

**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
GOAL SETTING SESSION  
CITY OF ISANTI  
January 22, 2018**

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m.

Members Present: Mayor George Wimmer, Councilmembers Dan Collison, Ross Lorinser, and Paul Bergley

Members Absent: Councilor Steve Lundeen

Staff Present: City Attorney Clark Joslin as Facilitator, City Administrator Don Lorsung, Human Resources/City Clerk Katie Brooks, Finance Director Mike Betker, Liquor Store Manager John Jacobi, Economic Development Director Sean Sullivan, Community Development Director Ryan Kernosky, Public Services Director/Assistant City Administrator Josi Wood, Community Events/Parks Coordinator Katie Everett, and Police Chief Gene Hill

Others Present: Glenn Farrell

City Attorney Joslin welcomed the City Council and staff to the Goal Setting meeting and gave a brief introduction regarding the Goal Setting Session Agenda.

**Overview of Prior Years Goals**

Joslin reviewed the top goals from 2017 and briefly reviewed the status of each of them. The 2017 goals were as follows:

**2017**

- Annexation of Surrounded Properties
- Dog Park
- Outdoor Hockey Rink
- Park Dedication Fund Use
- City Comprehensive Plan Update
- 2017 Pavement Management Program
- Palomino Road Reconstruction
- Railroad Avenue Sidewalk/Trail
- 2017 Liquor Store Tasting Event
- Setting a Future Target Date for Discussion of a New Liquor Store Project.
- Public Works and Police Department Storage

Earlier years Goals were listed in the handouts and briefly reviewed. The earlier years' Goals were as follows:

**2016**

- 5<sup>th</sup> Street NE Extension – Develop Funding Options

- 2016 Elections – Implement Polling Places
- Adopt New EDA Marketing Plan
- Hotel Project Options
- New City Councilmember Orientation
- City Comprehensive Planning Update
- 2016 Collective Bargaining
- Department Head Salary Review
- City Staffing Plan
- Purchasing Discretion
- Isanti Liquor Tastings Event
- Railroad Avenue Sidewalk
- Continue Marketing Plan and Economic Development Efforts to Diversify and Increase the Tax Base
- Maintain City and Development Standards

## **2015**

- Adopt a Long-Range Revenue Plan
- Adopt Pavement Management and Utility Improvement Plans
- Complete a Utility Rate Study
- Create Joint Planning Advisory Board with City of Cambridge and Isanti Township - Comprehensive Planning
- Work on Sidewalk Infill on CSAH 23 and Heritage Boulevard
- Continue Marketing Plan and Economic Development Efforts to Diversify and Increase the Tax Base
- Maintain City and Development Standards

## **2014**

- Police Chief Search - Internal Posting Process
- Change Sidewalk Snow Removal Policy
  - Formal Policy Change for Council Consideration
  - Purchase of new equipment
  - Hiring of one new full-time maintenance technician
  - Discontinue charging citizens for un-cleared sidewalks
- Create Joint Planning Meetings with Cambridge and Isanti Township - Compatible Land Usage/ Common Control Boundaries
- County Road 5 (Heritage Blvd) Traffic Study - Traffic Control/ Improvement
- Street Light Infill - Phased Plan for Budget Consideration
- Community Center Improvements / Parking Lot Improvements
  - Tie in Downtown Accessibly to City Hall/ Community Center through Downtown Parking Improvements, Access East of City Hall
  - Community Center Improvements
- Complete Implementation of City Website Improvements
- Continue Economic Development Efforts to Diversify and Increase the Tax Base
- Maintain City Standards

## **2013**

- Community Center - Finalize Process/ Make it Financially Viable

- HRA Option - Evaluate
- CSAH 5 Aesthetic Standards / Traffic Flow Evaluation
- City Website Update
- Maintain City Standards
- Utility Billing - Pursue In-House Billing
- Continue Economic Development Efforts to Diversify and Increase the Tax Base

Mayor Wimmer felt the budget is on track per prior budget projections.

## **Review of 2018 Projects/Goals**

### **a. City Website**

Economic Development Director Sean Sullivan reviewed the history of the City website planning. Mayor Wimmer pointed out that in term of marketing the City, it is important to have a good site. Councilmember Lorinser thought that while there is a lot of information on the website, it isn't always easily attainable. Discussion about the importance of having a robust City web-site and the importance it plays for the residents and continued economic development growth continued among the Council and City staff. In terms of neighboring cities, the City's website is lagging behind and is not user friendly. Councilmember Collison asked about the availability of a mobile app for the City. Mr. Sullivan responded that he has briefly looked into it and there are options available. Discussion consensus was that the City's technology needs to be updated.

