

City of Worthington

Community Visioning Committee

Monday, November 25, 2019 - 6:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.

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

Committee members Present: Joe Sherman, Don Mottley, Austin Mitchell, Paul Cynkar, Matthew Lees, Kathryn Burris, Graham Wood, Jon Melchi, Laura Abu-Absi, Cynthia Findlay, Jack Miner, Beth Sommer

Committee members Absent: Linda Mercadante

Others Present: Assistant City Manager Robyn Stewart, Management Assistant Ethan Barnhardt, Lauren Falcone (on conference line) and 2 visitors were in attendance

Mr. Sherman convened the meeting at 6:07 p.m.

Mr. Sherman welcomed the guests to the Visioning Committee meeting. He overviewed his presentation to the City Council about the past two Visioning Committee meetings with a focus on the Bang the Table software and the standard overview speech they are working on. He noted how Councilmember Myers asked if all of the Committee was engaged in the process and he responded that all of the Committee was very engaged. He spent most of his time going over the communications plan and how it is their roadmap and how they will report to the City Council. He brought up how Councilmember Kowalczyk had a few questions about whether the Committee was still doing the interviews and how the Committee will develop questions to gather feedback. He noted how her emphasis is Age Friendly and he explained that they will engage with Poggemeyer and include Age Friendly questions. It was a very good conversation with Council, and he looks forward to doing the next one.

Ms. Sommer asked if Councilmember Kowalczyk commented on which questions were Age Friendly. Mr. Miner brought up how Councilmember Kowalczyk had given out a packet of information that he passed on to Ms. Falcone. He explained that there is an Age Friendly consortium across the country with information about how to become an Age Friendly community. That includes assessment tools and based on the issues and demographics in the City, it is likely that we will have those questions come up anyways.

Ms. Abu-Absi said that things that are deemed to be Age Friendly features in a community are desirable such as walkability and transportation. There may be overlap with the quality of life issues they may want to talk about.

Ms. Falcone added housing as an issue for Age Friendly. She wondered if Councilmember Kowalczyk wanted questions for the key persons or stakeholder interviews. Mr. Sherman replied his impression was for both. He asked that Ms. Falcone distribute the Age Friendly information from Councilmember Kowalczyk.

Mr. Miner announced that he has accepted a new role as Vice Provost at University of Cincinnati. They are keeping their home here and he has a condo in Cincinnati. Part of the conversation has been to shed some of his Central Ohio commitments, and he will be stepping down after this meeting. This was not something he knew when he joined the Visioning Committee, but someone came knocking and he could not turn it down. He said he was going to continue as secretary of McConnell Arts Center board.

Mr. Sherman said this is an interesting scenario since Mr. Miner has served as the Vice Chair. He asked if there are any volunteers that would like to step into the Vice Chair's role. Mr. Mitchell said that he would volunteer.

MOTION

Mr. Cynkar moved, seconded by Mr. Mottley to close nominations for the office of Vice Chair and declare Austin Mitchell the Vice Chair.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Falcone asked if Council had responded about how to fill in the seat. Ms. Stewart said they would not be prepared to respond until after the next Council meeting after having the chance to discuss in executive session. Any appointment would then be made in public.

Mr. Sherman discussed how Chris Boring's presentation had a lot of data and he asked if there was anything that the Committee wanted to follow up on.

Mr. Cynkar said the age demographics really surprised him, particularly the under 18 age group and the 65 and over age group. He was really interested in the 18-44 age group. It makes him think about the age groups to target. To him, it leads him to types of housing, types of restaurants, why some restaurants may not want to come to Worthington. That is important data moving forwards.

Ms. Sommer questioned if that information is something important to put in Bang the Table.

Mr. Sherman responded that it is a great point. He asked how we put this together and cause a person to want to engage. He noted how Mr. Boring is willing to come back when we get deeper in this.

Mr. Melchi noted that Mr. Boring's data showed the Anthem Building filled which skewed the data.

Mr. Mitchell brought up how Mr. Melchi asked about getting the raw data and that is something he is interested in seeing.

