

LAKELAND CITY COMMISSION

Strategic Planning Retreat May 14, 2024

The Lakeland City Commission met for the Strategic Planning Retreat at the RP Funding Center in the Lake Hollingsworth Room. Mayor Bill Mutz and Commissioners Chad McLeod, Bill Read, Stephanie Madden, Sara Roberts McCarley, Mike Musick, and Guy LaLonde were present. City Manager Shawn Sherrouse, City Attorney Palmer Davis, Finance Director Mike Brossart, and City Clerk Kelly Koos were present along with other staff members and the media. The facilitator Merrill Stewart was also present.

Merrill Stewart called the meeting to order at 8:09 a.m.

Opening Remarks, Recap of Day 2, and Goals for Today.

Target Area 3: Public Safety Presentations with Q&A - Chief Sammy Taylor.

Commission Discussion:

Commissioner Mike Musick: Do the 35 officers include an officer for the Explorer Program? No.

Mayor Bill Mutz: What kind of hiring mix between experienced and recruits? Chief Taylor: Approximately 50/50. We do not have many officers in the middle right now.

Mayor Bill Mutz asked about the recent 25 in and 25 out. Chief Taylor: There was no predominate reason. Some retired, some took other jobs, some moved out of state.

Mayor Bill Mutz: Are there other drone opportunities besides the subscription model? Chief Hans Lehman: The whole business has switched to subscription base. With that, if the drone crashes, the subscription replaces the drone. The program was for 4-6 drones.

Mayor Bill Mutz: Has LPD started training out of body cam videos? Chief Taylor: We have established a library of videos displaying the right way to handle situations. He is working to build the library with Lakeland officers in Lakeland locations.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde wanted to hear more about retention and to do more for wellness. He did not know recruits had to be 21 years of age to become a police officer. Chief Taylor: We do more than just the mental health application. We have peer support. When there is a shooting, the peer support is with the officer. We also provide support for the dispatcher and the crime scene. We need to improve supporting the detectives dealing with child sex crimes. We also need to support the forensic officers investigating the computer sex crimes.

Commissioner Bill Read: Have you lost officers over promotional issues? Chief Taylor: We made an adjustment on the assessment center. They changed the requirements to promote to lieutenant to allow for experience in lieu of a college degree. He did not think they had lost anyone in the last two years over lack of a promotion.

Commissioner Bill Read: Is there anything in strategic planning that you think we may be deficient in? Chief Taylor: No. The administration and commission are always supportive. He is not frivolous with his requests.

Mayor Bill Mutz asked about the Real Time Crime Center (RTCC). Chief Lehman: The Sheriffs' Office operates an RTCC 24/7. Lakeland is Monday - Friday 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. If we increased staffing and worked with software enhancements, we could expand. Some officers have access to their laptops and will do data mining in the field. Civilian analysts would be a benefit. Chief Taylor: Those are expensive for staff.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden: Is there a way LE and LPD could partner to share the costs of drones? Chief Taylor was open to that idea.

Fire - Chief Doug Riley

Commission Discussion:

Commissioner Mike Musick asked what the benefit of transferring equipment was rather than adding new equipment. Chief Riley: Moving the truck to Station 8 does nothing for Rescue 1. It does help Station 3.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde: Do you think there could be a need for additional rescue trucks? Chief Riley: Yes, in the future. His concern today was that he cannot fill the vacancies he has now. There is no point in adding resources when he cannot fill today's vacancies.

Mayor Bill Mutz asked if they could change the geographic assignments. Chief Riley: We could but it could increase response time which is not acceptable for the citizens.

Mayor Bill Mutz asked about lead time on rescue units. Approximately 1-year.

Mayor Bill Mutz would like to see a review of response times. Is there any chance of putting a station on the Williams land?