### **b. Equipment for City Council Communications**

The Mayor mentioned that the current system is not efficient and needs to be updated. The current system is from 2005 and requires frequent tech upkeep. Audio file retrieval is slow and outdated. In the interest of going paperless, the use of emails for Councilmembers for City communication and moving to the use of tablets was discussed. This would eliminate the use of paper and staff resources to put packets together while also streamlining the process. Councilmember Lorinser added that he would like to see about getting cameras in the Council Chamber to stream meetings. Mayor Wimmer agreed since video streaming is much easier now than in the past. However, policy would need to be discussed to ensure that the recorded meetings reflect the set Council Agenda items.

### **c. 20 Year Capital Improvement**

Financial Director Mike Betker pointed out that it is good to understand that although you can't say with certainty where you will be in 20 years, you will have a ball-park idea so incremental changes can gradually be made over time. Discussion of the capital improvement plan briefly included the need for additional storage space for the City in the future due to growth, but Mayor Wimmer noted that there was nothing new that wasn't in the plan already and hadn't already been previously discussed. This project is needed and initial work has started.

### **d. Administrator Transition**

The Mayor informed the Council that throughout 2018, City Administrator Don Lorsung will begin transitioning duties to the Assistant City Administrator Josi Wood as part of the long-term staffing plan. By 2019 Ms. Wood would begin working as the City Administrator with Mr. Lorsung taking on Assistant City Administrator and Assistant City Clerk duties along with special projects that the City would otherwise need to pay an outside source for. Part of the staffing plan also includes bringing in a two-year Tech Engineer position to help supervise projects that are currently contracted out. It would not be an increase of dollars but rather a reallocation of currently

contracted engineering costs which would also provide additional staff capacity. This position would possibly take duties of the Public Services Director.

**e. Emergency Generators**

This is a serious need in case of a major power outage. Public Services Director/Assistant City Administrator Josi Wood said there is a generator at the water treatment plant and the main lift but that is all. This will keep most of the sanitary sewer services working temporarily but the lift stations will quickly fill up. There are two other critical lift stations but only one large portable generator available. Two more generators are needed, an additional one for the lift stations and another to supply a building facility with power if needed, either City Hall or the Police Department.

Police Chief Gene Hill said they have received quotes from Cummins and CAT, with the cheapest generator starting at \$26,000 but that doesn't include transfer switches, automatic starts, or installation. Another option would be purchasing units through the Wildfire Land Services with the MN DNR. The generators are used units from the Federal government and are tested and operational before they leave the DNR for approximately \$750.00 each. Transfer switches and installation would be an additional \$5,000 and can be done through a City contracted electrician.

Discussion included the different power supply capacities the City would require and what is available from the DNR. Chief Hill noted the DNR generators are mil-spec and so are designed to sit outside and be easily moved with a forklift. He then suggested the best solution for the City would be to get the generators through the DNR and have an electrician wire them in. Discussion continued about making sure any available generators had the correct power adapters to so they could be safely used in an emergency.

Councilman Collison asked if a generator at City Hall could also power the Community Center. City Administrator Lorsung responded that issue had been discussed as there is a need for emergency shelter for people and there are very limited resources in the City as the schools do not have back-up generators and cannot be a resource for shelter.

Councilman Collison pointed out that maintenance would need to be considered for the units also. There is a recommended weekly and twice a year comprehensive maintenance protocol that needs to be taken into consideration also.

**f. Multi-use Skating Rink**

Mayor Wimmer suggested a model similar to North Branch for an outdoor recreational park with a flat, multi-use surface next to the BMX building. Public Services Director Wood said lights and water would be the most significant cost. Discussion among the City Council and staff included options for lighting and filling the skating rink, types of uses including pleasure skating and sport-related, and the likely need for re-grading of the area due to the current slope of the area. Mayor Wimmer said there is cost to it but it seems it would be beneficial.

Glenn Farrell, 200 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue NW, asked if the Fire Department had a water tanker that could be used to fill the skating rink. Mayor Wimmer agreed but added that the City would be billed for the use of the Fire Department's equipment. Mr. Farrell then suggested the option of buying a water tank with a skid that could be loaded onto a truck bed. Mayor Wimmer thanked Mr. Farrell for his suggestions.

