

City of Worthington
Community Visioning Committee
Tuesday, August 11, 2020 - 6:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

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

Committee Members Absent: Catey Corl

Others Present: Assistant City Manager Robyn Stewart, Management Assistant Ethan Barnhardt, Public Information Officer Anne Brown, and Lauren Falcone Poggemeyer Design Group.

Mr. Sherman started the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

MOTION Don Mottley moved, seconded by Paul Cynkar, to approve the meeting minutes from the Community Visioning Committee meeting of July 27, 2020. The motion was approved.

Mr. Sherman thanked everyone for the work they've been doing and noted there are additional focus groups upcoming. Ms. Findlay is running late and we'll postpone discussion of an idea she has expressed regarding implementation.

Communications Report

Ms. Falcone reported she shared a 6-7 page document on insights with the committee and she received a few comments. She has questions for the committee. Regarding diverse businesses in Worthington, she read it to mean more businesses and Mr. Lees read it as more small, boutique type businesses. Mr. Mottley suggested using "varied businesses, including niche businesses".

In the same statement on businesses, the opening paragraph notes the City has vacant land and buildings available for development. Mr. Lees commented that he is not sure of the purpose of the statement and it sounds very City focused as if the City owns the land. Ms. Falcone noted she was trying to get to the idea that the buildings are not as vacant as people think. She is trying to determine how to share that information. Mr. Sherman suggested using the terms "any vacant land and buildings for development can assist with funding for the City. Ms. Sommer suggested the language should be clear that the City doesn't own the land. Mr. Mottley noted the land that is vacant is conspicuous which leads people to think there is a lot of vacancy. Ms. Mercadante suggested something be included regarding factual information. Ms. Abu-Absi indicated she liked the revised language suggested by Ms. Falcone. Mr. Lees commented he thought it was fine with the revision.

Ms. Falcone asked about the last question which asks whether people would like to join a committee or run for Council. Are we trying to ask people to do something specific such as run for Council or just encourage people to get involved. The Committee responded that they thought the latter.

Ms. Falcone indicated Mr. Barnhardt has already built out tiles on the website for these insights and vision statements. He shared the information prepared for the website. The Committee indicated it looked great.

Ms. Falcone noted Mr. Barnhardt is working with the Communications group on a press release that will be distributed. Committee members are encouraged to share it with their networks. Mr. Lees echoed the encouragement for members to share within their networks. This is the time for people to react to specific ideas. Ms. Falcone asked about the timing of the press release. Mr. Barnhardt indicated he can have the information live on the website very quickly so the press release can go out any time, unless we want to include specific visioning or charrette dates.

Ms. Falcone proposed the idea of holding the second mailer, which should be a letter, until we can send the vision checklist and have people fill it out and send it back. Ms. Abu-Absi commented that she really likes that idea. She would like to understand the cost and how it fits in the budget. Mr. Lees concurred, stating it shows they've reached out to the largest audience they can. He thinks it is important to clearly note it as a draft for reaction. Mr. Wood expressed his support for this idea and thinks we should continue to encourage connection with the website. People can complete it there as an option to returning a paper response if they prefer. Mr. Sherman agreed with the idea also.

Ms. Abu-Absi commented on timing. She doesn't think we need to wait for school to start. Mr. Cynkar commented that he thinks parents will be thinking of school first.

Ms. Falcone stated she will work with the PDG staff to prepare a mailer consistent with the ideas expressed. Mr. Sherman asked Ms. Falcone to suggest a date range for the mailer.

Ms. Falcone indicated Mr. Mitchell asked about sizes of neighborhoods for evaluating responses. Ms. Falcone reported the City has shared a map of the neighborhoods with number households and population. She shared some examples of the number of survey responses as compared to number of households. Ms. Falcone indicated she would share the neighborhood map. She commented that previously we thought we would do a lit drop, but she doesn't recommend that now with COVID. We might instead target neighborhood Facebook pages.

Speakers Bureau

Mr. Cynkar reported Mr. Sherman and Ms. Sommer attended the Chamber's Economic Development Committee meeting last week and they were able to share comments and information about this process. They also have a scheduled event with the Noon Lions Club later this month. They have a revised presentation that moves the questions to the end. Mr. Sherman suggested the group that will attend the meeting get together about a week before to plan the discussion.

Public Survey/Signage

Mr. Mitchell commented on the youth survey/Instagram poll. They've been working on a five minute survey to push out through Instagram targeting current high school students or individuals who graduated in last four years and attend/attended any school in Worthington or home schooled students. They'll be holding a \$50 gift card drawing; anyone who completes the survey will be entered. He thanked those involved in developing and reviewing the survey. Mr. Barnhardt indicated he will work to get the Instagram ad posted tomorrow. Ms. Abu-Absi will share the information with the Schools communications group and ask them to do a direct post. Mr. Mitchell noted in order for people to be entered in the drawing, they have to share their email address so we will have that contact information.

