

SPECIAL MEETING CITY COUNCIL  
November 4, 2021

The City Council of the City of Albemarle met in a special session focusing on strategic budget planning on Thursday, November 4th at 4:00 p.m. in the Stanly County Senior Center. Mayor Ronnie Michael and the following Councilmembers were present, to-wit: Mayor Pro Tem Martha Sue Hall and Councilmembers Martha E. Hughes, Dexter Townsend, Christopher Whitley, Shirley D. Lowder, Benton Dry, and Bill Aldridge.

Also present were the following City of Albemarle staff:

- Michael J. Ferris – City Manager
- Britt A. Burch – City Attorney
- Cindy Stone – Clerk/Assistant to the City Manager
- Keith Tunnell – Economic Development Director
- Chief T. Pierre Brewton – Fire Department
- Jacob Weavil – Finance Department Director
- Kimber Hurlocker– Assistant Director Finance Department
- Dana Chaney – Human Resources Department Director
- Owen Squires – Information Systems Department Director
- Lisa Kiser – Parks and Recreation Department Director
- Kevin Robinson – Planning and Development Services Director
- Chief Jason Bollhorst – Police Department
- Judy Redwine – Public Utilities Department Director
- Dan Worl – Public Utilities Department Assistant Director
- Ross Holshouser – Public Works Department Director

Facilitating the session or presenting were:

- Geraldine Gardner – Executive Director, Centralina Regional Council
- Emily Parker – Senior Planner, Centralina Regional Council
- Nina Barrett – GAME Coordinator, Centralina Regional Council

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The Mayor called the meeting to order.

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**Introduction and Meeting Overview**

City Manager Michael J. Ferris opened the session by welcoming everyone and briefly summarizing the intent of the meeting. This strategic planning session is a continuation of the work begun in Fall 2019. Tonight the goal is to connect the priority areas selected by Council in the previous fiscal year with the City’s adopted vision and mission statements in order to set some goals.

Emily Parker from Centralina Regional Council (CRC) began with an overview of the agenda, a summary of how the meeting would proceed, and went over ground rules review. She introduced Nina Barrett, a new member of the CRC team.

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The CRC team moderated an icebreaker activity with Council members, asking them to share what they are thankful for or what they think is something good or positive.

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### **Strategic Planning Overview/Goal Setting Phase Overview**

Geraldine Gardner walked the group through the previous phases of the strategic planning process that began in fall 2019: developing priority areas, conducting the community survey, creating the vision and mission statements, and now aligning all of these elements into goals.

For this budget year, the strategic planning/goal making process will occur this fall compressing the budget specific part of the process in early 2022 (January/February). The objective for the next few sessions is to have Council finalize and endorse goals that align with the City's vision and mission and priority areas.

The CRC team has been working with the City's Leadership Team to take the City's mission, vision, and the priority areas and align them into goals. The strategic planning process this fall will work with the mission and vision to develop goals, which will elicit strategies that will inform tactics in order to monitor growth year by year.

The recent process in goals creation involved a steering committee comprised of representatives of Council and the Leadership team, and the Leadership Team. A survey was administered and CRC went through the results first with the steering committee then the Leadership Team to obtain input and feedback. Those results are being shared with Council tonight.

To build the goals, the priority areas were aligned with the mission and vision, community survey results and steering committee/Leadership Team input and combined. Leadership Team members were split into groups each one to take on creating a goal.

### **Presentation: Leadership Team – Proposed Goals**

Ms. Gardner introduced this section of the meeting by recapping the process the Leadership Team used in order to obtain proposed goals to be presented tonight.

Members of the Leadership Team were divided to take on the process of evaluating a priority area in order to develop it into a proposed goal. The criteria they used to assess priority areas and proposed goals include: Is the goal clear? Is it attainable? Is it specific enough so that it could be done in a year? Can progress be measured?

Overall, the resulting proposed goals were considered to be aligned with the vision but usually needed tweaking of language in most cases. The goal teams then came to present their proposed goal and report out their process.

Proposed Goal 1 – Talent Compensation Management/**Organizational Capacity** –

Team: Jacob Weavil, Kimber Hurlocker, Kevin Robinson

The team discussed their process to obtain their proposed goal. In using the criteria for assessment, the team thought that the priority area language was too specific, and did not stretch the City's capacity to help City employees provide the tools they need to maximize their performance in their positions. They combined priority areas of talent compensation management and organizational capacity into this new goal of "organizational capacity" in order to give the goal more breadth and to align better with the mission/vision and the results of the community survey.

The team then summarized measurements of progress in this goal area. Measurement methods included: quarterly internal surveys of departments; monthly Leadership Team meetings with real-time feedback; skills and performance evaluations via NeoGov; achievement of certifications associated with job responsibilities; annual salary studies; and monitoring of turnover rates and feedback via exit interviews, among others.

Proposed Goal 2 – **Safety and Security** –

Team: Michael J. Ferris, Pierre Brewton, Jason Bollhorst

This team thought that this was a solid goal, and one that still is a basic need for any jurisdiction. The consensus of the team was that ambiguous wording needed to be replaced to be more specific. Their assessment was that this was an opportunity to make a stronger connection to the vision statement. They used the community survey feedback to help craft the new goal language. In particular, they exchanged "advance" for "enhance" in the new goal statement to specify improvement rather than just moving forward. They also added "in order to improve quality of life" to make a stronger connection to the vision statement.

