

City of Worthington
Community Visioning Committee
Tuesday, September 8, 2020 - 6:00 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

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

Committee Members Absent:

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

Mr. Sherman convened the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

MOTION *Mr. Mottley moved, seconded by Mr. Mitchell to approve the meeting minutes from the Community Visioning Committee meeting of August 24, 2020.*

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Sherman explained that his regular update to City Council will be on September 21st. The Charette visioning workshop is coming up on October 1st. There will be no meeting on the October 26th. The final City Council presentation will be on the 9th of November.

Ms. Corl overviewed the thought process that she went through along with Ms. Falcone and Ms. Findlay to make sure all the principles were focused on being evergreen and do not contain action steps. Action steps are kept specific to the things we are going to do. The content was cleansed to be “we are this” and to consolidate as much as possible. Ms. Findlay explained that she worked to separate things into general overarching principles on how to move forward, and then specific action items that someone in the community is responsible for. We pulled some specific ideas that we did not want to lose from the community that were more in the weeds.

Mr. Cynkar asked about the action items in the table and why we put in the time frame, responsible party, and participating parties. They seem like a requirement and that is not this Committee’s charge. Ms. Falcone replied that as far as a planning process goes, you always want to put in that information, so the next group takes the action item and runs with it. As a consultant, she recommends putting those things in to close the loop. Ms. Sommer voiced that she has the same concerns of Mr. Cynkar and she does not know who the responsible or participating parties would be. Ms. Findlay said she thought that this would be run through the City to see what they could add to the columns. Ms. Abu-Absi asked if this was typical for a visioning document. She worries about setting City folks up for unrealistic expectations considering unpredictable revenues. Ms. Falcone responded that it was included in the initial scope of services. Mr. Mitchell asked if something like providing city-wide internet services was heard enough to be included here. Ms. Findlay explained that it was something we had heard, and the Committee needs to decide if it is something to be included or that can be acted on or not. Mr. Cynkar said he likes the action items and the chart, but suggested having just the action items, and then including an addendum with the chart so Council has a roadmap for implementation. Ms. Corl said these were action items we heard, but there are probably some things that we missed or other things that are not feasible.

Mr. Sherman asked if it the Committee's role to prioritize items. Ms. Stewart shared her thoughts that some of these items will take a lot of discussion. Additionally, officials and staff will have questions about them as well. She was thinking there could be a vision document with statements and principles, but then action items could be handed off to a group to do strategic planning to determine what the next steps are for the plan document to be implemented. Committee members could help with that transition, and we could bring in others educated in those areas to help develop action plans. Mr. Sherman suggested saying "Suggested Action Items from the Community" and that this is what we have heard, and this is the list. Mr. Mitchell said some of the action items can easily be derailed if not couched positively. Ms. Findlay explained how she saw some action items that not everyone would get behind. We say we want more restaurants and entertainment, but there is the question whether people understand that requires more bodies and density to be possible. Throwing the action items out in the charrette would be the place to see what "spaghetti was hitting the wall". Ms. Falcone detailed how the charrette is more about making sure people are ok with the vision statements and principles. Ms. Corl suggested that we want to show a sampling of the things we have heard to illustrate the principles need to start solving things. We need to engage residents in ideation and for them to prioritize from a resident perspective what ideas feel most important and need the City to start prioritizing and aligning with resources. Mr. Mottley mentioned that hopefully we know which action items are likely to have disagreement, and maybe we do want to get them out in front to see if people agree with our formulation of it.

Mr. Mitchell brought up how the City has no authority on electricity. Mr. Mottley explained that the City can go to AEP and influence them even though the City is not the utility. We need improved power service and reliability; people are telling us the power is not reliable. Mr. Cynkar brought up the first vision, he suggested we include the location, quality of life, and not just the schools. This gives too much power to the schools. Mr. Mottley asked if the last item about examining policies through the lens of racial and socioeconomic justice, if that needs to be in the second vision that "Worthington is Welcoming to All". Ms. Findlay expressed that the community does not want diversity to be separate thing, it should be woven throughout the whole vision and not just stuck under one category.

Mr. Mottley suggested adding to third action item of the second vision, Worthington is Welcoming to All", to include policies, practices, and activities. There are specific activities that can be done to increase diversity. We need to be consciously appealing to a broader demographic than we are today. Ms. Corl suggested that there needs to be a new lead in sentence. Mr. Cynkar suggested, "Worthington embraces diversity and that Worthingtonians increasingly come from all parts of the world." Mr. Melchi asked about how much this overlaps with "Worthington is Forward Thinking and Proactive". Mr. Mottley said one is diversity and inclusion, the other is governance. Mr. Melchi asked if we are providing a vision for the government, or if we are providing a vision for neighbors. We are making a recommendation for the government to implement, and he asked how is this different. Mr. Mottley responded that it is a separate part of the vision about how the City governs itself and makes decisions. One is how decisions are made and the other is about what mix of citizenry we want to have or want to feel welcome here. They are very different. Ms. Findlay explained that just weaving diversity through the whole thing would not be enough of an emphasis compared to what we have heard. Mr. Mottley emphasized that it is mistake to water this down and dilute it. Mr. Mitchell described how when looking at this, what does the future look like? It looks like Worthington is diverse. Our baseline right now stinks. There is the question of if we are doing things today that are different than other communities. The results are not there and this is something we need to do differently. Mr. Mottley responded that the City has done everything they can but has not

