

**SAUK CENTRE CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2013 – 5:00 P.M  
UPPER LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM**

**1. CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL/ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Sauk Centre City Council met in a Special Meeting May 29, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. in the City Hall Upper Level Conference Room pursuant to due notice being given thereof.

Present were Mayor Brad Kirckof, Council Members Mike Olson, Keith Johnson, Warren Stone and David Thomas. Also present were City Administrator Vicki Willer, City Planner Sarah Morton, Deputy Treasurer Carol Inderreiden, and Ambulance Director Kathy Struffert. Public present were Andrea Kerfeld, Ann Carlon, Pam Borgmann, Gary Gamradt and Merle Felling. Mayor Kirckof presided thereat.

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The agenda previously provided to all Council Members was approved by General Consent.

**3. MEETING PROTOCOL AND EXPECTATIONS**

Mayor Kirckof outlined the procedure and expectations for the meeting. First they will review the prior meeting outcomes and evaluations to be followed by a visioning exercise. They will also discuss the Council's Commitment to Parks which was tabled from a previous meeting. This meeting is intended to be an open dialogue between the Council Members.

The Visioning Exercise will give each Council Member an opportunity to participate in a "Miracle Session". This is designed for each person to explain if they woke up one morning and a miracle happened what that would Sauk Centre be like.

This meeting is intended to be positive and forward thinking and all members will have a chance to be heard.

**4. REVIEW OF PRIOR PLANNING SESSION**

Each Council Member was provided copies of the outcomes from the Planning Session held in July of 2012 with Bruce Miles. This includes the Successes and Issues, Intended and Unintended Outcomes that are both Positive and Less than Positive. Also a Draft Vision, Draft Priorities, and Draft Vision for Council Meetings and the Evaluation of the Prior Meeting.

Recent Successes & Issues (from Chainsaw Planning Exercise July, 2012)

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Less Than Positive</b>
<b>Intended</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Infrastructure</li> <li>2) Financial improvements over last 7 - 8 years</li> <li>3) Vibrant business atmosphere</li> <li>4) Cost-saving measures have not had a dramatic effect on services</li> <li>5) Public safety</li> <li>6) Parks improvements</li> <li>7) Confidence that we are moving in a good direction</li> <li>8) City is safe &amp; well-protected</li> <li>9) Hospital purchase process</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Airport expansion</li> <li>2) Economic development</li> <li>3) Local belief that "The city should take care of it"</li> <li>4) Efforts to get retrievable documents from new electronic records system</li> <li>5) Not all citizens know what the council is doing &amp; should do</li> <li>6) Communication</li> <li>7) Interpretative Center - what is our role?</li> </ol>
<b>Unintended</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Operating w/ fewer staff</li> <li>2) Hospital purchase process</li> <li>3) Business expansions</li> <li>4) Fewer foreclosures &amp; business closures than anticipated</li> <li>5) Banks take over foreclosure, pay back taxes, clean up properties</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) LGA cuts</li> <li>2) Economy downturn</li> <li>3) Demographic trends</li> <li>4) Market value exclusion</li> <li>5) FEMA update process</li> <li>6) # if items that get started locally &amp; then become "city projects"</li> <li>7) Satisfying business needs</li> </ol>

Draft Vision, Priorities, and Vision for Council Meetings from July 2012 session.

**(Draft) Vision for City**

In five years, we should be known for...

- Our small-town atmosphere
- Being a place that people choose to live
- Being a place where businesses choose to locate & expand
- Clean, safe & up-to-date telecommunications, infrastructure & services that cause people to move & stay here
- Being a "Green" & healthy community for
  - Citizens of all ages
  - Inclusiveness
  - Businesses & the Downtown

**(Draft) Priorities for City**

To deliver on our vision in five years, we will need to spend more time on...

- Being "friendly" to businesses by understanding their wants & needs
- Maintaining public safety & improving infrastructure

- Developing long-term plans where necessary
- Simplifying interactions & communication with local government (permits, etc.)
- Developing the park system & tree initiatives
- Preserving downtown & downtown businesses
- Tourism

**(Draft) Vision for Council Meetings**

We would like our meetings to...

- Be transparent, yet time-effective
- Stay on the topic at hand & talk through items in advance with Vicki if individual Council members need additional information
- Contain reports that document activities toward pre-determined goals
- Allow effective committees to deliver recommendations to Council
- Have citizens involved through website & at meetings
- Have a better-defined role for council members on external committees (Committee Chairs occasionally come in for updates?)

