

**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
GOAL SETTING SESSION  
CITY OF ISANTI  
January 23, 2017**

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

Members Present: Mayor George Wimmer, Councilors Dan Collison and Paul Bergley

Members Absent: Councilors Ross Lorinser and Steve Lundeen

Staff Present: City Attorney Clark Joslin as Facilitator, City Administrator Don Lorsung, Human Resources/City Clerk Lindsey Giese, Finance Director Jackie Fisher, Liquor Store Manager John Jacobi, Economic Development Director Sean Sullivan, Community Development Director Roxanne Achman, Public Services Director/Assistant City Administrator Josi Wood, Community Events/Parks Coordinator Katie Everett, Police Chief Gene Hill, and City Engineer Brad DeWolf

City Attorney Joslin welcomed the City Council and staff to the Goal Setting meeting.

City Attorney Joslin gave a brief introduction regarding the Goal Setting Session Agenda.

**Overview of Prior Years Goals**

Joslin reviewed the top goals from 2016 and briefly reviewed the status of each of them. The 2016 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

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

### **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

### **2012**

- Community Center Review – Citizen Task Force

- Capital Replacement Fund – Review Reserves
- Utility Billing Review and Recommendation
- CSAH 5 – Traffic and Congestion Issues
- Main Street Traffic Issues
- Continue Economic Development – Diversify and Increase Tax Base

Mayor Wimmer stressed that all of the decisions made by Staff and Council, whether straight dollars and sense, or planning type decisions, impact our bottom line as a city.

City Engineer Brad DeWolf discussed the asset management and pavement plans. We have a very pro-active plan and stressed that maintenance is always more cost effective than restructure. The Mayor added we have a dedicated funding source and the intention of that is that we stay on schedule. Councilor Collison questioned how long we will be able continue to use the wastewater pond system. DeWolf answered the pond systems are working quite effectively, and stated that we will have to re-evaluate when the State starts requesting nitrate and chloride removal. In his opinion, he felt this City would have about a decade.

## **Review of 2017 Projects/Goals**

### **a. Annexation of Surrounded Properties**

Joslin explained that the city of Cambridge annexed a number of properties that it surrounded that were formerly in Isanti Township. Surrounding properties benefit from City services and facilities while not contributing any payment for their operation or maintenance. The City of Isanti also has a number of ‘donut holes’. In 2011, possibilities of annexation of the ‘donut holes’ was discussed but it was decided not to consider further action at that time. Joslin elaborated that there were discussions with Isanti township to develop a policy about payments in lieu of taxes for services provided. We were looking to create a mutually acceptable agreement for the services but that was never an agreement that was able to be finalized.

The Mayor stated that a lot of these properties are not receiving any benefits from the township but are paying their taxes to the township. The Mayor stated that we have to make a decision as a City. As the City continues to grow, that these properties need to be annexed to the City. All but one is already under our planning jurisdiction, and they benefit from our growth as a community as well as our police protection. These property owners have a lot of benefits they are receiving directly.

The Mayor shared that he understands residents are concerned about increase in taxes, as they would be paying City tax rate instead of township tax rate. Currently our City tax payers are subsidizing their tax rates right now. He further explained that the City will get a lot of pushback. The Mayor mentioned those potentially being annexed may ask about the connection to city water and sewer, and he wanted to make it clear that those are two separate items. That not all properties within the City of Isanti are connected to water and sewer. If someone has a good working system, the City would not force them to connect to the city services.

Councilor Bergley asked if all these properties are all residential? The Mayor explained a few are residential properties that are currently non-conforming in commercial zoned areas, the Golf Course, and the rest are residential. Bergley asked if it's different for residential or business on how the City would treat the annexation and expectations. Mayor confirmed that those are residential properties in the B2 district, but that expectations for a business would be the same as residential. Administrator Lorsung mentioned that if there are properties that have utilities going by them, they would then be charged an access/availability fee. Currently, because they are not in the city they don't receive that fee, but if utilities are running in front of their property and they are annexed that fee would be applicable.

The Mayor stated that with no other questions or concerns being mentioned, that with this goal setting process items are discussed at this meeting and are brought for approval at the next Council meeting. Therefore, he will bring this goal forward to the next Council meeting.

#### **b. Dog Park**

The Mayor mentioned that this is a topic that has been brought up a lot. The decisions that will need to be made are do we want to have a dog park, do we want to have it located in the area currently specified and do we want to pay for it? The current discussed location is currently about an acre, with potential to grow. The estimated cost is between \$18,000 and \$19,000. There was discussion in regards to the usage, the area, and handling of waste. It was discussed that this should proceed as a goal to be brought to the next Council meeting.