Ms. Findlay said a couple people asked Mr. Boring questions and she wondered if we needed to re-ask him those questions.

Mr. Mitchell said he recalled asking about some of the trends in the numbers and whether things have been evolving in one particular way or another.

Ms. Findlay brought up how she asked about Worthington's population and what happens if we choose not to become denser and whether that says anything to our future.

Mr. Sherman asked to have Committee members send him their questions for following-up on.

Mr. Melchi said he is interested in total breakdown of employers instead of having a bucket of private employers. Mr. Boring's numbers did not have anything on public employees in the city limits.

Mr. Cynkar asked if anyone was surprised about the crime rate in Worthington being higher. He thinks that we view this as a very safe community, but crime is higher than our peer groups. Ms. Sommer said she did not know if that included the UMCH population. Ms. Abu-Absi said the numbers were from 2017 after UMCH closed.

Ms. Abu-Absi said all these things will make interesting fast facts for Bang the Table.

Mr. Mitchell said Mr. Boring was willing to do a deeper dive in other topics, he asked what the committee wants to dive into.

Ms. Abu-Absi brought up housing options now and what we do or do not have compared to other communities. Mr. Mottley said there is a Census of Housing that could have a lot of that data.

Mr. Mitchell suggested sending out themes that we want to follow-up on.

Mr. Lees explained how members of the Committee and staff did a training with Bang the Table on how the backend works. We have visionworthington.org for the URL and it is up and running. We want to monitor the number of people with access on the backend of the system. He suggested anyone in the organization should use their real names and not be anonymous. We will be able to put in frequently asked questions, upload documents, latest news, and utilize a number of other tools.

Mr. Lees demoed the website to the committee showcasing how it allows a lot of interaction.

Ms. Abu-Absi questioned how the fast facts might be put on the website and lead to the other tools. Mr. Lees said that is something that needs to be discussed as far as data collection through the website. In his estimate there is the communication component of this to push information out, but we do not have a data collection strategy yet.

Mr. Sherman noted how the training had a lot of content and the video of that should be pushed out to the committee. They showed different demos of other cities utilizing the tools. Ms. Findlay said there were a lot of community visioning resources that were out there showing best practices. The Committee may want to look at those. Mr. Sherman said this tool will be really beneficial and very good for the community.

Mr. Lees drew out a chart for the elements that we want to see including: Design, Communications/Information, Engagement/Data, Data Analytics, and Response. He asked Committee members to think about those categories and think about how they may want to get engaged.

He explained how we will need help from a graphic designer with Poggemeyer for banners and graphic designs. Information includes FAQ, fast facts, etc. Engagement is the data collection piece and how we are using the tools and the information we are collecting through it. Data analytics entails what we are learning from the data coming in and how are we feeding it back to the community. Response is what are we doing with the information that is being provided to us. This is what keeps this effort vibrant and interactive. What can we do as a committee and what do we need to ask Poggemeyer and staff to take on?

Mr. Sherman asked Ms. Falcone if there is a model that has been used going forward. Ms. Falcone said the Committee could rely on Poggemeyer for design work. Mr. Sherman said this is such a huge mountain and he asked if there a bucket that Poggemeyer typically manages so the committee can see how to delegate responsibilities. Mr. Lees said he would send Ms. Falcone the areas and she can react to what they will do.

Mr. Miner said in the short term there is a lot of copy that needs to be written and we will need volunteers to write around certain topic areas determined by the committee. Subgroups can monitor these different areas.

Mr. Lees said it would be great to have leads that have a weekly meeting to look at where we are from an engagement perspective for the website. To be successful it needs to be continually updated and dynamic.

Mr. Mitchell asked if there was any part that is community member to community member. Mr. Lees said that there are open forums that can have interactive conversations. They suggested when conducting in-person event to get data, the data collected should be moved to the website as well.