worked. Mr. Mitchell stated that there is nothing there to make the City accountable. Ms. Burris agreed with Mr. Mitchell that if this is a picture of what we have heard and what they would like to see, they were not saying the City should embrace diversity. They said they want to be diverse and want to know how to get there. Mr. Mitchell asked if we have anything about measuring diversity and being transparent about it. Ms. Falcone brought up one comment about how we measure it is that we see different faces. Mr. Mitchell suggested adding a topic around discourse in the community and division, and how people communicate with each other. Mr. Mottley detailed how we do have the CRC (Community Relations Commission) that is set up to work with this issue, so we should not be overly prescriptive. This will probably be handed to them to make more specific policies and recommendations. Mr. Cynkar discussed the idea to hold a large diversity event because the City does not hold many large events, they are held by other organizations. The idea is to make sure that the events have something that encourages a lot of people to participate and attend. The question is whether we want the city to be in business of holding events or supporting.

For the vision “Worthington Thrives”, Mr. Cynkar asked about prosperity and whether it means high quality of life for all people living here. Mr. Mottley suggested high quality of life and standard of living. Mr. Cynkar suggested that the character of the City could be added into why people come to Worthington. Mr. Mottley brought up that we we heard through the non-profit and civic group focus group that a lot of our organizations do not communicate well. Mr. Cynkar asked do we want to examine policies in place to make Worthington a better place for economic development or encourages economic development? Ms. Findlay expressed how this was a place we heard a lot of conflict, and the only thing we did hear was that we need to look at zoning. She is not sure we heard that we need to rezone for a lot more development. There are a lot of people concerned about density and development. Ms. Stewart described how the City has a sense of how our zoning code compares to other communities. But the question of where our community wants to be with our zoning code, she is not sure if that is totally clear. Ms. Falcone noted how economic development is hot button topic with people saying that it is not working, and we need to look at it again. The comprehensive plan is what is in place to guide future land use. Zoning guides what is wanted with the land use. Ms. Stewart expressed that if we can get consensus around the type of development people want, you can then look to see if your policies and regulations can get you there, or if they need to be updated or changed. Ms. Findlay expressed there are a significant amount of people that are not agreeing with us being hugely business friendly. We must find a way to say to Council that they need to lead us through this conversation through a new comprehensive plan if possible. Mr. Melchi conveyed how the comprehensive plan is a road map for the government and the zoning is part of the comprehensive plan for implementation. We are telling the City to do all sorts of things with land. We are telling the City the comprehensive plan needs to be updated and that process needs to be engaging and reflective of where we want to go and of the citizenry. Ideally, a comprehensive plan is then updated every 5-10 years thereafter but does not always happen with resource restrictions. Mr. Mitchell recommended that we have an action item that recaps what we have heard which is that lots of people have said our zoning is bad. The action will be to restart the comprehensive plan process.

Mr. Cynkar expressed how the vision that “Worthington is Natural and Sustainable”, is the perfect example of the what and how, exemplifying what we are trying to promote here. Ms. Findlay suggested wordsmithing the pool situation. Mr. Cynkar suggested adding language about collaborating between the school district, the pool board, and City to resolve the pool situation. People really miss the pool; it needs to be settled one way or another. The history of Worthington has been that the school district and other

parties have figured out a solution for high profile properties in the district. Mr. Mitchell conveyed how this is just setting this as a priority for the City. There are a number of steps to that will need to occur to including a property tax levy if a joint recreation district is pursued to address the pool.

Mr. Mitchell asked about the point about providing a better community policing model. Ms. Falcone replied that came out of the diversity focus groups. Mr. Cynkar said that came out during the time of the protests, and he does not think it belongs. Mr. Sherman agreed we need to stay away from this. Ms. Stewart explained how the City has hired a facilitator to have conversations in the community and it could be possible to tie the action statement to their report. Ms. Burris brought up the older boomers focus group where the woman from Europe talked about police walking the streets and bicycling on the bike path which were neat ideas that were positive. She did not sound satisfied with the way things are now. Mr. Mottley suggested adding something about a framework to discuss resident petitions with a timeframe, process, and protocol to have discussion.

For the vision that "Worthington is Mobile and Interconnected", Ms. Stewart stated that she was interested in the reaction to the principles about the sidewalks. There was a battle on Crandall a few years ago, where some people wanted sidewalks and others liked their yards without sidewalks. There are some people who do not want sidewalks. Mr. Cynkar expressed how he heard people talk about how they wanted sidewalks to be continuous. Ms. Abu-Absi talked about the Crandall sidewalk debate and how people were active and involved. She wondered if we did 100% walkability with sidewalks, or should we strive to achieve improved walkability. We could take out some absolutes but still reflect what was heard from some folks. It is both a cost issue upfront and some people not wanting to deal with the maintenance.

Ms. Falcone explained how the mailer is going out this week and there is a tile on the website directing people to the draft visions and charrette registration. The Committee's next meeting is the charrette on October 1st.

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.