**Evaluations from July 2012 Session**

**1) What was good & productive about this session?**

- Got the council talking
- Pulled the council out of the details
- Exciting, informative, thought provoking
- Good discussion
- Stimulating

**2) What was your biggest discovery?**

- Council's support & concern on issues relating to economic development
- The council is united behind more items that I thought
- The "plan" can be simplified!
- The council was/is more together than I thought

**3) How would you improve this session?**

- Encourage more equal participation - the session becomes less exciting when it is dominated by one or two people
- I wouldn't!
- More time would have been useful
- Have just a stand-alone session - this felt rushed

**4) What type of follow-up would be best?**

- A recap report after the written report
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- A summarized report of what you saw & heard
- Work on follow-up after budget & develop an action plan

Mayor Kirckof referred to the expectations for Council members stating that this are all things to work towards, however the expectations of each member is different. He would ask how we can become more efficient and engaged.

As far as the Evaluation of the prior session, he clarified that these are comments made by individual council members with how the Council could work differently.

He concluded that any time a Board sits down and talks about Planning is valuable but you lose if you don't take it to the next step with the information gathered. These are things that can be a base to work through as we look ten to twenty years in the future. He then opened it up to other members for comment.

Olson – Questioned if a five or ten year plan is worthwhile as Councils change. He is curious what others think about that.

Kirckof – Has been on the Council for close to ten years and visited and worked with many other councilmembers in that time. They have felt for many years that what we are doing is working. He stated what he doesn't know is if they really give enough direction of where they want to be. Where he sees the City in ten or twenty years is a much boarder picture. He feels you should start high and you can work your way back to what is reasonable. He suggested you create a Vision for twenty years and can back up from there. As far as what is working, he feels that staff understands where we want to be.

Olson – Asked how we measure whether it is working.

Kirckof – Explained he sees it measured by efficiencies, growth and change. He feels they have been a success when you look where we are now vs. ten years ago which is feedback he has received in the community.

Olson – Disagrees. He feels that the Council measures success by being able to pay staff and mow the parks and that we are still here. He stated perhaps we could have been further and unless we state where we want to go we can't measure how far we have come.

Johnson- Asked how you plan for the curves you get thrown.

Olson – Plans are not etched in stone.

Johnson – Plans may have to change based on lack of planning by others.

Olson – Agreed that plans change annually, however we need to know where we are planning to go when we make decisions on allocating resources.

Kirckof – Stated how we measure determines if we had success. Feels we are in a good position because we have been able to do what a lot of communities have not been able to do so that should be considered a success.

Thomas – The Plan six years ago was to get control of the City finances. That has happened.

Olson – Stated that was never a stated goal. There was no matrix to measure what has been done and asked how things can be a goal if not all the council knew about it.

Thomas – Disagrees stating it was a goal and it was discussed by the Council and they did know about it.

Kirckof – Suggested we get feedback from everybody. It is good to review what we have accomplished and what we envision for the future.

## **5. VISIONING EXERCISE**

Mayor Kirkof explained that the Visioning Exercise is simply how you would like to see Sauk Centre in twenty years. This is outside of budget and is simply how would it look if you woke up and a miracle happened and everything you wanted Sauk Centre to be has happened.

Kirckof Vision – Population of eight to ten thousand. 26 parks with walking trails between them all when today we have 16. Forty new businesses. 5,000 jobs. Expanded industrial park. Boating and swimming in Sauk Lake. A Riverwalk.

He continued that some may not agree with needing growth but he feels it is important. The average age in Sauk Centre is 41. The population is up ten percent since 2000. The top ten employers have 1500 jobs. He asked where can we potentially be in twenty years.

Olson - He agreed that these would be good goals. Population growth, expanded job base and expanded parks. He added that staff and the committees can then work to get us there. With stated goals everyone understands what we are working for. He added that we will get community involvement as we move forward and will get their input and put the vision together, but that we need is the community engaged to help get to these goals. He concluded that a visioning exercise is something that the public can do. He suggested each ask himself “What inspires you?” You can achieve more than you realize as you work towards it and stretch your goals.

Stone – Suggested that he is often accused of being conservative but believes that for the City to set goals out further than five years is a waste. The Council can hand down orders to other Boards but if they aren’t given the funds to do it it isn’t going to happen. Then you have difficulty getting people to serve on Boards if they can’t do anything. Reality will stick its head in so it may be a waste of time. He added that someone can make a living in Sauk Centre if they want to. We can keep it safe and keep it clean and

we have tools to grow the community, but is it really the fault of the City if a downtown business closes?

Olson – Asked Warren if he is OK with where Sauk Centre is at today.

Stone – Yes, and as far as growing, the land around Sauk Centre is privately owned and if they don't want to come in they don't have to.

Kirckof – Asked Warren - What is one thing you would like to see if money wasn't an issue.

