

City of Worthington
Community Visioning Committee
Tuesday, June 9, 2020 - 6:00 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

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

Committee Members Absent:

Others Present: Assistant City Manager Robyn Stewart, Management Assistant Ethan Barnhardt, Lauren Falcone Poggemeyer Design Group, and one visitor were in attendance

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

MOTION *Mr. Mottley moved, seconded by Mr. Melchi to approve the meeting minutes from the Community Visioning Committee meeting of May 12, 2020.*

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Sherman explained how he received a couple emails that were also sent to the City Council and are now public record. One of the emails said that based on their personal experience with Miro, they must protest the methods being used. They had concerns about people not being heard and the methods being used were discriminatory. They said that we cannot afford another exercise that can be dismissed due to flawed data gathering. With that comment, he explained that he went back to the individual and expressed how these are difficult times that the Committee is finding ways to work through. The SOAR is one piece of the outreach to community. The Committee will be moving ahead during this time of social distancing through additional focus groups and charettes. The second email he received was along same lines, asking to suspend the visioning process because it is hearing from a self-selected group of people with pro-development opinions that are hijacking the process to build apartments on High Street. Mr. Sherman responded by thanking them for their thoughts and apologized that they did not have a good experience with the SOAR workshop. He brings these messages up because they also went to Council. He wants to make sure that we are all comfortable and on the same page with this process moving forward. If anyone hears more of these types of responses coming up, please send it along. He will incorporate the help of Council and City Staff to make sure these things are resolved. He followed up with the two individuals and they are now calmed down and understanding. Leadership is needed at this time and the community needs clarity. It is unfortunate that some people would rather complain instead of taking a stance and moving ahead. He stated that he is thankful to be part of the Committee where others are of the same mindset.

Ms. Abu-Absi thanked Ms. Falcone for her work with one of the SOAR sessions which was difficult with some participants, and she did a great job moderating through that. She expressed how she does feel she is getting virtual meeting-ed out. She has been brainstorming about ways to safely do some type of personal engagement, keeping meeting sizes down to ten. She wanted to put that idea out there. She wondered if there is the possibility to collectively brainstorm how to have some element of in-person engagement that would be helpful for people disenfranchised by the technology driven world right now.

Mr. Mitchell agreed with everything Mr. Sherman said and the positive impact that the Committee can have. We have the opportunity to get fired up and stay focused, drawing on the common purpose and core beliefs of community. With the Speakers Bureau and SOAR events there is a lot of common ground there.

Mr. Melchi explained that whenever you do something like this some people will criticize the process. He looked back at process of the Comprehensive Plan and he thought it was well put together, but people still cite it as flawed. Today more than ever, whenever someone has opinions on an issue, the first step is to say the process is broken or “fake news”. He understands being virtual meeting-ed out, he does not know how much more we can do until the Governor relaxes things. If we have a limit of nine people, the tenth will say they are disenfranchised if they cannot get in when doing something in person. If folks have opted not to participate, that is on them. We have given people different avenues to participate. Considering the circumstances, the Committee has done a good job trying to get input from all stakeholders. He gets frustrated when people criticize the process given the time the Committee has put in. We are on the right path and need to keep moving. If we can be inventive on how we engage in person, we should jump on it, but that is hard right now.

Ms. Falcone expressed that if we can get the Charette events in person that would be awesome because that is where the visioning is going to take place. She did get 5-7 emails of positive feedback from people of different demographics after the SOAR. Ms. Corl did an awesome job with Miro and it did exactly what we wanted it to do with so much data.

Ms. Stewart noted that there are often people who are critical of any process pursued. She believes the Committee is doing a good job and should evaluate the criticism to determine if there is something that could be incorporated. In response to self-selection, we need to track and see where the gaps are and discuss what can be done to address concerns. We are getting positive feedback as well. The goal should be to put the best process together and move forward.

Mr. Sherman asserted the process is being validated and he is excited to see the SOAR feedback.

Mr. Lees updated that we are seeing good progress on participation on the website with 334 registered users. That is up 126 since May 1st when we started to do the donation promotion. We have had 151 since everything was moved online. We are working to drive people to the website and get more feedback. With the topic of diversity being so heavy on social media and with all the issues on racial injustice, it has been a great opportunity to leverage interest and move people over to our site. He posted something on June 6 to our Speak Out section around diversity and what we want to see with diversity. He posted a link to that on Worthington Alert and we had 181 visits that day, 121 the next, and 113 the following day. There were 21 comments just on that topic. In the last month we have had 440 people visit from social media, 431 visited directly, and several people visited through email. We are continuing to see some movement on the What We’ve Heard section with people liking some of the ideas. As we get feedback from the SOAR, that will be another opportunity to get people’s feedback. The more we build membership for the website, then we can reach out via email to send newsletters and updates.

Ms. Falcone gave an update on the registration for the focus groups that have been filling up. For the general public, we are doing well with younger folks. For the civic groups focus group, we should have a list to direct market to. Mr. Sherman wondered if Ms. Parini could help with that. Mr. Mitchell explained

that Mr. Cynkar was going to be talking with Chamber for the business focus group. Ms. Sommer said there were not many on the recent chat, but Mr. McCorkle and Ms. Paugh will spread the word.

