

**City of Worthington**

**Community Visioning Committee**

**Monday, February 24, 2020 - 6:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.**

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

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

Committee Members on Conference Line:

Committee Members Absent:

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

**Mr. Sherman convened the meeting at 6:05 p.m.**

**MOTION**

*Mr. Mottley moved, seconded by Mr. Melchi to approve the meeting minutes from the Community Visioning Committee meeting of February 11, 2020.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

*Mr. Sherman apologized, he has been out of town and has just got started on working on the tee shirts. He will have an answer on those in the next couple of days. He presented the idea of expanding the order to 25-30 shirts. Ms. Burris said it is very important to have something identifying committee members as they are out in the community.*

*Ms. Burris explained how she now has over 1,000 postcards that arrived at her home recently along with the plastic stands. She brought up that it may make sense to put the post cards in a central location. Mr. Cynkar noted how having a meeting in a box is a good idea and we could store the post cards along with that, possibly at City Hall.*

*Ms. Burris said her intentions are to work with Ms. Stewart to distribute the post cards in City buildings and then other public places afterwards. She brought up how the poll on the website asks how someone learned about visioning process and the post card selection is currently at zero. She thinks when people read that, they are thinking of a mailed post card and maybe the terminology could be changed to brochure or something like that.*

*Mr. Lees brought up how there was a good article in the ThisWeek News featuring Mr. Sherman talking about the visioning process. He encouraged committee members to share that article on their personal social media pages. There have been some extra registrations from sharing on social media.*

*Ms. Brown said that she is just about finished with the mailed newsletter that will go to the printer in the next couple days. It will include information about the March 30<sup>th</sup> SOAR in-person event. That should arrive mid-month in people's homes. She has also shared information on the City's social media.*

*Mr. Barnhardt gave an update on the website statistics, noting how there has been strong registration and use of the interactive features.*

*Mr. Lees explained how our registrants will be the most engaged participants. He discussed how committee members need to engage and acknowledge citizen comments on the website. We have received graphics from Poggemeyer, and we will be able to use social media cards to help promote initiatives by the committee. He detailed how we are continuing to maintain new content on the website and working to make sure that content is refreshed. There is a regular working group meeting on the phone to discuss logistics for the site which has been going well.*

*Ms. Findlay asked whether it is advisable to seed discussions on the forums. Mr. Lees responded that we need to figure out what we are pushing things and when we need specific feedback on something. We can push conversations to the website.*

*Mr. Sherman asked if there is a way to follow up on folks who have visited the website. Mr. Lees replied that he will send out a newsletter welcoming them to the website and letting them know about the in-person SOAR event on March 30<sup>th</sup>.*

*Ms. Burris thanked Mr. Lees for all of his work, pointing out that the website is really nice and easy to use. She did notice in one discussion where someone talked about shuttles and made a tongue in cheek comment about "New Worthington." We need to be sensitive to how people feel who are not part of what is traditionally thought of as being right here in Worthington.*

*Mr. Lees presented that there need to be new committee members "Listening" on the website in March. Mr. Mitchell, Ms. Corl, and Ms. Burris volunteered.*

*Ms. Abu-Absi referred to some comments made on the Worthington Alert page recently. She explained how she likes to do a quick gut check before posting something online and stated that having a second set of eyes before responding can be helpful. Mr. Lees said the goal is to be neutral in every instance possible. It is best to acknowledge comments and then encourage moving the discussion to the visioning website. It is best to use facts, not opinions as much as possible. Mr. Lees and Mr. Sherman offered to serve as a second set of eyes to anyone responding to comments online.*

*Mr. Mitchell asked if we want to leave a comment from a committee member every time someone posts something on the website. Mr. Lees replied that we want at least an acknowledgement that we are listening and hearing comments that are being made.*

*Ms. Abu-Absi wondered if the committee is going to make a point to capture what is offered on the forums and discuss it in the SOAR event or demonstrate some additional follow-up when people post on forums. She asked if there should there be a forum thread specifically on what we want covered at the SOAR event. Ms. Corl said she thinks it is the other way around. Other sites have the street team says and posts in-person feed back on the forum. It is about taking what we are hearing and building a circle. Mr. Lees said that can generate discussion and is a perfect way of using a forum. There have to be strategic ways to use the website because we cannot push people all the time.*

*Mr. Cynkar gave an update on the Speakers Bureau. He brought up that the business cards have been delivered. He has been approached about doing several speaking engagements including the Worthington Lions Club and a group that meets at the Episcopal Church. He feels like for the people who wants to do presentations, there ought to be a short meeting to go through the PowerPoint, and have people add to it. That way we can make sure we are all on the same page and helping each other grow. Along with the meeting in a box, there should not be major preparation for anybody going out doing presentations.*