#### **c. Outdoor Hockey Rink**

The previous outdoor rink was taken down for safety reasons. Without paying an overwhelming amount of money for a refrigerator rink, it's hard to guarantee ice. The plan would be to move the rink to the grassy area just south of the BMX building. It would be temporary, so the space could still be used in the summer. The cost of this would be between \$61,500 – \$92,500. We could potentially budget for this for 2018, if the Council wanted to pursue this. Councilor Bergley stated he believes it is hard for a city to staff warming houses, and as a hockey rink user, to consider this issue when looking at these costs for the usage the rink would receive. Josi Wood, Public Services Director also added that there is a lot entailed in the maintenance, much more than the pleasure rink. Further discussion ensued. It was brought up to relocate the Pleasure Rink so it would be closer to the warming house and bathrooms. Wood indicated that there would be some challenges and costs associated with it, but it would be an option. This item will be addressed by the Park, Recreation and Culture Board.

#### **d. Park Dedication Fund Use**

The Mayor informed the Council that we have always used our park dedication funds for new items. However, state statute allows us to use these funds to replace some items. If our policy was changed, it would impact any new development going forward. The funds would likely not be there. The Mayor was not in favor of changing it but wanted to bring it before Council so a conscious decision was made. Brief discussion took place. Attorney Joslin clarified the state statute states we cannot dedicate some of the funds for ongoing operational maintenance but they could be used to replace funds that we were going to use for development from our budget from

funds from the dedication fees. The Council came to a consensus that they are comfortable with the language as is.

**e. City Comprehensive Plan Update**

Mayor Wimmer indicated that our comprehensive plan was developed a number of years ago, and much has changed in that time. He then asked if we are still on the right path of where we want to go? And does the plan reflect that? He believes we need a serious update to our plan. Roxanne Achman, Community Development Director, agreed, at the very least, we need to update the plan. She indicated with the upcoming potential annexations, the new property that was just annexed using a zoning district that we have not used before (even though it was in our previous comp plan) and the new overlay district, updating the plan is important. The Mayor also mentioned that road plans and improvements need to be included in this as well. Brad DeWolf added that by using technology and social media venues we are able to get more public input versus coming to an open house meeting. An estimate of the cost to update or provide a new comprehensive plan could range from \$50,000 to \$100,000. This is not currently in the budget for 2017.

**f. 2017 Pavement Management Program**

City Engineer stated that the Pavement Management program is currently under design and will be bringing it before Council. He stated that we focused on getting seal coats on some of our very highly traveled roads and will also be doing some crack sealing. A preliminary budget will be brought before Council.

**g. Palomino Road Reconstruction**

This currently has no funding source, and would need bonding. The actual amount will be determined from cost estimates.

**h. Railroad Avenue Sidewalk/Trail**

This currently has no funding source, and would need bonding. The actual amount will be determined from cost estimates.

**i. 2017 Liquor Store Tasting Event**

Liquor Store Manager John Jacobi explained that last year the tastings event was held in the Community Center. We did not get the numbers as anticipated. In order for this event to be successful, we would need to have approximately 60 people just to break even. The Liquor Store Committee discussed that this year the plan would be to hold tastings at the Liquor Store and have different vendors come in one day a week for the month of October to provide different samples to store guests.

**j. Setting a Future Target Date for Discussion of a New Liquor Store Project**

There was discussion in regards to the prior projects done on the store. The Mayor stated that currently we are in a situation where it is under great management and we are getting great revenue out of it. Mayor Wimmer questioned what kind of sales we would need to generate in order to continue to bring the same amount of money to the bottom line of the City while also

paying the capital costs of the new store. John Jacobi, Liquor Store Manager, addressed Council and discussed the possibility of Sunday sales and new conditions. He also pointed out our record year last year. The Liquor Committee would like to have goals in place such as a certain year in which they will look again at the plans as a possibility of expanding the store. Jacobi stated that the lack of space is the greatest issue. Further discussion took place about what it would take to repay the cost of building a new store, or expanding the current store. The Mayor stated he would like to see this item go to Finance Committee to come up with some numbers to evaluate, and at that time we would have a better idea of when the City could look at a target date for the store.

**k. Public Works and Police Department Storage**

The Mayor identified that there is storage located all over the City, however, it is not efficient. Public Services Director/Assistant City Administrator, Josi Wood, spoke to Council informing them of the needs of Public Works. Chief of Police Gene Hill also spoke in regards to his department needs for storage, and the expense of items that are currently gaining wear and tear due to the storage constraints. The item was directed to Finance Committee to research to budget for 2018.

Mayor Wimmer explained these goals will be brought before Council to be assigned to Committees for consideration. He also thanked and praised Staff for their work.

**Adjournment**

Motion by Bergley, second by Collison to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 10:27 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Clark A. Joslin, Facilitator  
Isanti City Attorney