Commissioner Chad McLeod: At what point would you envision beginning the process to build the station in southwest Lakeland. Chief Riley: It is never too early to start conversations. It just takes a long time to get from point A to point B. It would be irresponsible to say we need to build that station today. They could use that station to house the 2nd ARFF truck to keep it out of the elements or have a truck to respond from both sides of the airport.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley: Does technology help with response time such as Waze and traffic notifications. Chief Riley: They take their numbers for response times from the actual calls.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley: But is there technology that can improve response time going forward? Also, are fire stations part of the consideration as growth is planned. Chief Riley: We are part of those conversations. We meet with partners and keep an eye on developments. We knew they were coming, and we study those response times.

Commissioner Bill Read appreciated the conversation today. Are we doing anything with drones? Chief Riley we are following behind police with drones. That is their wheelhouse.

Commissioner Bill Read: As we are rezoning it is important to think ahead and reserve a location. It is important to have the vision and watch for needed site locations to save money.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden would like to see the historic data sent to the innovation office to model for the future. They might use that for forecasting at strategic planning sessions.

Hiring Recruiting and Retention – Chief Doug Riley

Commission Discussion:

Mayor Bill Mutz: The vacancies are compelling. It is across industry. There are 1,500 vacancies statewide.

Commissioner Chad McLeod: The 16 who left for other departments, are they going to local departments or elsewhere? Chief Riley: The most recent trend shows they have all been local. They say they are leaving for the overall package.

Commissioner Mike Musick: We need to have a conversation on how to become competitive again. These young adults are savvy in looking for the best position. Chief Riley: The folks leaving are satisfied with the facilities but are leaving for better benefits.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde: Excellent presentation. We do need to be part of the cure to retain qualified employees.

Commissioner Bill Read: This was eye opening. We may have to implement a Fire fee to help make Lakeland competitive.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden asked Chief Riley if he looked at approaches. Do we have an option to add a different shift option? Can you have different shift options? Do

the shifts have to all be uniform? Chief Riley did not know of any department that offered shift options. It would take some research.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley: This is a special unique group of people - police and fire. We are missing the boat. We need to look at the human aspect of this. What makes someone raise their hand to go into this field. Are we missing something that is a human attribute that we are not recognizing?

Target Area 3: Public Safety - Goals Discussion

1. Provide outstanding public safety response and prevention services, especially in response to population growth.
2. Prevent crime through environmental design, safe neighborhoods, safe places for kids, and pedestrian safety.
3. Cultivate a supportive, inclusive, and respectful work environment that values diversity, teamwork, and innovation, and promotes employee well-being, morale, and job satisfaction.

Mayor Bill Mutz: #1 add modeling before response.

Commissioner Chad McLeod: Does 1 capture recruitment? # 3 does.

Mayor Bill Mutz: #2 through environmental design and maximizing technology.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde: Maybe more interaction between kids and Fire.

Replace pedestrian safety with Vision 0.

#2 could focus on fire too not just police.

Commissioner Mike Musick would like to see fire and police diverge on this one. We could have a separate goal for fire.

Merrill Stewart: Should we have a goal for fire?

Commissioner Mike Musick: Start thinking about the future before it is here. Provide excellence in safety and compassion by LFD through adequate responsive services.

Mayor Bill Mutz: Provide excellence in safety and compassion by LFD through adequate responsive services. Merrill Stewart will take this and work on it.

#3 add Sustain after Cultivate. Add innovation so it reads Cultivate and Sustain.

Promoting creative employee well-being.

Commissioner Mike Musick: We must talk about the need to retain.

Mayor Bill Mutz: How do we deal with the felt needs of the younger generation?

Chief Riley liked the goals and wanted to add fire prevention to the proposed #4.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde wanted to add something about engaging our youth. Promoting the call of public service

Commissioner Chad McLeod: If we do not get these two areas right, nothing else matters.

Other initiatives: alternative shifts, RTCC, PAL Building, Williams to carve out space for a fire station, pursuit of grants.

Break from 10:04 a.m. to 10:21 a.m.

Target Area 4: Culture Presentations with Q&A

Commission Discussion:

Commissioner Chad McLeod asked about an employee engagement survey? Mark Farrington: That was being handled by CMO. We need to first decide what type of information we are looking for.