*Ms. Burris said that goes back to needing to have laptops or tablets to show the PowerPoint on. Mr. Cynkar said we will need to have a way to do presentations with PowerPoint and without PowerPoint. A short talk may be easier to do without PowerPoint slides.*

*Mr. Cynkar asked if the City would keep a master calendar. Ms. Stewart said that there is a calendar on OneDrive, and anyone can update that.*

*Mr. Sherman asked if we have a targeted list of people we are looking to go after. Mr. Cynkar said there was a list, but it needs to be formalized.*

*Ms. Sommer explained when we are going out to these groups, her thought is to have a visioning committee name tag. These events are not where you would want to wear a tee shirt, you want to look more professional. Mr. Sherman said that is a good point and he thinks something nice would be the thing to do.*

*Ms. Findlay asked Mr. Cynkar about the details of his discussion with the schools. Mr. Cynkar said the major opportunity they have is the newsletter that Vicki Gnezda puts out a couple days after the board meetings, which goes out to 1,300 staff people. She has agreed to include Visioning Committee information in that newsletter. Secondly, it was suggested to talk to Judi Gallasso, who teaches the Political Radicalism and social studies classes, to discuss creating a forum which may be the most efficient way to engage with students. Ms. Gnezda is going to get information out to administrators, so they are not surprised if they are contacted by members of the Committee. Ms. Findlay said there may be some extracurricular groups that would be good to reach out to. Mr. Cynkar explained how it has been discussed to talk to the PTA, but some of those people may live outside Worthington.*

*Mr. Sherman asked about the type of name badge to have produced after Ms. Stewart's sample badge was passed around. Ms. Stewart explained that the badges are not particularly expensive. Mr. Cynkar noted that when going in the schools you will need to have a name tag. He suggested having each committee member's name on the badge. The Committee discussed the design of the name badges and directed staff to get quotes on badges.*

*Ms. Falcone explained the logistics of the SOAR in-person event on March 30<sup>th</sup>, and how it will be organized. Participants will break into 10-15 groups and they will have ten minutes each to break down the SOAR and then organize them from the top. After that, everyone will get back together and have each leading activity member present back to whole group. The hope is to have small group discussions that will play off of with what everyone is saying.*

*The Committee discussed what time the SOAR event should begin and end, deciding upon 6:30-8:30pm.*

*Ms. Corl asked what the invite flyer sample was for. Ms. Falcone explained that is to push out in order to get people interested. It can be sent out electronically and posted in places throughout town.*

*Ms. Mercadante noted that this would be three meetings in one month, and she asked if everyone would be okay with that. The Committee agreed it was okay. Mr. Sherman said we would need the meeting before the 30<sup>th</sup> as a "dry run."*

*Ms. Abu-Absi asked about the value in having people register for the event. Ms. Falcone said that we could use Bang the Table or SurveyMonkey for registrations. We can put a QR code on the flyer. Mr. Mottley said that registration is a courtesy but walk-ins are welcome.*

*Ms. Corl asked if these are the types things we would want to have posted in the signs on the Village Green. Ms. Brown said shared information with Mr. Wood about posting signs up on the Village Green and we currently have signs scheduled for the last two weeks of March.*

*Ms. Falcone asked about whether the Committee wants to provide food. Ms. Abu-Absi said we should offer at least drinks. Mr. Mitchell suggested drinks and cookies and he brought up how Ms. Goodman's bakery has a very popular Instagram account with thousands of followers. He suggested there could be a way to have them post they are preparing cookies for the Visioning Committee.*

*Mr. Lees asked if the City could set up a Facebook event for the SOAR Event. Ms. Brown replied she would get the event included on City's electronic newsletter as well.*

*The Committee discussed the logistics of creation of a Village Green sign and getting it posted.*

*Ms. Findlay said that conducting the key stakeholder interviews has recently been in high gear. A lot of people have done a great deal of work over the past couple weeks. Ms. Abu-Absi took a lot of time aggregating the responses from the City Councilpersons.*

*Ms. Abu-Absi presented the aggregated feedback from the City Council interviews. She explained how there was a good bit of consensus in the first few questions, but the notion of two camps in Worthington around development quickly emerged. There was also a lot of consensus at the end of survey around the goals of what the community wants to get out of the visioning process and how to use it.*

