direction, then he thinks it is disrespectful to go around him.*

*Out of respect to him after he took the time to speak to us, it is not good form to disregard his protocols. Ms. Falcone brought up the need to hear from younger generations. The schools do not know what is coming and they are overwhelmed. People in the focus groups said we need to hear from younger people. Mr. Wood stated that we are going to have difficulty having young people respond to anything, it is generally tough to get any real response from high school students. They are pretty checked out. Ms. Abu-Absi suggested creating a separate short, easy survey, and get it posted on Instagram. Students are looking for an outlet, but if we try to formalize it, it may become too much of an ask. Ms. Falcone discussed how we have talked about doing a senior survey. There were several younger people in the focus groups, but it seemed like some of the conversation was over their heads. Mr. Wood said that we could try to get the schools to post an Instagram story with a couple of short yes or no question polls.*

*Ms. Falcone updated the Committee that the public survey now has 827 responses. We are getting anywhere from seven to 87 responses a day. It has now been open for five weeks. There has been some negative feedback, with people saying it is too long. The split between male and female is the same as it is on the Facebook ad, split between 61% female and 36% male responding. The survey has a 72% completion rate with an average completion time of 17 minutes. For the survey gift card promotion, we can update it to ask people to please leave their name and we can then pick names for the gift cards. Traffic has been really good, and we see a bump from Facebook and the City newsletters. Personal email and social media have really been shown to be the best ways to get people to respond to what we are doing. We would like to see 1000 responses to the survey. Ms. Findlay brought up one topic that has come up on Wednesday is the question of at what point do we look at demographics of who is filling out survey and how do we go out and get those folks that have not responded. There is the question of if we go out and target people in a different way. Ms. Falcone presented from the demographics from survey that Gen X and Z are higher. Younger people showed up in focus groups and were engaged. The demographics by race lines up closely with the City's overall demographics. Ms. Findlay asked if we could get a breakdown of the neighborhood question, that might help us figure out if there are gaps and how to fill them. Mr. Wood suggested creating individual calls for the Speakers Bureau by neighborhood. We could have a Colonial Hills call for example and post about it in their Facebook page. Mr. Cynkar asked about Worthington Moms Facebook group, he hears there are lot of people on that. Ms. Falcone said she will distribute the listing of the neighborhood participation.*

*Ms. Brown stated that she has forwarded analytics about opens and clicks from electronic newsletters and Facebook posts. Mr. Mitchell asked about the City's perspective on holding in-person gatherings. Ms. Stewart explained that we are not holding in-person public meetings at this point especially with the increase in coronavirus cases.*

*Ms. Falcone commented on how the Committee has had so many touches. We have engaged about 1300 people and gotten about 1100 big ideas. We have touched all households with postcards. In the focus groups, people were talking. People are filling out the survey. If there is some worry that there is not a lot of traffic on website, we are hitting people in other ways. These numbers will go into the final report to show how many people were reached and talked with us. Moving on to the focus group wrap-up, she distributed a word narrative with everything that everyone said. We had good participation rate from Committee members; we had almost half there for each focus group or SOAR. There are some huge similar themes coming from the different generations and groups. She sent out the bullet points of the commonalities and differences. We are working on taking the bullet points from last week and creating an infographic for the public to react to. As a follow up to the focus groups, a couple people mentioned*

*their kids are too busy to participate. She asked if we want to put the focus group questions on the website to react to or do we have enough information? Should there be more focus groups conducted for young people or minorities? Mr. Melchi said that we keep hearing about high school seniors, but we have college kids at home for summer and have not engaged them. They are closer to making choices to live in Worthington or not. It is getting late, so if we do that, we need to move pretty quickly. Ms. Falcone asked how do we get them engaged and how do we reach out to the minority community and get them to attend a focus group? Their vision of Worthington is very important. Ms. Findlay brought up that we do not want to forget about the business leaders of the largest employers in Worthington. Mr. Sherman explained that he has worked with Mr. McCorkle and they have identified 12 business leaders and they are working to engage them as a focus group. He also has met with Jack Conrath along with Councilmember Robinson and they are working to nail down and flesh out their process. Mr. Mottley asked if the Community Relations Commission could assist with minority outreach? Ms. Sommer said that she has contacts with the AME church near Crosswoods. If we want to involve them, then we need to let them know what to do. Sitting through the focus groups, they said they want diversity, but they are the wrong people to be talking about it. We could ask the pastor to have five or six people to talk about what they want to see in Worthington. Mr. Mottley stated that we have a small minority population in the city limits, and we need to talk to the broader community for their perception of Worthington about having more diversity in the borders of the city. Mr. Mitchell explained that we have heard across the board how we need more diversity in all forms. The question to the committee is whether we need to solve how to get diversity or is that what the vision is? We can be a bunch of white, middle class people that say we want diversity and give that to City Council to work on. Mr. Wood said that part of a vision is hearing from folks what their vision for Worthington is and what would make them more likely to stay in Worthington. Part of not being a diverse community is a reason people do not feel welcome or attracted here. Part of hearing a vision and building a vision is understanding if we want to get to place of diversity, and what does that vision look like for those people not represented now. We should maybe reach out to people not necessarily in Worthington and ask why they are not living in Worthington. Mr. Mitchell said that maybe it is okay to say this is an aspiration of the community. Mr. Sherman stated that our goal is to gather what the community wants. Ms. Sommer said she would be prouder of our final project if we reached out to seek that opinion.*