Mr. Lees expressed that people are still learning this effort is still happening. There is still room to grow as far as getting awareness out there.

Mr. Sherman discussed how Mr. Cynkar has talked with the schools and there are some things going on. On June 15th we will have more of a feel on what the schools will be doing and emails will be sent. He did ask for a list of where Speakers Bureau will talk next. Mr. Mitchell asked if everyone could put their names next to groups that you have reached out to; the spreadsheet is on OneDrive.

Ms. Findlay explained how the survey is ready to go and the postcards were sent out with a link to the survey. Ms. Falcone explained that it will be interesting to see the traffic from the post card and the website. Next week we will send out a City email blast. People say they get info from neighbors and friends, that is the best grassroots. We have 30 responses to date. The survey needs to be open for 2-3 months. Ms. Findlay bought up the stakeholder surveys for Visioning Committee applicants and City Council candidates. She asked whether Poggemeyer would provide a survey summary. Ms. Falcone replied that the Survey Monkey results were sent out and she can pull up whatever you want. She can email that out to everyone. Mr. Sherman explained that some things may come out of the surveys for the focus groups. Ms. Falcone explained that she will work on the high school survey, but there is not much traction with the schools to get it out. Mr. Sherman explained how there is a group of kids putting their thoughts together to compare what Worthington is doing versus what others are doing across the country. He does not see us getting much traction with schools.

Ms. Findlay stated that the visioning sign is in the hands of the Griswold people to put on Village Green. All the yard signs are out. Mr. Sherman asked whether we need more signs for the Farmers Market. Mr. Mitchell shared that they have a lot of signs out there and ours are mixed in. It looks good and is getting the message across. There is a lot of potential with the signs if we got some more.

Ms. Falcone thanked everyone who helped out on the SOAR. There were a couple naysayers, but overall it was positive. There were lots of comments with people playing off of each other. In the big ideas section, there was the concept of the "Worthington Mile" developing from downtown to mall. The idea is to put the feedback into the Vision Worthington website and send out an email blast to tell people about the SOAR results and to make comments. There are a number of questions we need to hear more about. There is a 20-page summary she will send out. 37 of the 70 who participated filled in the participation surveys. She then read out the summarized results of the Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results.

Mr. Mitchell asked how the Committee feels about our outreach to diverse populations in Worthington. Ms. Falcone asked if there are Speakers Bureau that we could reach out to. Mr. Lees stressed how important it is to get participation from schools because that is where you will capture diverse thinking. There are many people feel that they are living in the community even if they do not live in the city. There is a question of whether we should we do more to go outside the city limits to reach out to the school district. Mr. Sherman shared that he had a conversation with a Council member and one thing they discussed was the fact that we have people who are constantly reminded that they are not a part of Worthington. He asked how we reach those people and there is the question about whether we should include people from the school district in the focus groups. Mr. Mottley expressed that whether we like it or not, the Committee was appointed by the City Council which is accountable to the nighttime residents

of Worthington. That does not mean we do not listen to people who are not legal residents of the City. People who work here are part time residents. We need to listen to everyone, but we need to keep in mind we are advising the City Council of Worthington and helping them form a vision to make their decisions. The focus should still be on the legal residents of Worthington, but we should listen to everyone. To achieve the goals of the people who live here, we need to hear from everyone including people who work here and to hear voices of people that are not legal residents. The focus should be on the boundaries of Worthington, that is who we are accountable to.

Mr. Sherman shared that a resident of Riverlea wants to participate in a focus group and he said no since they are not a part of the city of Worthington. They go to city schools, use city services, and a Councilmember said we should open this up to them. He explained that he pushed back and did not think so. He asked the group their opinion on who we open this up to. Mr. Mitchell said he thinks we have things that are targeted on the community and there are opportunities to more intentionally reach stakeholders outside of Worthington boundaries. Mr. Melchi expressed that his concern is reaching residents within city boundaries. If we get 30 people from Riverlea and do not get enough from Slate Hill or Crosswoods area of the school district, he asked how we balance that out. It is a tough position, but we were appointed by City Council of Worthington. We need to be more intentional with outreach. Aside from going door to door, it is tough. We have sent mailers, utilized social media, and posted signs.

Ms. Falcone said that the public survey is the best opportunity to get voices from people from outside of Worthington. We can push out the public survey and get data to separate residents from non-residents. Mr. Mitchell asked what we can use to go beyond the boundaries of Worthington. Ms. Stewart said that not all of Ms. Brown's mailing lists are Worthington residents.

Mr. Sherman stated that the consensus is to not invite Riverlea to the focus groups.

Ms. Findlay asked about engaging employees of businesses in Worthington. Ms. Falcone replied that we could have businesses send the survey out to all their employees. We might be able to get some good information and build on the diversity.

Ms. Sommer asked whether the focus group for civic groups also include religious organizations. Ms. Findlay responded that it does, and we would want to engage them.

Mr. Sherman said that the Committee does not have a meeting until the 14th of July. We have 6 more meetings before we get into October. He explained he has thought about asking Council to extend out the Committee's timing through October to give a little more time if needed. He asked the Committee if everyone is comfortable extending this out if needed. Mr. Mottley expressed that we will probably need the time in order to do this right. Mr. Sherman stated that he will make that ask to Council.

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.