*One surprising thing was that one respondent asked for the opportunity to address the Visioning Committee about what they think. Ms. Burris explained how Mr. Foust when he was interviewed has definite strong feelings about what his former constituents felt and what he saw happening on Council. She believes his request comes from his feeling that he has been on both sides of the fence now and there are certain things he believes are important to share with the Committee. Mr. Mottley brought up that these are public meetings so he can come. Mr. Sherman asserted that the Committee is not political. If he wants to come and sit that is one thing, but to give him 30 minutes to address this group that is something he is not in favor of. The Committee decided to encourage Mr. Foust to engage as other members of the public are encouraged to do so, by attending the Visioning events and engaging through the website*

*Ms. Abu-Absi overviewed the aggregation of City Council responses. Councilmembers indicated that they received their information from the City, which includes staff, other Councilmembers, and the City's website and social media. They are also received information from residents out in the community and online. Most residents have told them they get information from social media and word of mouth. There are varying views on the effectiveness of print.*

*Constituents have said unanimously that some of the community's favorite attributes are the strong sense of community, the school district, and the character of the Historic District. Other Councilmembers noted their constituents have also mentioned that basic city services are strong, there are a lot of community events and opportunities in the Historic District, there is a non-urban pace supporting families with children, and the walkability of parks and schools. Some of the least favorite attributes or challenges of the community include the lack of housing, the lack of diversity, frustration with recent development, the sense of falling behind other communities, the tension that exists around development and density, and economic sustainability of the community.*

*When discussing the community's impression of Worthington's location and standing in the region, all the Councilmembers recognized Worthington's great location. Four mentioned the two opposing views on Worthington's standing within the region compared to other suburbs. Also mentioned was the conflict between wanting to be a historic, quiet suburb versus looking at communities around us doing what are perceived to be more innovative things.*

*Some of the community values that Councilmembers hear are important to Worthington residents include:*

- Inclusion/openness/friendliness
- Equality
- Diversity
- Opportunity
- Community involvement
- Walkability and bikeability
- Sustainability
- Serving across the lifespan
- Safe
- Local activities/businesses/facilities/schools
- Leveraging the wealth of knowledge of residents
- Maintaining home values
- Avoiding crowding

*Some of the physical attributes or resources that the Worthington community feels need to be preserved and enhanced include:*

- Green space
- Natural space (i.e. ravines)
- Parks
- Character of historic district
- Other 'signature pieces of community' – pool, community center
- City services
- Need to support active modes of transit (bike/ped).
- Specific call-outs to more funding to support walkability – sidewalks and safe streets, connectivity, crosswalks,
- Transportation enhancements
- Railway quiet zones
- Class A office space
- More commercial restaurants

*The attributes that need to be continued include:*

- Nothing
- Car-centric planning and single-use zoning
- Empty office spaces that are not class A
- Pizza and banks

*The community's thoughts on future development are varied with a significant portion of residents who are not opposed to change but want to learn more about how mixed use and sustainable developments might benefit the City. There is growing frustration that we continue to fight the same battles on this topic, leading to inaction. There are two camps in the community who disagree over what development means, and about single family homes and diversity in housing stock. Certain topics such as the United Methodist Children's Home have become emotionally charged. Aesthetics are a concern for a small segment of persons in the community.*

*The elements of the community that are seen to be most important to residents include land use, economic development, infrastructure, and transportation among other things. To Council, infrastructure is*

*important, but residents often take it for granted. Residents want infrastructure to be maintained, but do not see it as a priority for focus. There was a sense that everything is important, and it is the Visioning Committee's job to sort the priorities.*

*When Councilmembers were asked what the Committee should ask residents about visioning the responses included:*

- *If the city were to reduce services, which services would you recommend reducing?*
- *See Council's charge to the committee. Where do residents see Worthington in 20 years? Not just in terms of land use and development, but for example what types of business or employment do we want in the community? Should we have autonomous vehicles? What are the core values of residents?*
- *What are the residents' priorities?*
- *Where would residents be okay with denser housing?*
- *What's your preferred way to receive information and communication from the city (to help increase public engagement)*
- *What sorts of attractions (i.e. restaurants) would you like to see in Worthington?*
- *What do people see a necessary to becoming age friendly?*
- *Why Worthington? Are you happy with it the way it is or do you want to see something substantially different?*

*When asked what are the most successful ways to engage the community, responses including things such as online, email, the Griswold Center, and Community Center events. For underserved areas or populations, it was recommended to consider door to door canvassing, or utilizing service providers for services to isolated populations. It was suggested to organize visioning-focused events through existing groups.*

