

**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
GOAL SETTING SESSION  
CITY OF ISANTI  
January 28, 2013**

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m.

Members Present: Mayor George Wimmer, Councilors Dan Collison, Steve Lundeen, Adam Johnson and Sue Larson.

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: City Attorney Clark Joslin as Facilitator, City Administrator/City Clerk Don Lorsung, Human Resources/Deputy City Clerk Karissa Henning, Finance Director Sarah Cotton, Liquor Store Manager John Jacobi, Economic Development Director Sean Sullivan, Planning and Parks Director Lisa Wilson, City Engineer Brad DeWolf, Police Chief Ron Sager and Public Works Director Pat Meyer.

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

**Overview of 2009 - 2012 Top Goals**

Joslin reviewed the top goals from previous years and they were as follows:

**2009**

- Long Term Financial Plan
- Commercial Tax Base
- Disaster Plan
- New Personnel Policy
- City Multi Modal Transportation Plan

**2010**

- Economic Development Comprehensive Plan
- Downtown Plan
- Consideration of EDA to an HRA
- Continue work on Rail Industrial Park
- Budgeting without LGA
- Establishing a list of cuts and prioritize budget items
- Determine the percentage of general funds to reserve
- Restructuring bonded debt

**2011**

- Restructure City Government – Joslin discussed Community Meetings/Outcome

**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

It was indicated that majority of the goals were completed. Councilor questions and project history were discussed that included the Pedestrian Bridge Project, Rail Industrial Park, Economic Development efforts and organizations, EDA and HRA concepts, the Isanti Community Center Task Force efforts to date/next steps and physical condition of the building/equipment/parking lot and recent fundraising efforts.

Joslin then asked each City Councilmember to comment on what they were pleased about with the 2009-2012 Goals.

- Councilor Larson – Economic Development Efforts
- Councilor Johnson – Financial Planning and Marketing of Isanti
- Mayor Wimmer – Long Term Financial Planning
- Councilor Lundeen – Economic Development – Past efforts/Upcoming Opportunities
- Councilor Collison – Financial Planning – Budgeting w/o LGA, Commercial and Residential Marketing Efforts

Joslin then asked each City Councilmember to comment on areas in the 2009-2012 Goals that needed more review and work.

- Councilor Larson – Historic Downtown Area – More planning and economic development effort needed for vibrant Downtown
- Councilor Johnson – Downtown Development – Need Businesses to attract traffic. Make it a destination
- Mayor Wimmer – Downtown – Discussed past Efforts, rail/bus planning to connect to Metro and amenities that would draw residents downtown and First Avenue Loop
- Councilor Lundeen – Downtown – Businesses moved to CSAH 5, agreed First Avenue Loop need. Community Center – largest major goal left
- Councilor Collison – Downtown – Businesses not open on Sundays and times that are convenient to residents

More discussion was had concerning past Downtown activities and that the City has been facilitating recent projects, such as the Historic Downtown Sign. Sullivan noted that the Chamber's Downtown Committee had been disbanded.

Mayor Wimmer gave a presentation on the Long Term Financial Plans. The purpose of the plan is to look long range at revenue, fund balances and expenses, as the City moves through a time period with a lower tax base. The presentation included information on the long term financial plan, comparison of taxes received based upon residential housing size, change in percentages of owner occupied and rental housing, the Hwy 65 corridor, Isanti's niche commercial and smaller retail draw, strengths include the industrial park and successes with industrial firms, and city tax base shift from 2009 to 2012, city general fund balances, savings in City operations in that time period, use of grants for equipment, local government aid use, and future capital replacement funds needs.

After a short break, a report on City Finances was given by Cotton that covered the following items: General Financial Conditions, Capital Improvement Plan projects and equipment, City debt/bonds, Union Contracts/terms, Health Insurance and Cotton's planning for an upcoming personal leave.

Sullivan gave a report on the 2013 EDA Marketing/Work Plan and current projects. Sullivan discussed that there are several projects in various stages, local job creation and Isanti strengths with recruitment, and neighboring community draws that may affect Isanti. Sullivan discussed the need for additional marketing funding. The EDA has reviewed the 2013 Work Plan, and has recommended its approval to the City Council. Staff will put the plan on the February 5, 2013 City Council meeting for consideration.

Joslin stated that this was the point in goal setting where the City Council had the opportunity to ask City staff any questions they had on projects and operations. Discussion was had concerning Liquor Store operations/future of the store /site, and store size needs/events and signage costs. Community signage on Hwy 65 was also discussed.

Joslin then began the City Council Goal Setting with a Visioning Session and asked the City Councilmembers to state what their vision was for Isanti.

