

**City of Auburn, City Council Retreat  
Meeting Summary**

Monday, April 9, 2018 ~ 4:30 pm - 9:00 pm  
Martindale Golf Course

**Mayor & City Council Members Present:**

Mayor Jason Levesque; City Councilors Alfreda Fournier, Belinda Gerry,  
Robert Hayes, Holly Lasagna, Andrew Titus, David Young

**City Council Member Absent:**

Councilor Leroy Walker (due to illness)

**City Staff and Facilitator Present:**

Peter Crichton, City Manager  
Denise Clavette, Assistant City Manager  
Mandy Schumaker, Facilitator

---

**I. Welcome & Introductions**

Mayor Jason Levesque opened the City Council Retreat, welcoming all and introduced the facilitator Mandy Schumaker.

**II. Create Ground Rules for meeting and our work together**

Mandy guided the City Council to create ground rules for working together through the retreat session. The City Council and staff participated in a brief ice breaker exercise using full names and explanations of where they came from. Group agreed to use the following ground rules in working together:

- Respectful
- Honesty
- Listen
- Candor & “tough skin”
- Participative
- Don’t take things personally (“**Q-tip**” – **Quit-Taking It Personally**)
- Flexibility
- Call it tight (on point)
- Inclusive
- Step Up
- No judging self or others

### III. What's your why? Why do you choose to serve?

**Vision:** *Where do we see Auburn in the next 5, 10, 20 years?  
What policies & initiatives are most important and will make the greatest impact on our city?*

Each person discussed their reasons / choice to serve as an elected official and serve in a public role.

It was noted that a couple of activities are currently underway which would feed into the vision of the City of Auburn: 2018 City Work Plan (attached handout in agenda packet), Strategic Plan process, Charter review in the next few years, and Comprehensive Plan update to begin in a few years.

Councilors shared what was most important to them for the vision of Auburn

*Councilor Fournier:* Good direction that we are going in; Auburn needs to have a sense of identity, sense of the City's personality; need to provide good opportunities for citizens.

*Councilor Titus:* Should provide security for its citizens including: financial, housing, etc. Need to provide confidence that we will be okay.

*Councilor Hayes:* Focus on the City's image – we need to improve our image

*Mayor Levesque:* Want our city to be different—a “good” different

*Councilor Young:* Manage growth – need to be able to attract people of all ages

*Councilor Gerry:* Work with existing businesses first—also how do we keep college students here?

*Councilor Lasagna:* How do we communicate that Auburn is unique? What are we doing that is special? Many business and residential opportunities with the mills. How do we communicate “something different” is happening here (in City of Auburn)? What could that be or look like?

**Strategic Plan process** for the City of Auburn is beginning, with the Mayor, City Manager's office and Clifton Griem, volunteer – leading the project. City Department Directors met and discussed primary focus areas that will guide the City over the next few years. Focus areas are outlined below:

- Downtown & Riverfront
- Economic Development/Tourism
- Education & City Collaboration
- Financial Management
- Recreation/Agriculture/Natural Resources
- Regional Initiatives
- Space Needs and Infrastructure
- Technology & Innovation

#### **IV. Dinner break / Vision (continued discussion)**

Conversation continued during dinner. Councilor Lasagna mentioned arts and culture should be part of the strategic plan. It was mentioned that arts and culture, other areas could be included within the main areas already identified.

Mayor Levesque discussed that we need to look at whatever we do, in terms of “return on investment” – ROI. Councilor Titus discussed that we need to define paying for itself, and should ROI be the lens which we look through for everything.

Mayor Levesque stated we should begin by looking at our various words / ideas on our vision, look at our frequent use of words in what we all shared in order to begin pulling together a vision statement. Words noted included: Opportunity, Different/Unique, Security, Bold, Livability, Sustainability, Collaboration.

#### ***Follow Up / Action Item:***

- ***City Manager & Assistant City Manager will draft a vision statement for Councilors to review.***

Other points were discussed: How do we define change? Do we want it? For a vision to be created, there needs to be sustainability of the vision—there is unrest if City vision changes every two years with the City Council. Also needs to be a process for getting people on committees that's transparent and communicated to all. Question was asked, does every ward need to be represented on committees? We may be missing people who want to be involved, and have specific skill sets that are needed, with ward requirements.

## **V. Review process for new initiatives**

Councilor Titus shared the current process for new initiatives but said the City Council had moved away from it. The City has a form that is filled out and must be signed by two City Councilors, it is then sent to and reviewed by the Mayor and City Manager. They decide if initiative move to the Council and subsequently onto the agenda/workshop OR it could move to staff. All agreed this was an excellent process and would use this process.

Discussion also included the challenge of having enough time to discuss items during the workshop. How could that be addressed? Could the workshop item be re-visited during the regular City Council meeting that same evening?

### ***Follow Up / Action Item:***

- ***Mayor will look at the workshop items, to see if they can be re-visited during the regular City Council meetings if there isn't enough time to address the workshop item.***
- ***City Manager will send City Council initiatives' form to the City Council.***

## **VI. Roles and Responsibilities**

Conversation centered around the necessity for City Manager / Assistant City Manager (staff leadership) to be managing staff; and the City Council's role in creating policy and enforcing policy. This needs to happen, as it is important to create trust with the staff. There have been instances where situations with staff performance has been addressed publicly by City Council members during City Council meetings / workshops. All agreed this should not happen in the future. City Council members were very complimentary of staff and all wanted to have an excellent relationship with them.

### ***Follow Up / Action Item:***

- ***City Councilors asked that the roles and responsibilities discussion, and appreciation for staff - get communicated to staff.***

The conversation continued on communication, particularly emails and concern with "replying to all". Emails are sent out periodically with pertinent information, and not intended for communication / dialogue back and forth with the entire City Council. City business cannot be discussed via email. City Councilors agreed. Further discussion surrounded the number of existing committees, difficulty knowing what each was doing, progress, etc. One idea mentioned was to have committees' minutes included in the City Council packet, on the City's website.

### ***Follow Up / Action Item:***

- ***City Manager will follow up with Liz Allen on the website, and with Sue Clements-Dallaire on the minutes / agenda packet.***
- ***Mayor / City Manager / Assistant City Manager will develop a plan to reduce and (or) consolidate the committee numbers by 30%.***

### **VII. Next Steps and Action Items**

- 1) *City Manager & Assistant City Manager will draft a vision statement for Councilors to review.*
- 2) *Mayor will look at the workshop items, to see if they can be re-visited during the regular City Council meetings if there isn't enough time to address the workshop item.*
- 3) *City Manager will send City Council initiatives' form to the City Council.*
- 4) *City Councilors asked that the roles and responsibilities discussion, and appreciation for staff - get communicated to staff.*
- 5) *City Manager will follow up with Liz Allen on the website, and with Sue Clements-Dallaire on the minutes / agenda packet.*
- 6) *Mayor / City Manager / Assistant City Manager will develop a plan to reduce and (or) consolidate the committee numbers by 30%.*
- 7) *City Manager will get information on the retreat on the website, public.*

### **VIII. What worked/what didn't?**

#### **What worked?**

- Retreat well done, appreciated - need to have another retreat
- Appreciated the meeting outside City Hall
- Retreat gave City Councilors time to go into more details
- Closure on many conversations
- Good ideas generated
- Everyone had the opportunity to speak
- One/Two topic agenda

#### **Change for next time?**

- Moving to another table for dinner, continuing conversation was difficult

### **IX. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.