

2000 09 07 Council Workshop

LAKWOOD CITY COUNCIL

WORKSHOP MINUTES

Thursday, September 7, 2000

Pierce Transit Training Center

6132 Motor Avenue

Lakewood, WA 98499

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Harrison called the meeting to order at 5:50 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Councilmembers Present: 6 - Mayor Bill Harrison; Deputy Mayor Claudia Thomas; Councilmembers Ann Kirk Davis; Larry Humphrey; JosÃ© Palmas and Sherri Thomas.

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Councilmember Excused: 1 - Councilmember Doug Richardson (arrived at 8:15 p.m.).

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Staff Present: City Manager D. Scott Rohlfs; Assistant City Manager Jeff Butzlaff; City Attorney Dan Heid; Finance and Systems Director Galen Kidd; Community Development Director David Bugher; Engineering Manager Bill Larkin; Police Chief Larry Saunders; Human Resources & Services Director Debi Young and General Services Director/City Clerk Alice Bush.

: City Manager D. Scott Rohlfs; Assistant City Manager Jeff Butzlaff; City Attorney Dan Heid; Finance and Systems Director Galen Kidd; Community Development Director David Bugher; Engineering Manager Bill Larkin; Police Chief Larry Saunders; Human Resources & Services Director Debi Young and General Services Director/City Clerk Alice Bush.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

Public Relations.

Mayor Harrison explained that discussion needs to happen between Council and staff about what can be done to improve citizens' perception about the City by identifying the problem and strategizing on how to address the problems. He then called on Deputy Mayor Thomas to assist with facilitating tonight's workshop.

Deputy Mayor Thomas asked Councilmembers and staff to each identify concerns in the City. Concerns that were identified include:

Â§ Lack of customer service

Â§ Lack of public relations strategy

Â§ What we are doing is not working

Â§ Overworked employees or understaffed areas

Â§ Things "fall between the cracks"

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- Â§ More staff for quality rather than quantity
- Â§ Misunderstanding of the roles and limitations of the City
- Â§ Lack of clarity on "quality" of targeted service
- Â§ How to respond to people problem, how we respond
- Â§ Lack of preparation time and planning strategies for controversial issues
- Â§ Overly defensive, tendency to debate issue
- Â§ Increase public information to provide more structure
- Â§ Bring closure to issues
- Â§ Citizen comments in perspective
- Â§ Communication to Council regarding citizen comments
- Â§ Change to local government in a short time
- Â§ Lack of vision planning
- Â§ Proactive project communication
- Â§ Negative citizen comments due to being told "no"
- Â§ Big picture communication
- Â§ People resist change from an uncontrolled government to controlled government
- Â§ Separation from Pierce County creates bad press
- Â§ Council takes on too many high profile projects without adequately addressing public outreach
- Â§ City needs to revise its mission statement
- Â§ Some citizens feel powerless and feel Council is not provided all the information by staff
- Â§ Have made a lot of tough decisions well
- Â§ Need to hang tough, growing pains
- Â§ Perceived lack of response to citizens
- Â§ Perception that staff are leading the Council
- Â§ Some citizen Committee not felt empowered; too much staff control
- Â§ Perception that priorities of the City does not match the priorities of the City
- Â§ Perception that City is heavy handed in enforcement
- Â§ Perception that there is an "inside" citizen group
- Â§ Lack of clear picture of who we are

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Groups were formed to review common issues.

Group #1 - Improve Flow and Quality of Communication

- Improve Flow and Quality of Communication

(Deputy Mayor Thomas, Councilmember Davis, Assistant City Manager Butzlaff, Police Chief Saunders, City Attorney Heid and Redevelopment/Economic Development Administrator Bock)

Solutions:

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- Ã~ Streamline process - more verbal and written checklist
- Ã~ Empower citizens to come up with solutions - use transition team
- Ã~ Reconnect with citizens - Boards, Committees, Ad Hoc Committees
- Ã~ Neighborhood Association with funding
- Ã~ Groom public expectations - provide simple feedback
- Ã~ Conduct regular surveys of citizens and businesses - keep it simple
- Ã~ At the end of survey - include phone number to call if there are questions and inform citizens, how to get involved
- Ã~ Newsletter generate positive feedback
- Ã~ Need to highlight positives
- Ã~ Shorter newsletter and more frequency
- Ã~ *How To's, how to do something*, how to do something
- Ã~ Find solutions to problem before saying "no" and how to say "no"
- Ã~ Tell the public what we are doing tonight and get results out
- Ã~ Provided feedback after public comment period

- Ã~ Revamp public comment period

Councilmember Richardson arrived at 8:15 p.m.

Group #2 - How to Better Market Lakewood

- How to Better Market Lakewood

(Mayor Harrison, Councilmember Palmas, Finance and Systems Director Kidd, Engineering Manager Larkin, General Services Director/City Clerk Bush and Management Analyst Davis)

- Ã~ Need to show benefits of change
- Â§ Property tax/lower taxes
- Â§ More police
- Â§ More business

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Ã~ Target certain groups/demographics

Â§ Vocal minority

Â§ Quiet/informed

Â§ Uninvolved/uninformed

Â§ Involved (not necessarily with the City)

Ã Use newsletter as a marketing tool

Ã Outcome of Public Comments raised at Council meetings reported back to the citizens through the City Manager under the City Manager's Report.

Ã Televis Council meetings and develop programming videos as educational tools to market the City.

Ã Bringing website in-house

Ã Secure marketing/public relations experts

Group #3:

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(Councilmembers Humphrey and Thomas, City Manager Rohlfs, Human Resources and Services Director Young, Community Development Director Bugher and Executive Assistant Newman)

1) The City, being overly defensive and not bringing closure to tough decisions, contributes to negative citizen perception of the City, especially, but not only, when they disagree.

Solution: Direct Council comments to citizens immediately after public comments.

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2) It is a perception that the City Council makes decisions from a limited perspective of staff and selected citizen input, not necessarily representing other citizen views.

Solution: Add verbiage to sign up sheet on instructions for Public Comments.

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Discussion ensued on what can be done now:

1) Council Committee works on revamping meeting.

2) Send out postcard to those that provide public comment

3) Communicate to employees on what happened tonight

4) Explore creating checklists on "How To"

5) Keep issues discussed in "Top of Mind"

6) Subgroup to look into professional marketing/communication expert

7) Ombudsman

8) Get "outside" perception

9) Rainier Cable Commission discussion

10) Use Newsletter as marketing tool

11) Prepare article and education on how to contact City with issues/problems

12) Post City organizational chart

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

BILL HARRISON, MAYOR

ATTEST:

ALICE M. BUSH, CMC

CITY CLERK

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