- Councilor Larson – Make the Isanti Community Center viable with Marketing. Economic Development – Marketing for the City of Isanti, fill the Industrial Park and East 65 Commercial Area. Look at CSAH 5 Corridor (it's a baby Hwy 95) and address issues.
- Councilor Johnson – Prepare a Larger Over-arching Plan and Vision for Isanti, promote its own unique attributes, close to metro for commuting, small town amenities, have more downtown draws. Cambridge is close enough for some amenities but more restaurant options are needed.
- Mayor Wimmer – Define and work towards Isanti's Niche. Be able to afford and fund operations and needs independently, 10 year plan for that, Develop assets and tax base. Heavy lifting for downtown, commercial, etc. needs to come from City to make plans happen. Systematic plan to make city self-supporting.
- Councilor Lundeen – Grow the downtown and restaurant base, Isanti is in a great position to make things happen, Isanti will grow and standards do not have to be given up, Main Street has shifted to include CSAH 5, Continue to grow Isanti, have the City Council agree on standards, retain the small town feeling.
- Councilor Collison – Concentrate on being Isanti, don't compete with neighboring cities, keep hometown/small town feeling, have efficient services, have wider spread commercial, beyond downtown, concentrating on smaller industrial/retail businesses.

Joslin reviewed a composite of ideas discussed that included themes of: Growth Continues, "Hometown Feel", Niche (Identity), Self Sufficiency, Maintain Efficiencies, and Best Practices. It was commented that over the next 5 years current services should be maintained.

A lunch break was taken in the session at 11:50 a.m.

The goal setting session was reconvened at 12:20 p.m. Joslin then asked City Councilmembers to list their top goals for 2013.

- Councilor Collison –
  - a. Promote and retain existing businesses
  - b. Look at a City owned sign on Highway 65
  - c. Community Center – Work on self sustaining through marketing and providing amenities (horseshoe pits, ping pong tables, etc.)
  - d. Rum River Meadows Park – Look at basketball court and sand volleyball court
  - e. Martin’s Landing – Work with DNR to Improve
  - f. Public Works Department – Look at Efficiencies, PW Building Space Issues, Parking Area Surfacing, Use of Salt for Winter Plowing
  - g. Development – Residential and Industrial – Heading in right direction, keep working on this
- Councilor Lundeen
  - a. Community Center – How to fund and maintain – top priority
  - b. Continue growth of Industrial, Commercial and Retail businesses in town
  - c. Street Lighting and Sidewalks – general public safety – look into
  - d. Park System – Continue to develop amenities in the parks we have (ex. another pavilion in Bluebird Park)
  - e. Building Permit Costs – Regarding sac/wac fees – why higher than adjacent communities – need to be competitive
- Mayor Wimmer
  - a. In-house Utility Billing – review, prepare proposal, look at contract with current vendor
  - b. City Website – Needs to be cleaned up and updated with more economic development focus
  - c. Capital Improvements – Need to define funding for priority projects, (ex. CSAH 5 Sidewalks, street lights)
  - d. Employee Groups – include non bargaining group in benefits discussion
  - e. Maintain City Standards – Consistent standards at all levels for nuisances and regulations.
  - f. HRA Option – Review it as option to purchase/manage properties for downtown loop and development
- Councilor Johnson
  - a. City Website – needs update – include new pictures of industrial park and parks
  - b. Hwy 65 & CSAH 5 – What are we looking for in development out there (needs planning)
  - c. CSAH 5 – Downtown includes CSAH 5. Needs to be cleaned up with consistent planned development (markets city)
  - d. Downtown Plan – review and complete a new plan
  - e. HRA Option – Would assist with Isanti on path to being an independent city with unique identity, consider this option

- Councilor Larson
  - a. Community Center – look at options – figure out how to make it sustainable
  - b. Downtown – make it successful
  - c. HRA Option – may be a good decision – help market the City and increase tax base
  - d. CSAH 5 – There are multiple issues (look and appeal), need sidewalks in place and look further at Credit Union Drive Option for traffic flow.
  - e. Utility Billing – this is a sore spot with residents, will need part-time staff to assist.

**Mayor Wimmer summarized the 2013 goals**

**1. Community Center**

- a. Finalize process
  - b. Need to make it financially viable
2. HRA Option - Work on Business Loop
  3. CSAH 5 Aesthetic (appearance) Standards and Traffic Flow Evaluation
  4. City Website Update
  5. Maintain City Standards – Consistency on City Standards at all levels
  6. Utility Billing – Pursue In House Option
  7. Continue Economic Development Efforts to Diversify and Increase the Tax Base.

Mayor Wimmer acknowledged that there were other items discussed and that staff will direct those to the appropriate Committees for consideration

**Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Clark A. Joslin, Facilitator  
Isanti City Attorney