



# CITY COUNCIL

## Strategic Planning Committee

**Monday, March 3, 2014**  
**Meeting Report**

**Attending:** J. Waltman, C. Daubert (Co Chairs); M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, D. Sterner, D. Reed, F. Acosta, S. Marmarou

**Others Attending:** L. Kelleher, C. Younger, D. Kersley, B. Rivera

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Waltman at approximately 5:55pm.

### **1. 2014 Strategic Planning Priorities**

Mr. Kersley stated that in an effort to provide focus on the setting of priorities for 2014, he and Ms. Snyder have come up with a list of 2014 issues. The list has been ranked by the Department Directors. He distributed the list to Council and noted the need for Council to rank the issues.

Mr. Kersley stated that and that he welcomes Council's input and suggestions for the addition or deletion of items. He stated that he and Ms. Snyder would facilitate further discussions at the next Strategic Planning meeting after the issues are ranked by Council.

Mr. Kersley noted that on the handout Act 73 and the Water System Lease would be "front and center" issues.

Mr. Waltman stated that Act 73 discussions would likely take most of the year but he stated that there are a few other issues he would like to see on the agenda. Some of them are: the Pagoda Foundation, revisiting Codes, the Blighted Property situation and general Capital Improvements. He also suggested that Act 111 be on this list. He suggested a meeting between Mr. Daubert, Mr. Kersley, Ms. Snyder and himself to go over some items not on the list.

Ms. Reed suggested that we should also be focusing on the downtown area as she believes downtown core is critical. She noted the need to focus on business retention, attracting new businesses, along with marketing and infrastructure needs. She also stressed the need for the City to improve and expand neighborhood organizations.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she is concerned about Council's continued recycling of smaller issues that should just be resolved quickly which would allow the forward movement of more crucial items. She suggested that Council learn to keep discussions focused.

Mr. Waltman agreed and stated that Council must come up with a system to ranking items weighted by urgency and need, which will eliminate the need to deal with items that are not under Council's purview.

Mr. Sterner suggested that Council should apply a reality check to the rating of items, based on the City's abilities.

Mr. Kersley agreed with Council on the various points brought up and assured Council that these are all things that are being done on some level.

Mr. Daubert agreed with Mr. Sterner saying that each item should be assigned a certain time to be discussed and a resolution deadline so that we do not keep recycling these issues.

Mr. Marmarou agreed with the need to build and support additional neighborhood organizations.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed that we need to deal with some of the less important items quickly so that our focus can be on the "big ticket" items.

Mr. Waltman stated that it is imperative that Council and the administration be on the same page regarding these priorities. He noted that a unified position is critical to the City's success.

Mr. Acosta questioned why CDC is not on this list. Mr. Waltman asked why the CDC should be included. Mr. Acosta responded that since the CDC's main focus is on the development of the downtown core, it should be on this list. He noted that this CDC is held privately but uses public funds. Mr. Waltman agreed with Mr. Acosta's point and added that our vision should be united in terms of "*can we do it, do we do it and should we do it?*"

Mr. Kersley explained that this is the reason a handout was devised. There are 105 objectives to cover and we must set smart, specific, attainable and realistic goals in order to move forward in resolving them.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that Council also need to define their role as legislators. She stated that while Council will rank the issues, the Administration must carry them forward. She also suggested that a review of ordinances should be added to the list.

Mr. Waltman stated that he will meet with administration to put together a list including all the items that were discussed thus far. He stated that he believes the city is becoming more stable

and its people are not as transient as in the past. He noted the need to support our small businesses and not forget about other surrounding neighborhoods.

There was a brief discussion on why the Ricktown effort started and why it failed to be successful.

Mr. Daubert believes that what the City needs is to build momentum by quickly dealing with smaller “low hanging fruit”.

## **2. Meeting Updates**

### **▪ Act 47**

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that Ms. Reed has been regularly attending these bimonthly meetings; however, she noted that some issues should be heard by the whole body of Council. She gave Act 47 as an example stating that she has heard issues that the whole body of council should be involved with and doesn't feel are.

Ms Reed responded that the minutes of the Act 47 meetings reflect all that is discussed at the meetings and it is the responsibility of council members to read those minutes. Ms. Kelleher noted that the minutes are also shared with PFM and the DCED, along with minutes from Finance Committee meetings.

Ms. Kelleher stated that Mr. Mann plans to attend every other Finance Committee.

### **▪ Nominations and Appointments**

Ms. Kelleher stated that many applications are currently tied up in the Mayor's office. All background checks were completed but these applications have not moved forward for the interview process. She stated that Ms. Katzenmoyer has inquired numerous times on these various applications to no avail.

Council requested an update on these applications and why they are being held up for so long.

### **▪ Standards of Living**

Mr. Waltman stated that street repairs will be an obvious issue given the harsh winter weather. He added that the installment of the UGI meters is also an on-going matter.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz commented that the enactment of the street cut ordinances has been implemented and will assist in correcting some issues with the UGI meters.

Mr. Waltman stated that bridge projects are a very important issue as well.

Ms. Reed noted that the repairs of the bridges will be progressive, beginning with the Schuylkill Avenue Bridge, followed by the Buttonwood Street and Penn Street bridges, respectfully.

Mr. Acosta noted the importance of the Buttonwood Street Bridge as many people travel on foot across that bridge to get to the Reading Hospital. He inquired if there will be an alternate route for pedestrians. He noted the importance of communicating with the people.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed adding that we also need to educate the public on the importance of repairing our infrastructure. Our bridges are in desperate need of repairs.

Ms. Reed reminded council that the bridge repair is not a City project. She stated that the Buttonwood Street bridge is a County bridge and the Schuylkill Avenue and Penn Street bridges are State bridges. She sees this as an on-going matter coordinated by Alan Piper and RATS (Reading Area Transportation Study) for at least the next six years. She suggested inviting Alan Piper from RATS to discuss the bridge repairs with Council. She noted that the City has representation on both the RATS and the Transportation Technical Committee.

Mr. Acosta noted that the Penn Street bridge will be closing for repair at the same time the Penn Street hotel opens. He stated that these issues require coordination.

Mr. Acosta suggested that perhaps we can implement temporary changes in our streets, such as changing traffic flow directions, installing signage to prevent stopping/parking so as not interrupt flow of traffic in certain, more congested areas, etc. He noted that the majority of the displaced traffic will be forced onto the Bingaman Street Bridge. He stated that there are already traffic problems in this South 5<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood due to the Tyson Schoener Elementary School. He inquired if curbside parking could be prohibited in front of schools to allow student curbside drop off and pick up, which could correct the double parking problems.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the unresolved problems with large trucks attempting to pass through the "short" railroad bridge on Laurel Street. She suggested placing a sign with the bridge's dimensions on Laurel Street, approximately one block away from the bridge, which could warn trucks in advance and prevent trucks from then having to back out to avoid going through the bridge.

At this point, Mr. Waltman adjourned the meeting at 6:50pm.

*Respectfully Submitted by,  
Bea Rivera, Legislative Aide*