The team then summarized measurements of progress in this goal area. Measurement methods included: improved fire department response times; reduction in crime rates through data analysis; dilapidated structures demolished/code issues resolved; LED lighting installation in neighborhoods/high crime areas/high traffic areas; and critical incident response training for all City of Albemarle employees, among others.

Proposed Goal 3: **Infrastructure** –

Team: Lisa Kiser and Ross Holshouser

This team thought that the term "infrastructure" was general and should be broken down into "external" such as buildings, roads, water/sewer lines, electrical grid, etc., as well as

“internal”, which could be IT network and enterprise operating systems. Their overall sense was that this is a good goal, but wanted to clarify the goal statement with less ambiguous language, particularly “quality service delivery.” They changed the less specific service delivery language to “reliable and consistent service delivery” because they noted that the City needs to meet the needs of a growing and thriving community. They tied in community survey results that underscored a high interest in continued investment in infrastructure.

The team then summarized measurements of progress in this goal area. Measurement methods included: increased funding for both external and internal infrastructure; develop and implement the stormwater management plan; decrease service interruption times; and increase capacity of all infrastructure systems to manage growth.

#### Proposed Goal 4: Community and Economic Development/**Community and Economic Growth Opportunities** –

Team: Keith Tunnell and Owen Squires

Overall, this team thought that the goal aligned with the vision statement. There are two different concepts in this goal area: economic development and community appearance. The new goal should help the City ensure that managing and balancing growth is for the benefit of Albemarle residents. They also thought that there should be a shift away from assets and appearance towards more expansive economic opportunity. The new goal language would align with the vision statement and would take into account that economic development was ranked highest in the community survey of services to improve.

The team then summarized measurements of progress in this goal area. Measurement methods included: annualized investment and job creation statistics; surveying new and existing businesses to measure training programs and educational successes; capacity for internal services to quickly respond to new development; and development of a responsive and comprehensive plan that assures utilities and services can meet and exceed demand, among others.

#### Proposed Goal 5: Multigenerational Engagement/**Inclusive Community Engagement** –

Team: Dana Chaney and Dan Worl

This team reported that initial feedback told them that the original goal language was too narrow and generic and not broad enough to cover more diversity than just multiple generations. By changing the goal to be “Inclusive Community Engagement” the team thought it aligned with the vision statement and the community survey, where 81% of respondents felt that diversity of businesses and services was average to poor.

The team then summarized measurements of progress in this goal area. Measurement methods included: offering high quality, inclusive downtown events; collecting ratings from a variety of types of surveys; statistics on use of amenities; evaluate demographics of traffic to City website;

establish goals to improve engagement of particular demographics that may not currently be engaged; and increase diversity of businesses in downtown to meet residents' daily needs.

### **Pre-Dinner Council Goals Assessment Exercise**

After the teams' report out the CRC team requested that Council members participate in a goal assessment exercise that resembles the one the Leadership Team went through. CRC requested that Council members assess the new proposed goals using the same criteria the Leadership Team used.

Council members counted off and worked in groups with Leadership team members to evaluate the new proposed goals/goal statements.

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There was a short dinner break.

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### **Council Goal Exercise - Report Out and Discussion**

The CRC team asked Council if there were any concerns they had which came up as a result of their assessments.

Goal 1: Define "invest" – is it training for personnel? Performance appraisals need to be workable, attainable, and understood by employees.

Goal 2: Define "enhance" resources." The team was trying to convey that the City needs the tools and resources to be able to attain the proposed goal and align with the vision statement. Maybe the City could define strategies to paint clearer picture for the public. This goal needs to be an area where the City always tries to excel. Is the police CALEA accreditation missing in here?

Goal 3: There seems to be a perceived imbalance in what residents want versus what they are willing to pay. A discussion ensued about how infrastructure is a "hard sell" to the public. The group thought that it would be important to underscore the "why" with residents.

Goal 4: There is a sense among some Council members as to the appropriateness of the word "guide" in the new goal statement. Council tossed around other words such as "manage", "facilitate", "align", and "ensure." CRC flagged this for further discussion in the next session.

Goal 5: This concept was well received. Council liked the fact that the City would be expanding our engagement beyond "multi-generations" to include many other types of groups.

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### **Wrap Up and Next Steps**

Ms. Gardner noted the following were the next steps in the strategic planning process for this budget season:

- Distribute survey to steering committee and Leadership Team next week to seek input for strategies development. That feedback/input process should be complete before Thanksgiving.
- The steering committee is due to meet November 30<sup>th</sup> to view the results and discuss them in order to develop metrics. At that meeting, there also will be a discussion about monitoring performance for goals.
- The Leadership Team will go through this process in December.
- For the December 13<sup>th</sup> strategic planning session, the Leadership Team will give their presentation of strategies for Council endorsement.

Mr. Ferris thanked everyone for participating tonight and reminded the group that this is the “big picture” thinking which is critical to look up and ahead to budget season.

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Upon a motion by Councilmember Hughes, seconded by Councilmember Dry and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned until Monday, November 15, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. in Council Chambers of City Hall.