*Some of the groups that were suggested for the Committee to touch base with and reach out to included persons in apartments that do not traditionally get a lot of traffic because 19% of residents are apartment dwellers. It was suggested to go to groups that have speakers such as the Colonial Hills Association, Rotary, and the Chamber. One Councilperson thought that the thoughts of homeowners should be given more weight than renters.*

*In Councilmember's opinions, success for the visioning effort were varied. One said that success is having data points from a large segment of residents and those working in the City. Visioning should inform the existing committees and boards. Success was also defined as the Committee having independence with Council keeping their hands off the process. The product should have sufficient concreteness that Council could use it in making capital budget spending priorities. There is a need to know what citizens generally think about development. Another Councilmember said that success is receiving information from 80% of the community. It was also mentioned that results should help developers and architects understand what the community will support.*

*Councilmembers heard from the community multiple things they think sparked Council's desire to take on the visioning effort. Things included UMCH and opposing views on things in the community. Council looking for more direction. The creation of several formal groups in the community, but not knowing what the community as a whole wants, rather than just who is yelling the loudest.*

*Councilmembers concluded by adding that there is the chance to be a leader on diversity and inclusivity. One noted that it is a blessing and curse that we have so many active and engaged residents. We need to keep them involved and help people understand that their voices are really being heard even if Council does not always agree with the position taken by that individual resident.*

*Mr. Cynkar said since UMCH is brought up, he asked if Ohio Health has submitted a plan. Ms. Stewart said they are proposing a 60,000 sq. ft. building on the corner of UMCH.*

*Ms. Findlay said that she understands Council wants feedback on UMCH, but she wants to keep the vision separate from that. She wondered if there needs to be a melding of missions on getting feedback on those separate areas.*

*Mr. Mottley said we might want to ask if we are gathering the information as part of the scope to help them with those decisions. Getting resident's attitudes towards things.*

*Mr. Mitchell brought up his interview with Mr. Smith and his question of whether the divisions we understand to exist are fundamental, philosophical differences. His bias is that there is a common core we share.*

*Ms. Sommer said that the SOAR process will be the start of bringing that out. It will also begin to come out in the Vision Worthington website.*

*Ms. Findlay said that some of the confusion is that people say they want a particular value in the community, but then what they are voicing is antithetical. Council wants to tease some of that out. We need to point out the cacophony Council is hearing on particular development issues.*

*Mr. Wood said we need to ask about UMCH without mentioning UMCH specifically. We will be failing if we do not get to the heart of those issues and discovering why people feel a certain way. We do not want to avoid the land use question.*

*Mr. Melchi said his hope is that through the SOAR and the website, we will start to see information come in that starts to inform this process and then we can pivot to another strategy if there is incomplete data. People think the Visioning Committee is going to solve these issues. Council wants decisions because decisions are coming to them. They will do their job and we will do ours.*

*Mr. Sherman asserted the Committee will lose credibility going down the rabbit hole of UMCH, Stafford, and other specific projects. In the survey and website we can begin to pick at it, but we have to be really careful.*

*Mr. Melchi said there are interesting ways to ask these questions.*

*Mr. Sherman said that we need to be clear when asked about UMCH and say that is not what we are about. We need to flip around the question and not get pulled into that.*

*Ms. Findlay shared how she was searching for a structural way to use these aggregations from the Council and the stakeholder interviews. She wants everyone to have a chance to read these. She suggested starting to pull out themes from the aggregates.*

*She brought up how the Committee has not begun tackling surveys for those persons who ran for Council and lost. We were slated to do those in person and we still want to spend 10 hours doing that. Their feedback may be different than those who won the Council race.*

*Ms. Abu-Absi explained how those who lost were running for Council and were more telling people what they thought. She is inclined to suggest using the SurveyMonkey for those people too.*

*Mr. Wood suggested adding a button to the survey to denote whether they are a Visioning Committee applicant or a Council candidate.*

*Ms. Findlay asked about demographic information for the stakeholder list. Ms. Falcone said they have information on the neighborhoods they live in and the quadrant of the City. Ms. Findlay wondered how many people we have that are younger in our stakeholder list. Ms. Falcone said the list was 50/50. Mr. Melchi expressed that we need to show we did our best to make sure the sample looks like Worthington.*

*Ms. Findlay stated that we want to make sure we are reaching out to ask a broad base of people, not just the people who go to all the meetings.*

*Ms. Mercadante asserted that we are mixing quantitative and qualitative. She thinks we should have certain demographics and if we see gaps try to fill them. We cannot claim it is representative of community, but we tried.*

**The meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.**