Stone – Work on giving land away for businesses to move in. Warren referred to the non-compete clause in the existing Plan and suggested that might be holding things back.

Johnson – Likes the size of Sauk Centre right now. One place that needs help is the industries that need qualified people and there is a shortage of qualified people. He added that he wouldn't object to a larger population if the cost of increased infrastructure, police services, EMT services wasn't an issue. He also reminded the Council that the Hospital deal is a 25 year lease, not a purchase. The Council needs to continue to work to keep it here.

Olson – Referred to Thomas stating he could do what he does from anywhere as long as he can stay connected. Many communities are faced with grow or die. It becomes a competition. If we are going to grow we need to compete with other communities and what they are doing. Having more people around is an economic boost.

Thomas – Agrees partially. He would like to see growth adding that when a City stops growing it starts dying. He feels 8,000 to 10,000 people would be explosive and could be disastrous. He would like steady growth as we have seen. 5,000 to 6,000 people in twenty years is reasonable. If people didn't leave we would be growing. It would nice to see local businesses expand in the area and not leave.

Olson – We are faced with an older population vs. a younger population. Each has requirements and we benefit from those. If we had 2,000 to 3,000 college age students come to town it would impact the elderly. We have to be sure we know what is in the growth. What should we work toward? What is that number made up of?

Thomas – He would like to see a community where all the kids don't leave for jobs. This should be a community where you can make a living and afford a house in this town. You couldn't afford this lifestyle in Mpls. If you are willing to accept a 50's type of lifestyle, this is a good place. He would like to see growth across all areas. Our location is on the fringe of the twin cities growth area.

Stone – Agreed that a lot of kids are leaving. But a lot of them are coming back in their late twenties and thirties when they have families.

Olson – Asked what is a good number? Are they coming back? Who is coming back? What are they bringing back? What do those people want? Are they high demand? What do we need to provide to be competitive? How do you bring them in? What is disconcerting to him is that many of the business people in town don't live here. What does that mean?

Stone – Public input will be a driving force in our vision. He stated in 1991 they sent out a survey and went door to door. There was an eight percent response. People don't want to participate.

Olson - Asking someone what inspires them is different than asking them eight questions when they don't know what you are looking for. Having a conversation about what inspires you about Sauk Centre would be helpful. It would be great to have the election conversation next time around focused on what is our vision.

Olson – Vision: Downtown activity so see people around doing things. If people are shopping then businesses come. It then attracts more people. He suggested downtown housing. He would like to reverse the age and education problem. Census says we are getting an older population with less education. We need population growth with more kids in school. Would like to see active people with parks and people doing things. More trees. He would like to see more going on in the parks than people sitting on the grass.

Things in common among the Council: Agreed some population growth is important. Need to focus on how do we make it a better place so people to come here? First is jobs and economic development along with education, parks, and activities.

Kirckof opened the conversation up to those in the audience:

Merle Felling – Good to think outside the box but none of that is ever going to happen if we don't get more infrastructure. We need an industrial park with larger lots. Businesses are looking for more room. City needs a Park for commercial/industrial with city water and sewer, large designated acreages. Then the other things will happen. You need the businesses here first. He expanded into Litchfield for two reasons. 1. Facility. 2. Staff.

Pam Borgman – Suggested the City work more closely with schools to make them aware of what jobs and industry we have around here. We haven't used the talents we have to get students involved in what is available and what is the vision of living here. People are going to leave for a couple years. We need to figure out how to get them back here.

Gary Gamradt – Suggested the development of a Mission Statement for Sauk Centre. Who, What, When, Where, Why we exist. Then does what you want to do support that statement.

Andrea Kerfeld – Not of fan of that's the way we have always done it. She sees a generational shift happening. People her age are taking over and not doing things the

same way as before. She encouraged the Council to come at things from a different angle. Involve more people. There is no such thing as too much communication.

Ann Carlon – We are in such an opportune location. This is where you get off the road. Plant seeds for people to come back. Be welcoming.

Kirckof – Thanked everyone for their comments.

## **6. COMMITMENT TO PARKS**

Stone suggested that the Council’s statement be sent to the Park Board for comment.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Kirckof – Suggested we keep the ball rolling. Perhaps quarterly meetings.

Olson – Suggested that we throw it out there for the public. Ask them what they would like Sauk Centre to look like if a Miracle were to happen. Facebook.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Council Member Olson and was seconded by Council Member Thomas to adjourn the meeting. A vote being recorded as follows: For: Council Members Stone, Johnson, Olson, Thomas and Mayor Kirckof. Against: None. The motion passed.

With no further business to come before the Council, Mayor Kirckof adjourned the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Mayor Brad Kirckof

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City Administrator Vicki M. Willer