Ms. Falcone shared the draft visioning boards that have been developed. Ms. Findlay commented that they discussed sharing these at the Farmers' Market. Mr. Mitchell reported he talked with Nina Parini this week who manages the Farmers' Market. Ms. Parini indicated they could provide a spot and a table. We need people to sign up to staff the table. Ms. Parini reported the market has tilted even more non-Worthington in last few weeks, up to 70% non-Worthington. Ms. Sommer suggested collecting the signs placed around the neighborhood and putting them at the market. She thinks the work slots should be at least an hour to be worth the time.

Ms. Findlay commented that she would really like to have a vision board for people to see. Mr. Mitchell summed up that he will create a Doodle poll to have people sign up for times to staff the Farmers' Market. Ms. Findlay asked people who placed signs to drop them off at her house.

Worthington Idea Lab

Ms. Findlay said that in thinking about all the ideas being proposed and the demand for intra-community coordination, she came up with a concept that a group could be created to receive ideas and work on ways to make them happen. The group could help find funding and the right people to be engaged. They would be a "make it happen" body. She thinks it could be self-funded in some way. There are always great ideas. Funding and time are lacking for implementing the ideas. Mr. Mottley commented that he thinks it sounds like an incubator of sorts but rather than focused on business development, it's focused on community ideas. Ms. Findlay states that she thinks it could connect to non-profits, businesses and government. Ms. Sommer expressed support for the idea and she wondered how it would connect with Leadership Worthington and the class projects they pursue. Mr. Mottley replied that he thinks Leadership Worthington doesn't really have the capability to take this on now as they're in a transition stage right now. Mr. Cynkar stated he really likes the idea. The timing may be challenging since many businesses are struggling to even keep their doors open. Mr. Mottley added he thinks much of this may not get much traction until after COVID, but planning for it now is important. Mr. Sherman suggested Ms. Findlay write up the idea and share it with the Committee so they can think more about it.

City Update/Discussion

Ms. Stewart commented that as the Committee starts to refine the visioning statements, City staff members can meet with the Committee to talk about their areas of expertise and answer questions (e.g. land use, economic development, parks and recreation).

Regarding the vision statements, Ms. Brown suggested the statements may need refinement. She is concerned about the first statement regarding Worthington being prosperous. She doesn't want to suggest that we only want to have affluent people. The Committee agreed that they probably want to work on that. We don't want to be exclusive; we want to be a community that flourishes. Ms. Brown indicated she'll work with Mr. Barnhardt to get the press release sent out.

Mr. Sherman suggested a smaller group work to refine the vision statements. Mr. Wood indicated he would like to be involved in that work. Ms. Falcone asked the whole group to review them and provide feedback. Mr. Mottley suggested everyone review and comment and then have a working group pull together the comments and provide a refined product for the next meeting. Mr. Mottley volunteered to be part of the working group also. Mr. Sherman asked whether we are limited to these nine items. Ms. Falcone said it does not need to stay at these items.

Ms. Falcone commented that she has struggled with how to handle the comments regarding excellent schools. Mr. Mottley suggested it might be a subitem under one or more of the vision statements. Mr. Cynkar commented that it is a sign of our times and the many young families moving in.

Ms. Falcone asked for comments back by next Wednesday (August 19). Members can send them either to her via email or note them on the file in One Drive. This discussion shows we're not ready to print the boards for the Farmers' Market yet. She suggests directing people to the survey and the website. Mr. Mitchell asked whether the website changes will be available for the Farmers' Market this weekend. Mr. Barnhardt replied that they should be uploaded.

PDG Update

Regarding the survey responses, Ms. Falcone reported they are starting to look at the responses by demographics, especially regarding how they get their information. The two most common responses were social media and word of mouth. Many people are looking at the Village Green signs also (50%). Gen X gets a lot of information via email. When considering people who don't live in Worthington, many people said it was due to housing availability, then cost and taxes. The biggest takeaway is we're communicating with every generation.

Ms. Sommer reported on the minority focus group that has been scheduled. She reached out to AME Church and she connected with a woman of color who grew up in Worthington and worked in the Schools. She is very connected and helping connect people to the group. It will be held next Tuesday (August 18) 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Ms. Falcone will send out the topics in advance.

Ms. Falcone commented on the visioning and charrettes. Visioning can be done through the mailer and the website. She is concerned about the charrettes and doing them online. They involve going deeper into the issues. She wonders whether we'll simply get the most vocal people. Mr. Sherman questioned whether we'll have enough information otherwise. Ms. Falcone suggested the Committee decide whether and how to hold the charrettes at the next meeting. Mr. Mitchell suggested we might be able to circle back with the stakeholders interviewed at the beginning.

Final Thoughts

Mr. Mitchell commented that it feels like there's a "light at the end of the tunnel" and he thanked the Committee for hanging in and working hard on this. He also thanked Ms. Falcone and City staff.

The meeting adjourned at 7:29 p.m.