

CITY OF DENTON CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

August 25, 2018

After determining that a quorum was present, the City Council convened in a Planning Session on Saturday, August 25, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. at Serve Denton, 306 N. Loop 288, Denton, Texas.

PRESENT: Council Member Hudspeth, Council Member Briggs, Council Member Duff, Council Member Armintor, Council Member Meltzer, Mayor Pro Tem Ryan, and Mayor Watts.

ABSENT: None.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- A. ID 18-1393 Hold a retreat discussion facilitated by Rick Robinson with Ramsee Consulting Group and give direction and priorities concerning the following: City services and infrastructure; streets; parks; finances, budget; planning; zoning and development; environmental issues; technology; public utilities, taxes; engineering; economic development; codes enforcement; transportation; purchasing; management; intergovernmental relations; boards, commissions and committees; meetings; agenda development; City Council interactions with each other, staff, and the public; and without limitation, any and all operations of the City of Denton city government.

Todd Hileman, City Manager, thanked everyone for working with Rick Robinson with Ramsee Consulting Group and stated that Rick would facilitate the meeting. Council's feedback would help them understand how to operate as a team with each other and the management team.

Robinson stated that during this meeting they would cover a discussion on behavior styles and team dynamics, a priority setting and vision drafting exercise, a discussion around City Council meeting structure, and provide an opportunity to discuss key policy topics and other strategic initiatives for the upcoming fiscal year.

Robinson stated that he had talked with everyone to see what they would like to get out of this meeting. Three biggest challenges last year were managing growth, infrastructure issues, and relationships/trust. This year the biggest challenges were managing growth, infrastructure and streets, affordable housing/homelessness, and transportation. The most urgent issue last year was relationships/ trust. This year the most urgent issues were – streets, housing affordability, new business /friendly development code, and public transit.

Council Members talked through their expectations of each other for the retreat.

Robinson stated that the DiSC Behavioral Preference Assessment was a tool used for discussion of people's behavioral differences. All DiSC styles and priorities were equally valuable. He stated that everyone was a blend of all four styles. A person's work, management and leadership styles were also influenced by other factors such as life experiences, education, and maturity. Gaining a better understanding of one's self was the first step to becoming more effective when working with others. Learning about the DiSC styles of other people a person works or lives with could help them understand their priorities and how they differ from their own.

Robinson reviewed what DiSC stood for and what the letters meant.

D – Dominance / This person placed emphasis on accomplishing results, the bottom line, and confidence. Behaviors of this person included - saw the big picture, could be blunt, accepted challenges, and got straight to the point.

I – Influence / This person placed emphasis on influencing or persuading others, openness, relationships. Behaviors of this person included - showed enthusiasm, was optimistic, liked to collaborate and disliked being ignored.

S – Steadiness / This person placed emphasis on cooperation, sincerity, dependability. Behaviors of this person included - didn't like to be rushed, calm manner, calm approach, and supportive actions.

C – Conscientiousness / This person placed emphasis on quality and accuracy, expertise, competency. Behaviors of this person included – enjoyed independence, objective reasoning, wanted the details, and feared being wrong.

He said the platinum rule was to treat people the way they want to be treated.

Council Members completed exercises with the meeting facilitator that were designed to help them better understand and communicate with one another.

Robinson stated there were five levels of dysfunction of a team – absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability and inattention to results.

Robinson asked the Council to write down a statement of their idea of the role of the Council and then work together in teams to create a shared statement of the role of the Council. Discussion included engaging citizens to get their input; giving direction and setting policy; transparency; current realities included previous decisions and outcomes; ignoring personal and political agendas in order to serve the people as a whole; protecting the health, safety, and general welfare and improving the lives of the citizens of the city of Denton; providing policy direction to staff that would provide some service and quality of life for the citizens by fiscally responsible decision-making; modifying past policies to conform with current environment while planning for future needs of the City; and mediating and negotiating with stakeholders and the City.

Robinson drafted a Role of Council from the Council's ideas – the role of Council was to set policy; provide direction to staff so staff could provide core services to provide for the health, safety, and general welfare and enhanced quality of life for our residents, business, and other stakeholders. We will use input from all stakeholders to strive to make decisions that are fiscally responsible and in the best, long-term interests of the city of Denton.

The Council brainstormed on Rules of Engagement. Discussion included: Respect – no personal attacks, presume good intentions; agree to disagree. Listening – show good listening behavior while others are speaking; no twiddling on phones, rolling eyes, audibly groaning. Use “what I think I heard you say... Negotiating – relevance to prior statements; relevance to role of Council; relevance to topic at hand. Build on common ground when possible.

Robinson drafted Rules of Engagement for the Council: The Council would at all times treat others with respect. Keep an open mind and actively listen – even to differing opinions. Seek first to understand. Be succinct and stay on topic. Respect each other’s time. Seek to find common ground.

Robinson drafted Rules of Engagement with Staff: Don’t abuse your access to staff. Be cognizant of the chain of command and staff time. Ask for information/not give direction. Encourage open sharing of opinions and expertise.

Council’s expectations of staff included full disclosure/accurate information; more candor; staff recommendations-name staff member; staff time requirements for requests by Council/not individuals; define options; and anticipate common Council Member reactions.

Hileman stated that the more staff got to know the Council, the better they could prepare the material for Council on different topics. He stated that what mattered to staff was that Council could trust the information staff gave them to make an informed decision.

Staff expectations of Council included 1) Prioritization and consensus on work session items. Develop and agree on a process to manage requests (length of meetings). 2) Direct inquiries to CMO/Directors. Understand the magnitude of your words on employees. 3) Understand staff’s focus is on building a culture of candor, fiscal responsibility, CIP delivery, business processes and streamline priorities. 4) If Council wants candor, hard on issue, not the person presenting. When not respected, staff will not be comfortable sharing their opinions. 5) Get the full story before forming an opinion or putting something in writing. Council emails and posts are frequently shared with management and employees form opinions as to whether a safe environment exists. 6) If Council wants candor – some mistakes will happen. Focus on how they can be prevented later rather than not letting an issue pass. 7) Understand as a premise that staff takes pride in helping the City look good and succeeding.

The Council discussed different ideas regarding vision – sustainability, transparency, people want to live here, economically vibrant, increase availability, pockets of appropriate commercial, maintain neighborhoods, reduced homelessness, small town values with the amenities of a big city, tax rate affordable, doubled in size, stable government - run efficiently, make sure we don’t become known as a Dallas suburb, and better low- and high-end housing options, healthy, green, artistic, affordable, diverse family friendly community with modern infrastructure where people want to live. A diverse city which maintains a balance of water, parks and interconnected spaces, while retaining its small-town feel. Well balanced in its economics, population and cultural arts aspects.

Council discussion also included things to focus on to achieve the vision - mobility plan; open space planning; collaboration with departments; new City facility master plan / new bond program; complete the development code update; complete a plan for City Hall West; NCTC parking garage for city use; event locations; complete streets; master plan for downtown; tree canopy objective and implementation; plan for the police department growth; recycling for downtown.

Robinson drafted a vision statement - Denton is a diverse community that successfully balances small-town feel with big-city amenities; arts with industry; green spaces with development; growth with sustainability; job growth with housing stock; to create a place where people want to be.

General consensus of the Council was that this had been a good investment of their time.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

CHRIS WATTS
MAYOR
CITY OF DENTON, TEXAS

JANE RICHARDSON
ASSISTANT CITY SECRETARY
CITY OF DENTON, TEXAS