

City of Portland

Portland, Michigan

Minutes of the City Council Goal Session

Held on Saturday, January 15, 2011

In the Executive Conference Room at City Hall

Present: Mayor Barnes, Mayor Pro-Tem Clement, Council Members VanSlambrouck, Calley and Fabiano, City Manager Dempsey, and City Clerk Miller

The session was called to order at 9:06 A.M. by Mayor Barnes.

During the Opening Remarks, City Manager Dempsey and Mayor Barnes stated the purpose of the goal setting session to have a high level discussion of the goals of the City Council. Department Heads have supplied a wish list/necessities/goals for their departments.

There was discussion of how the department goals may be limited by cuts at the State level. Council Member Fabiano suggested that department heads provide suggestions for cuts they could make to their departments.

Under Council Priorities, City Manager Dempsey explained the purpose of the Budget Priority Questionnaire.

There was discussion that costs associated with items on the questionnaire would be helpful.

Mayor Pro-Tem Clement suggested a pay scale for employees that tops out at a level that stays constant rather than increasing with years of service be considered.

City Manager Dempsey explained the current pay grades and how they top out and then increase with cost of living adjustments.

Mayor Pro-Tem Clement suggested not increasing pay scales to keep good employees but looking at other types of incentives.

There was further discussion of this issue.

Council Member Calley stated that the City of Portland can't always be compared to what other communities are doing; have to work within the city's budget.

Mayor Pro-Tem Clement stated that she doesn't want to convey the message that good employees are not valuable.

City Manager Dempsey stated that Portland is unique in that most employees wear multiple "hats". The staff is smaller than many similar sized communities.

Council Member VanSlambrouck inquired as to the areas that City Manager Dempsey sees as possibilities for cuts.

City Manager Dempsey stated that all General Fund departments will be looking at cuts, but this is somewhat dependent on what happens at the State level. Deferring capital costs will be the first to be considered and then cutting staff.

The Council suggested looking at retirement incentives and lower pay scales for new employees.

Under Council Goals, Council Member VanSlambrouck stated he believes the City should take an active role in recruitment for development and should be concerned with maintaining City standards. It is important to “look” attractive. Examples of areas needing to be maintained are the River Trail, moving the grass, etc.

Mayor Pro-Tem Clement concurred with Council Member VanSlambrouck and stated that there is a need for higher income families to move into the area. There should be a focus on bringing educated working families to the City. The quality of life in Portland is what attracts people to move here. She further stated that priority should be given to those departments that keep the City attractive such as the Parks and Recreation Departments. The City should also fund projects for the Economic Development Corporation such as videos and obtaining professional opinions.

Council Member Fabiano stated that he is in favor of a \$0 or negative growth budget where there will be sacrifices the same as families have to make. There are big costs coming such as the legacy costs for upcoming retirees.

There was discussion of succession plans and the need to train an employee or employees to be able to run departments if needed.

Council Member Calley stated that he agrees with economic development but sees the infrastructure as more of an incentive than anything else in attracting development and sees it as a priority to maintain the funds that support the infrastructure. He agrees with City residents that don't want to become a “bigger city” but want to maintain the small town atmosphere.

Mayor Barnes stated that job security for City employees in knowing they won't be laid off or cut to the point that it's not the position they hired for is a priority. He further stated he would rather see across the board reductions. He doesn't want to let employees go for budgetary reasons. City employees are not a dollar sign; they have knowledge and are committed to the City. He also stated that many City employees are on the Fire Department which is like having a standing Fire Department.

Mayor Pro-Tem Clement suggested the possibility of a survey of residents and City employees in regard to potential budget cuts.

Mayor Barnes presented the scores on the City Manager evaluation.

Goals for the year were presented and discussed.

- **Resolving the Fire Authority Issue.** Council Member Fabiano gave an update on its progress. Danby and Portland Townships have been holding meetings without the City. A final draft of the agreement was agreed on at a meeting last week. Since then, one of the Townships stated its unhappiness with the funding formula and nothing has been heard since.
- **Potential property acquisition at Two Rivers Park.** There was discussion of whether this project should go forward given the possible effect on the General Fund.

- **Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvement Project.** The Plant is currently at approximately 70% capacity. The DEQ states that at 80% capacity the increase of capacity needs to be considered. For this reason, the City is looking to improve the Wastewater Treatment Plant with the current project. If more capacity is needed in the future for possible development, this could be negotiated with a potential developer.

City Manager Dempsey stated that the financing for the Project needs to be closed and the project needs to move forward. He is still working on possible offsets for wastewater rate increases. One possibility is the refunding of ½ of security deposits on utility services to customers with good payment history.

- **Old School Manor.** City Manager Dempsey stated that the building continues to deteriorate. He is keeping up on efforts to keep individuals out of the building and looking at possibilities for development of the property. One possibility is tearing down the building and dividing the property into lots for single family homes.

The Council stated the goal to return the Old School Manor property to the tax roll.

Long term goals were presented and discussed.

- **DPW Building.** Council Member VanSlambrouck stated the need for a DPW building to protect City equipment and assets and a need to start considering funding for this need.

City Manager Dempsey stated that a local area resident will be doing an internship with the City this semester to help develop plans and costs for a DPW building.

Mayor Pro-Tem Clement asked if the intern could also develop plans for the building at the Grand Dam Arts Center.

- **Funding Retirements.** Council Member Calley stated the City needs to be looking at funding the retirements of long term employees and their succession plans.

There was further discussion of this issue.

- **Fiber Optics.** City Manager Dempsey he will be trying to incorporate this goal in the next year or two. Fiber needs to be purchased and installed to tie the DPW into already existing fiber lines. Once this is accomplished the City will be able to upgrade its phone system and tie into the Public Schools phone system.
- **Sidewalk to High School along Ionia Rd.** Mayor Barnes stated the need for this sidewalk.

City Manager Dempsey stated the City has no control of this as not all of the property is in the City limits. This will only happen if the City takes over responsibility for the sidewalk.

- **Paving of Cutler Rd.** City Manager Dempsey gave an update on the progress in getting Cutler Rd. paved. The 2010 Census results have not been published yet; this will be a determining factor in the progress of this project. The earliest this could take place is 2015 if the City of Portland can be included in an urban cluster. If population does not increase enough to be

placed in an urban cluster and remains part of the rural task force then possible funding for the project is even more dismal.

- **Radio Meters.** City Manager Dempsey stated the timing of this project needs to be determined. Currently, specs are being put together to get bids. This will need to be addressed within 1 to 3 years.
- **Water tower painting and maintenance.** City Manager Dempsey stated that costs for this is approximately \$80,000 and will extend the life of the water tower 10 to 15 years. This project needs to be addressed within the next 2 years.
- **City engineer.** Council Member VanSlambrouck mentioned the possibility of having a city engineer on staff with the City of Portland to help with the planning of projects.

There was discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of having a city engineer on staff.

Mayor Pro-Tem Clement suggested the possibility of this as Department Heads are replaced over time.

- **City planner.** Mayor Pro-Tem Clement stated that she would like to see a city planner on staff in the future.
- **Bridge replacement.** City Manager Dempsey stated that he has been talking with MDOT recently about the bridge replacement. He has been talking with planners and developing a Complete Streets Program to apply for a grant for a pedestrian way along Grand River Ave. The City would need to spend approximately \$15,000 to get a 75% matching grant. Should this be done? City Manager Dempsey further explained where the discussions with MDOT are at.

The Council further discussed this issue.

Mayor Barnes suggested having a similar workshop meeting with the Council during the summer to discuss goals, etc.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

James E. Barnes, Mayor

Monique I. Miller, City Clerk