Mr. Cynkar asked about the data analytics piece. Mr. Lees said that is people looking at the data. Mr. Cynkar asked if the site could produce a scorecard to show what has been accomplished. Mr. Lees said on the backend it shows that information, such as who has visited, registered, etc. We will ask people to register so we can see their involvement across the entire site. If they want to be anonymous they can be in public, but they are not anonymous to us. We can ask about their relationship to the City such as if they live, work, or send a child to the schools. There is the question if we want people who do not live in the City responding.

Mr. Melchi said this is City owned and a public record. He asked how this works if someone says bad things and if we have the ability to delete those comments. What are the parameters around what we can and cannot do. Mr. Lees responded that Bang the Table has a policy to not allow identification of a person in comments. It is an automated review. Profanity is immediately removed. Ms. Findlay said Bang the Table has specific moderating advice best practices.

Ms. Stewart brought up that the Committee could have Anne Brown come in to speak about the City's policies regarding those types of things. Mr. Sherman asked if she could come in on December 10.

Ms. Sommer asked if Bang the Table would allow someone to say something such as... "The City Manager..." Mr. Lees said that is the conversation we need to have.

Mr. Wood said we need to come up with a policy, it is important so we can act if it happens. He asked if they have a tool that will flag certain terms for a moderator's attention. Mr. Lees suggested starting with Bang the Table's policies and then looking deeper into them.

Mr. Mottley asked about public records for social media being deleted. Ms. Stewart explained how the City archives social media records that are deleted. We need to have a conversation about archiving with this tool.

Mr. Mitchell asked if there are any features from Bang the Table the City would leverage for other issues. Mr. Sherman said that initially it was decided it would only be used for visioning. Mr. Mottley said if it is positively received he could see the City using it after this work is done.

Mr. Melchi asked if they gave an idea of how many participants is a good number. Mr. Lees said they punted on that question; it depends on the community and their initiatives. They did not give a good percentage.

Mr. Sherman said that he is struggling with personally how we get our heads around this. He suggested Lauren send out a list of best practices. He asked the Committee to look at what other communities have done and be ready to talk on the 10th. We have to understand what we want to present to the community to begin with.

Mr. Lees asked when we would see the public input plan from Poggemeyer. Ms. Falcone said she wanted it to be discussed on December 10. The plan will talk about focus groups, charettes, etc. It will spell everything out a little bit better.

Mr. Sherman said the message to Council is to say what their strategy is and how they are going to do this. It is a tough time of the year, but everyone should come together on the 10th and know who wants to step up and take on responsibilities.

Mr. Wood asked if it is okay to create smaller committees. Committee members indicated they may want to organize into smaller teams to manage certain aspects of the process, for example three or four members may agree to take the lead on a particular initiative.

Ms. Findlay brought up bringing together a working team and if they should get together before the 10th to get moving on the basic communications piece of this. Mr. Lees said they need to have a quick follow-up for engagement opportunities. Ms. Findlay said she would like to get started on the content.

Mr. Lees asked who would be interested in writing content. Ms. Abu-Absi, Mr. Cynkar, Ms. Findlay, and Mr. Wood expressed their interest.

Mr. Wood asked about the specific way to manage on the back end of the website. Mr. Lees said that had to be figured out; we need to decide if we want everyone to go into the back end. Eventually everyone should be able to get into there, but if we do that you should be trained on how to do it. The administrator level can do everything, or you can be given access just to specific projects.

Mr. Mitchell asked if the videos could be posted there. Mr. Lees said yes.

Mr. Sherman asked if Mr. Lees was comfortable on the final communications plan. Mr. Lees said his goal would be to get something launched that was at least informational. He did not know if there would be any engagement pieces. Mr. Sherman said the goal is to make sure we are comfortable with the launch. If that means January, then it means January. He talked with Nina Parini with the Old Worthington Partnership and she said they could get into the Farmers Market at any time.

Ms. Sommer explained how she does not want to people to see our website and react negatively because there is no information on it. That it affects our reputation. We are still having people coming in front of us and we are still learning. Poggemeyer has not summarized all the documents yet.