**g. Street Extensions – Richard Avenue SE & 5th Avenue NE**

There is a study that has been done for 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and one will be done for Richard Avenue SE to determine the total cost. Currently the Richard Avenue improvement would be on hold until the hotel project moves forward. Penny Lane has already been vacated. Ideally the street extensions and the hotel project construction would happen simultaneously.

**h. Liquor Store Tastings (off-site)**

Liquor Store Manager John Jacobi discussed the possibility of local businesses hosting off-site liquor tastings. He said it is not possible for the liquor store to provide this service due to liquor liability laws according to the director of the Minnesota Municipal Beverage Association. However, if a business wanted to pay for the hiring of a caterer with the correct licenses and provide insurance, the caterer's license would then allow the liquor store to come in and provide the service. Mayor Wimmer questioned if it would generate enough revenues for the liquor store to recoup expense of doing this. Mr. Jacobi was uncertain but he did not believe it would. It was also discussed that recent liquor store tastings held inside of the liquor store itself had generated more revenue and repeat sales than tastings held off-site.

**i. Traffic Issues with Heritage Boulevard**

In anticipation of Kwik-Trip coming into Isanti, the traffic situation on Heritage Boulevard was discussed. Heritage Boulevard is an Isanti County road and the City will have to work with both the county and MN DOT to make any changes to Heritage Boulevard. Community Development Director Ryan Kernosky outlined a brief summary of options that have been brought to the county. Additional discussion continued between City Council and staff about alternative ideas that may optimize traffic flow on Heritage Boulevard.

**j. Sledding Hill at Bluebird Park**

Councilman Collison would like a sledding hill as he feels it would be a nice amenity for the City. He offered a potential location as Bluebird Park. Councilmembers and City staff discussed where the best location would be with other City locations offered as potential possibilities. Discussions continued regarding safety concerns, such as lighting and City liability issues, how a sledding hill could potentially be engineered, landscaping and topography, and maintenance of both a potential sledding hill and surrounding properties. All agreed that a sledding hill would be a nice addition to the City. It was decided that the Park, Recreation, and Culture Board should discuss the issue to see whether they feel it is feasible to pursue as a possible project, and if so where the best location would be.

**k. Fluoride Information Added to Water Bill**

Councilman Bergley put forth adding information to the monthly City water bills that fluoride is added to the City water supply. He referred to water bills in Austin, Texas that offer the same information since it is the only chemical added to the water for a medical treatment. He felt it would inform residents of why fluoride is added to the water. Mayor Wimmer felt that addition would cause unwarranted concern to residents as to why the City felt it was necessary to include that information on the water bills. It was mentioned that the information of what chemicals are added to the water are posted in the Consumer Confidence Report on the City website and annually in the official City newspaper.

**l. City Hall Water Bottle Refill Station**

Mayor Wimmer feels that adding a water bottle refill station would be a good step for the City as it would be greener, would get rid of so many disposable plastic bottles, and would help with our

Greenstep's best practices. The water bottle refill stations would be available to the public at City Hall also. Chief Hill suggested additional sites of the Community Center and both the Police and Fire Departments as well. Councilman Lorinser thought the BMX track would be another good site and added that he believes the refill stations would be utilized by many. Discussions included that there would be initial installation costs and routine cleaning and maintenance required as well.

**m. 2018 Pavement Management Program**

City Administrator Lorsung commented that planned sealcoating will be proceeding in the Northwest part of the City and could be expanded upon depending on the budget.

**n. Continue Marketing Plan and Economic Development Efforts to Diversify and Increase Tax Base**

Mayor Wimmer said the Marketing and Development efforts will continue moving forward.

**o. Maintain City and Development Standards**

Mayor Wimmer noted dramatic progress in median household income over the period of 2000-2016. The City of Isanti has gone from the lowest per capita income levels to the highest in that time period. This allows the City to attract a whole different set of businesses and the ability for the City to grow, offer more services, and be less dependent upon outside financial assistance. These overall changing trends helps for continued future growth in the economic well-being of the City and its residents. The Mayor believes this helps everyone with increased property values and opens the door to many other community amenities. Councilmember Lorinser agreed that this type of planning is beneficial and it should continue.

Mayor Wimmer summarized what had been discussed during the Goal Setting Session. Goals will be assigned to the appropriate Committees and Boards to move forward for Council's consideration.

**Adjournment**

Motion by Lorinser, second by Collison to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 9:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Clark A. Joslin, Facilitator  
Isanti City Attorney