Shawn Sherrouse: We do have that budgeted. We have a meeting with a possible vendor later this week.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde: Are we addressing the upscaling or rescaling of our associates, especially those on the cusp of staying or leaving? Mark Farrington: Managers sometimes notice an employee at risk; and will engage with HR on how to change that. Upscaling - there are 16 different departments with different needs. How do you make that happen? We try to do a lot through training, coaching, and the classroom. We try to see how a department can best provide training.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley: LAMTD has an annual employee survey. HR must be a trustworthy arm of the entity. How are we auditing our practices in HR? Is there a consulting firm that could look holistically at what our HR department is doing? How are we pushing that forward? If we are not doing this well or its not trustworthy, we need to make sure that this piece of our bricks and mortar works well. Mark Farrington stated, in early March he did a data run to summarize how we are doing. We have looked at time to fill a vacancy, turnover which is down, and marketplace applications. We are trying to see how we develop the people we have and what will keep them here as well as attract people. We have not looked at bringing in an audit firm.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley: The public facing employees need to work as cheerleaders for the city. She just wants to make sure it is a safe environment.

Sometimes it takes extra eyes to see blind spots. Mark Farrington did engagement surveys before coming to the public sector. Surveys help leadership know how people feel and measure the gaps between departments. After the survey you develop proactive measures.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden was glad to hear the employee engagement survey is on the way. She wanted to capture the general feelings of employees. Do they feel empowered or micromanaged, silo vs cross communication etc.? She found that professionals right out of college might want something different than a working parent. How do we approach that subject for working parents. She found the presentation to be lacking in how we approach parents. She hoped to hear about childcare, and maternity/paternity leave. Mark Farrington: Those types of benefits are a joint effort. He invited Joyce Dias forward.

Merrill Stewart: Part of the answer may lie in the employee engagement survey. She thought this was an actionable item.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden: Maybe we do not have a lot of people asking for it because they go elsewhere.

Joyce Dias felt they talked about it a lot. Employees take advantage of FMLA, and we are also creating lactation rooms. We talk about it a lot with employees.

Commissioner Mike Musick: We have had some common threads through all of this. Putting on roofs is easy. It is the people part that is difficult. It is not easy to do what HR is trying to do.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley: How are we, in our policies, changing the way we speak from male centric department heads and even politicians? Old talent looked a certain way. The framework around how we talk about HR is very important. Are we being inclusive? Diversity of thought and experience are also important. The reason she is asking for an audit is to make sure we are building a fabric that is malleable and nimble to accept all sorts of talent. She wants to make sure everyone is welcome at the table and that we listen to what they are saying.

Mayor Bill Mutz: We are wrestling to being prosaic/reactive and progressive/flexible. Things we thought were not realistic, employees now think are needs. Questions are our friends. The challenge is to maintain the stability and service and hire/retain employees. If we want to be a world class organization, we must have a world class way to gather that data.

Commissioner Mike Musick asked about response rate for an employee survey.

Mayor Bill Mutz thought 85% would be a good response.

Shawn Sherrouse: We are meeting with the City of Largo later this week. They have recently done an employee engagement survey. It has been about 2 years since he met with work groups across the city. We talked about satisfaction and engagement. There were common threads in that discussion, especially pay. We have worked on that. We will continue to look at that every 3 years to make sure we do not lose ground. Work schedules - we now have alternative work schedules. Rewards and recognition - employees have asked for time off as a reward. We now have multi-tiered health insurance at employee requests. We are now at a place where we have fixed the low hanging fruit. Now we will do an employee engagement survey to see how we can improve. This will also help with retention and recruitment.

Commissioner Bill Read thought this was an interesting subject. We have diverse employees. This has been an enlightening discussion.

Communications – Communications Director, Kevin Cook.

Commission Discussion:

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley appreciated the strategy piece. She was a big proponent of centralization. What do you see that would be most beneficial to keep the flow of information to our public to be as good or better and how do we marry those things together? Kevin Cook appreciated the Commission allowing the investment they have made. We have had a space study done in our communications area. Tomorrow, we are meeting with the architect to see how we can better our space. We are hoping to add one more employee.