Mr. Cynkar explained how the Chamber of Commerce has four events and they would like to have the committee participate. They have the Groundhog Day presentations on February 4, they conduct Eggs and Issues quarterly, the City comes once a month for Coffee & Conversations, and there is the annual meeting in February. They have offered any of these venues for anyone from the Visioning Committee to come in and communicate. Mr. Sherman asked for Mr. Cynkar to distribute all those dates.

Mr. Sherman said to take December off the table. At the January 14 meeting Committee members should come prepare to say what they are wanting to do. January can be looked at for a kickoff at the Farmers Market. He went on to explain how he sees the postcards as dynamic tools not printed once but done on a quarterly basis. He is in favor of making January 14 be the kickoff.

Ms. Sommer questioned if our audience is bigger than Worthington and includes people with kids in school district which is a bigger reach and geographic area.

Mr. Lees explained how he questions if we need the input of people in the surrounding area.

Ms. Findlay responded that you cannot exclude the school district and we are importing people who come here for employment. The school district plays a huge role in people's identities and why they move here.

Ms. Abu-Absi stated that if we need to filter out non-residents, we can.

Mr. Lees said that if we are trying to get feedback on schools, we will need to market outside of the City. The question we need to answer is if we want to drive input from outside of the community.

Mr. Mottley said there are different ways of being a resident of Worthington, such as someone who lives here versus works and/or shops here. There is a difference between welcoming the input versus driving the input from nonresidents.

Mr. Miner brought up that we may see insular trends, maybe a demographic we are not seeing. Is there a point where we need to go someplace to do a focus group for people who never engage with Worthington.

Mr. Sherman said that plays into engagement sections and how do you manage that opportunity.

Mr. Lees asked if Mr. Sherman wanted to submit the ThisWeek News column in December or shift it back to January. Mr. Sherman said it is supposed to be generic and he has rough draft written.

Mr. Miner explained how people already know we are operating and there is a point people want engagement from us to remind them this is happening. This article can be a way to buy us some time. There are things you can do to keep things moving along.

Mr. Wood asked how many times we would have an opportunity to do an article. We can reach a large audience through this communication. Putting information about Bang the Table in that article would be driver of people there. He worries about using that opportunity without some place to send people.

Mr. Lees said he thinks we can do the column in December and then do press releases in January and have them write stories about the website. Maybe there could be another article in the March timeframe.

Mr. Sherman said he would like to see a quarterly update in the ThisWeek News. He expressed how he would like to put the communications plan in Council's agenda packet for the December 9 meeting.

Mr. Lees responded he would update the plan. He then asked if everyone was able to look at the Facebook sites they are members of. If they have not, he asked that committee members send that information to him before Thanksgiving.

Ms. Falcone discussed the banner designs with the committee's logo.

Ms. Sommer expressed how she wants it to have a call of action on it.

Ms. Burris suggested removing "Tradition Meets Tomorrow" and adding language with an action statement.

Mr. Sherman suggested "What's YOUR vision?"

Mr. Mitchell suggested "Share your vision"

Mr. Sherman described a dollar chip idea to help drive traffic. We will need to come up with a budget for something like that.

Mr. Wood suggested instead of slash adding an arrow pointing to the link. Share YOUR vision → www.visionworthington.org

Ms. Falcone said she would make the changes and send it back out to the committee. She then explained how for the postcard, the general consensus was that it is too wordy.

Mr. Cynkar brought up how during the election there were many colored, glossy postcards sent out and there was some pushback. He did not know if this would connect to that. Mail was one of the biggest ways to campaign and was viewed as that people were spending more money to print them. Ms. Falcone said they will be doing printing in-house. Mr. Miner said that like it or not, someone is going to pay attention to a color postcard.

Ms. Sommer said under the Get Involved section, she wants it to say if someone does not have time to come to meetings, to then direct them to Bang the Table to express their opinion. She also thinks we need to say that the Visioning Committee meets twice a month at the Municipal Building. She asked about the meals and the tours and who would be doing that. Ms. Falcone responded that meals were discussed initially as part of the scope and the costs are not part of the contract. A restaurant would have to donate for that. We can do something downtown where people bring their own food. If it is confusing or misleading, it can be taken out.