*Ms. Falcone asked what does the future of our public input process looks like? She is not sure if we can hold the visioning session and charettes online. The SOAR and the focus groups went great, but all the feedback from the participation survey said that people want more time to talk and dialogue. She thinks it needs to happen in person. Ultimately, it is up to committee. We can try the charette online, or we could wait, but she does not know when we can get together in person. Her clients are split 50/50 between going online and waiting. We can display a slide with a vision statement and people chat about it, but if there are 100 people, she does not know how long it could take. We have a month to finish the survey and additional focus groups. By mid-August we need to figure out what we are going to do. Ms. Abu-Absi asked about the flow of the charette. Ms. Falcone explained that the charette is done more at tables. It is more dialed in. Poggemeyer would have stations for people walk through for each vision and you can dive into the categories. Mr. Mottley said from a public health standpoint, we do not imagine having mass gatherings until next year. We need to look at online options to get the same result. Mr. Melchi brought up that MORPC is doing their housing project and they have been doing it in Teams and sending participants to breakout rooms within Teams. It is not 100% perfect but has accomplished what you are talking about. Ms. Falcone explained we can come up with vision statements from everything we have*

*done and post them online for people to comment on. Or we could invite people and have them type in a meeting chat. We have a handful of naysayers about the online activities and we will need to make sure they feel included. Ms. Sommer asked about the naysayers. Ms. Falcone explained that it is a few people who are having difficulty connecting to Teams, and do not like Teams or were confused by MIRO boards. A couple people signed up right when the meetings started, and it was hard to distribute information to them at that time. We invited them to reengage. Mr. Sherman emphasized that we are not going to please 100% of people. It is the typical naysayers who were offended that we did not ask them personally to participate. When you ask them later why they did not participate, they answered they were too busy. Ms. Sommer explained that a lot of people are on Teams meetings and we have reached out to a lot of people in different ways. Ms. Falcone asked Committee members if they have sent emails out to people asking them to participate to share with her how many people you have emailed on your distribution list.*

*Mr. Sherman asked everyone's opinion about if they believe we are doing a good job up to this point? He wondered if there is anything we should think about changing. The heavy lifting is coming up with the results and reporting and how we are going to socialize that. Mr. Melchi stated that he would like to get a brief timeline from Ms. Falcone on what the last few months will look like for committee members and what could be expected. Ms. Mercadante said she wanted to register that it is difficult sometimes to stay interacted with the process. She wanted to do speaking engagements but that is not working right now. Mr. Cynkar said the difficult part is going to be synthesizing all of this and bringing it down to what the community really wants. The City needs a 10-year plan to accomplish these things. We need to find a way to address dilemmas. Mr. Wood shared he is struggling with how we are asking people to vision for a world with no idea what financial situation the City is going to be in. We may come up with a vision, but we are not sure where it is going to go. Ms. Burris said that she is seeing that the residents, business, and civic groups are all very splintered. There is not a cohesive sense of community. It is startling that many groups have not heard of each other. There is no sense we have yet been able to get this feeling we are all on the same team. Mr. Mottley emphasized that there are points of consensus and points of disagreement. There are a lot of shared values of the groups we have heard from. Ms. Burris stated that her concern is there is not a sense of compromise on how to get to a vision. Mr. Sherman said this starts at Council and they are very divided as well. That is a reflection of the community. Ms. Findlay asked about other communities with dilemmas in their priorities and what their visions look like. Ms. Falcone responded that they look at the common ground, education, communication, cooperation and that is where we get common vision. People do not understand density, and relationships between education, finances, development, and others. Everyone loves where they live in Worthington. The hot buttons are residential, density, economic development, and diversity. Ms. Cynkar said that people do love where they live and city services, but we face a mall and offices that are not doing well, the UMCH site, NIMBY-ism, a hotel that is a big hole, and working from home that is the wave of the future. He has never heard one person complain of where they live and their services, but how do we keep that? Ms. Falcone commented she is surprised how much the City communicates, but people feel like there is not communication and she wondered why that is. The perception is that communication is not working. A lot of education is needed.*

**The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.**