Commissioner Mike Musick: How are you able to do more with the same number of staff? Kevin Cook: When we started, we had a vision. We melded LE's marketing department and Kevin Cook as the PIO. We have evolved by changing positions as people retired, that and efficiencies.

Commissioner Chad McLeod: Is the idea of centralized communications moving forward? Kevin Cook saw efficiencies of scale and one voice one brand.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden appreciated Kevin Cook making sure the department will be in good hands when he exits the organization. How do we build trust and implement a centralized communications department? Kevin Cook suggested that if we are going to start this, we start with just General Fund departments.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden: Do you look at cost comparison between internal/external? Kevin Cook did not look at that.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden: If you went to centralized communications, do you use any outside agency support? No.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden: You mentioned your mobile production tools, could you use a podcast room in addition to mobile tools? Kevin Cook: We need mobile podcast studio solutions. The mobile tools he was talking about were for live streaming meetings.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden: Where would you envision an optimal location for a centralized communications department? Kevin Cook: We have already designed the area for an additional person. Real estate at City Hall is difficult to come by. He wants to stay at City Hall, but he does not want to force someone else to leave.

Mayor Bill Mutz complimented Kevin Cook on things like Andrew's Commission Meeting summary. Communication through a single voice is very important. The reason for that is because that is the place where all the nuances are known. The quiet morphing that you have done over the years should be highly complimented. It would be great to celebrate our employees with frequency.

Commissioner Mike Musick: When you are talking about being understaffed, is there an opportunity to utilize interns? Kevin Cook: We use an intern every summer. Internships are usually over the summer. They are highly effective, and we put them to work right away.

Shawn Sherrouse: He and Kevin Cook have been talking about a centralized communications effort.

Lunch: 11:35 a.m. to 12:49 p.m.

Target Area 4: Culture - Goals Discussion Additional Presentations with Q&A

1. Develop an informed and engaged community where people feel invited to take an active role in their City.
2. Strengthen governance structures, processes, and mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability, and integrity in decision-making and public service delivery. (*City Operations*)
3. Invest in cultural institutions, heritage preservation, and arts programming to enrich the cultural fabric of the city and enhance quality of life for residents. (*Community Theatre, Mayors Council on the Arts, City Hall Improvements*)
4. Enhance community well-being by ensuring accessibility to services that enrich quality of life for seniors, youth, and families. (*Senior Center, PAL Youth Development*)
5. Forge partnerships with stakeholders, to leverage resources, expertise, and networks in addressing shared challenges and achieving common goals. (*Partnerships*)

Merrill Stewart wanted to address some of the initiatives. They are denoted in ().

Merrill Stewart anything for goal #1?

Mayor Bill Mutz: What is the How of #1? Merrill Stewart: It could be communications or different activities.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden: Do we have the capacity to develop an informed and engaged community?

Commissioner Guy LaLonde: Or centralized communication?

Mayor Bill Mutz: Or is it sustain an informed and engaged community?

Commissioner Mike Musick: Or continue to develop?

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley: This was not necessarily a goal just for Communications.

Merrill Stewart anything for goal #2?

Commissioner Stephanie Madden thought the goal reminded her of autocratic and bureaucracy.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley: What if we just say strengthen transparency?

Mayor Bill Mutz: What if you just say enhance trust?

Merrill Stewart: Should this be two goals, build trust and be collaborative? What would be the result of the collaborative goal?

Commissioner Chad McLeod: Sustainability of the future workforce? We want to retain staff. Right now, we are losing staff to other agencies.

New Goal: Mayor Bill Mutz suggested continually innovating and curate an engaged competitive workforce through a collaborative empowerment citywide.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden wanted to know how they could approach the lack of focus on motherhood/parenthood and childcare services; things the current workforce needs. Is that something we focus on under culture?

Merrill Stewart: It could be included in policy creation or review of policies.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley: The policy in support of parents would be an action item under the mayor's proposed goal.

Merrill Stewart asked for additions to goal #3.

Mayor Bill Mutz would like to add art pieces or public art.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley thought that could go under arts programing.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley: add /assets after institutions.