Mr. Lees said the question is the purpose of the postcard. Ms. Sommer explained that it should drive input to the website. Mr. Melchi said you probably have ten seconds with the piece for someone to look over it. It should have a couple bullet points and the website address.

Mr. Wood said it should keep the headers but have fewer pictures and less text.

Ms. Falcone said she would update the pictures, the email address, and remove Mr. Miner's name as Vice Chair.

Mr. Sherman asked Mr. Wood to jot some ideas down for the postcard "buckets" to send to Ms. Falcone.

Mr. Lees said the questions at the top of the postcard served as a way to connect to people and he accepts the feedback that they are too specific. The hook needs to be something other than visioning and should be more personal. Mr. Mitchell suggested something about what you want your community to look like in fifteen years.

Mr. Graham asked if we want to put out points that are specific, because people with a viewpoint on an issue may engagement more quickly.

Mr. Mitchell expressed that the questions deal with the polarizing issues in the community. With what we are trying to accomplish, we should try to stay above it all.

Mr. Wood said he would write on top of this template and give specific comments.

Ms. Falcone said the postcard will be 6X9 and she likes the idea of producing them quarterly to give more information and update people more often. It will be glossy and good looking and she hopes people do not toss it.

Mr. Sherman said the events will take care of themselves In January. We need to start thinking about the interviews. Visioning Committee members interview the individual council members and the Visioning Committee applicants. Poggemeyer will do the consultant interviews. He thinks we could take this to 100 people if it is what we want to do. That gets back to the time commitment and number of questions.

Mr. Cynkar said that committee members were asked to name people and he thinks they should be added. There is nothing that says these interviews need to be face to face.

Ms. Sommer asked if they should be one on one or two on one interviews.

Mr. Miner said these were the community leaders that we want to spend time with, one on one for an hour. If Visioning Committee members are doing it themselves, there can be value in two on one to help guard against biases. We are still going to end up doing something like Survey Monkey later.

Mr. Melchi said if we do a broad survey, we could use a tool like Survey Monkey with specific questions and can collect info without 100 interviews.

Mr. Mottley said part of this is to inform and see what is put in those later tools.

Mr. Melchi suggested Councilmembers should not be interviewed by the person that appointed them.

Mr. Sherman said that the nature of the questions is important. Mr. Mitchell asked if we would be working with a template. Mr. Cynkar said that being consistent with questions would be valuable for the key persons.

Mr. Sherman asked what we want out of the stakeholder interviews. Mr. Miner expressed how with this group of people you will have a little more safety asking open ended questions. This is the group where you can ask the 10,000 foot level questions about the community. Those folks will have a response ready. What we get out of it is data to help see what a focus group looks like.

Ms. Falcone said the key person interviews are like a focus group.

Mr. Miner suggested we might want to have some committee members work together with Poggemeyer to develop the questions. Ms. Falcone remarked how she has some questions they can use. Mr. Sherman asked Ms. Falcone to provide information about the purpose of this and the types of questions.

Mr. Cynkar said one of the goals is that we would talk with 80% of Worthington. He asked if there is some way to hand out a business card or something with information. Mr. Mitchell said that adds to the tally of making a connection. We can use that to track people we contact. Mr. Sherman said it is a good idea that should be considered. Ms. Falcone concurred that giving them something business card size is a great idea. Mr. Sherman asked Mr. Cynkar to look into the idea.

Mr. Cynkar said he will put something together and he expressed how he would like to work on developing questions for stakeholders.

Mr. Melchi suggested putting a spreadsheet out on OneDrive listing the responsibilities people would like to volunteer for.

MOTION

Mr. Mottley moved, seconded by Mr. Melchi to approve the meeting minutes from the Community Visioning Committee meeting of November 12, 2019.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Falcone said she wants to talk about the public input plan and Bang the Table at the December 10 meeting. Mr. Sherman asked Ms. Falcone to put the draft agenda out to the group. Mr. Mottley asked to extend the meeting on December 10 to 8:30pm since there is only one meeting in December. Mr. Sherman agreed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.