Mayor Bill Mutz: Add public art, after cultural institutions.

Merrill Stewart asked for comments on goal #4.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley suggested not identifying a specific group, quality of life for all citizens.

The Commission did not want to lose sight of needed accessibility.

Merrill Stewart asked for comments on goal #5.

Add the word Maintain and forge partnerships.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley: Those partnerships are not just outside the city. That also includes different departments talking to each other.

Commissioner Chad McLeod appreciated Merrill Stewart taking the time to pre-draft these goals.

Munn Park Revitalization – Ted Kempton, Pennoni Inc.

Mr. Kempton explained their thought processes and presented two options.

Commission Discussion:

Mayor Bill Mutz asked what the advantages were of adding a building. Mr. Kempton: It would depend on the use of the building. If it had a roof top bar and multiple concessions it could add a lot. The use needs to participate in the park. Both concepts remove 1/2 the parking. They intended to provide ADA parking and loading/unloading for events.

Commissioner Mike Musick liked #1. He liked the idea of the building. He would go higher than 2 stories. Go 4 stories and have event space.

Palmer Davis: There were deed restrictions that apply to Munn Park that require it to be used for public purposes.

Shawn Sherrouse thought there could be a building there with multiple uses as long as the City maintained ownership. Palmer Davis thought the uses had to be park related.

Commissioner Chad McLeod liked both. He thought there were some risks with the building.

Pam Page liked the concept that maximized the park's use for the public. Our density will increase downtown, but the greenspace will not. What she liked about Concept One is the downtown front lawn. She thought the pavilion was iconic. The lighting at night invites the public to come down.

Bob Donahay liked option One too. He did not think it was a good idea to lose real estate in the park. The park is not that big.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde thought one looked too square. He did not like the square pavilion.

Commissioner Bill Read liked the pavilion. He hesitated to have bathrooms. We have quite a few dog parks downtown. He did not want to lose green space. He did not like the square. He was not sure they needed a dog park.

Concept One had 15% more green space.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley liked Concept One better. She liked the lighting on the pavilion. She would hesitate to over program the space.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden liked the concept with the swan fountain/splash pad. She planned to advocate for more programmed events to keep the park activated. She would rather allocate funds for events rather than a building.

Commissioner Bill Read did not want to do a building and take away the greenspace.

Commissioner Mike Musick liked the building and pushed for that.

Mayor Bill Mutz liked the flow of Concept One.

Shawn Sherrouse: The idea of a building was never intended for city offices.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden knows people worry about the pavilion filling up with homeless people when the park is not activated.

Shawn Sherrouse: Once the Commission chooses a concept, then we will move on to the design.

Mayor Bill Mutz thought they should come to a consensus on which concept.

Action: The consensus was to move forward with Concept One with the pavilion.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden thought it was very strategic to put the splash pad and dog park near the restrooms.

Commissioner Mike Musick asked about a safety hedge to separate from the train tracks.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde wanted more information on how the park will remain clean. Pam Page: It would have k-9 grass and it drains, and you can wash it down.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde also wanted a little pizzaz on the pavilion.

Commissioner Sara Roberts McCarley: The restrooms would face north towards the parking lot.

Shawn Sherrouse: If there were no other comments from the Commission, they would work on Concept One.

Finance / Funding – Finance Director Mike Brossart

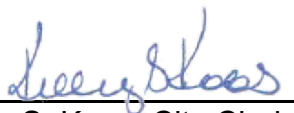
Commission Discussion:

Commissioner Mike Musick: What would Mike Brossart recommend if the City needed \$250 Million? Mike Brossart: We have got 3 different ratings in the City. He would like it to be 4. We have LE, General Fund, and Water Utilities. He would like the Airport to have their own bond rating. He did not want to see the Airport's debt ratio inhibit the General Fund's debt ratio.

Mike Brossart explained the difference between a general obligation bond and a millage rate increase.

Merrill Stewart thanked everyone for their participation in this process. She will update the goals. Staff will be meeting for two days next week to move forward.

The Commission adjourned at 2:45 p.m.



Kelly S. Koos, City Clerk

