

TRACY CITY COUNCIL

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

February 28, 2011, 5:00 p.m.

Room 203, 333 Civic Center Plaza

Web site: <http://www.ci.tracy.ca.us>

Call to Order - Mayor Ives called the special meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

Roll Call - Roll call found Council Members Abercrombie, Elliott, Mayor Pro Tem Maciel, and Mayor Ives present; Council Member Rickman absent. Council Member Rickman arrived at 5:19 p.m.

Items from the Audience – None.

Discuss Council Relations, Practices, and Norms – Mayor Ives stated the purpose of the retreat was to engage in an informal discussion which would set direction for the City. Mayor Ives requested open communication between Council and staff and added the Council's role is to be clear, to plot outcomes and get clarity on the major issues and the expected outcomes. Clarity is the most important issue. Mayor Ives added Council also would need to support staff in their attempts to carry out the Council's wishes.

Leon Churchill, Jr., City Manager, introduced the facilitator, Kathleen Novak. Ms. Novak is the former Mayor of Northglenn and recent past President of the National League of Cities. She is highly regarded as a trainer and a facilitator who has worked with many local governments throughout Colorado. Since 1993 she has been director of the Rocky Mountain Program and is now co-director of the Colorado-CPM program. Ms. Novak teaches in the Business School and the School of Public Affairs at the University of Colorado Denver, and holds a Master's in Business Administration.

Ms. Novak thanked Mr. Churchill and stated the three characteristics common to effective councils are a willingness to address difficult issues, the ability of a council to deal with those issues, and an effective relationship with staff. Staff needs to understand Council's aspirations and where the City wants to go. Capturing the hearts, minds and aspirations of the community is important. Obstacles that are often underestimated by councils and staff include big-picture issues that raise questions of competing values. Governing bodies operate under conditions that impede the hard work it takes to focus on the big picture. Many times the inclination is to avoid issues because of the potential conflict involved. It is often easier to be effective helping residents deal with individual problems, than it is to build and maintain a sense of community by addressing big-picture issues. There are also natural incentives to avoid conflict, especially when smaller, more manageable issues need attention. Ms. Novak added that the art of politics involves recognizing and balancing legitimate, conflicting values.

In response to a request for comments from the Council Mayor Pro Tem Maciel suggested a discussion on the roles of Council Members, and the best way to address issues which are sent to the Council or to individual Council Members. Council Member Maciel stated he believed consistency was the key. Council Member Rickman wanted clarity from staff, not simply having staff state what they think the Council wants to hear. Council Member Elliott referred to the Council's eight priorities and suggested they be reduced to a more manageable number with firmer agreement from the Council.

Ms. Novak discussed the unique characteristics of the Town Board or Council Group which included membership and group formation, terms of office and council life-cycle, political-administrative relationships, authority and power relationships, operating procedures and problem solving environments.

Ms. Novak stated setting Council direction is the most important thing a Council does, and how a Council does its work is more important than what it actually does. Working together in agreement with the Council's priorities is very important. Team building is about roles, goals, expectations and agreements and takes place when Council is having important conversations about what it does. Highly effective Councils have a willingness to address difficult issues first, the ability or capacity to deal with difficult issues second, and the ability to deal with staff third. Conversations are difficult to have in public because they deal with conflict and competing values often get in the way. Effective Councils are willing to have discussion and debate on the important issues. Often Councils spend too much time on the smaller issues and not enough time on the bigger issues.

Councils also work under a set of conditions including terms of office and Council lifecycles which makes it harder to focus on decisions. Council members have approximately 13 months of working productively, followed by a less productive stage while gearing up for elections. Council Members are elected to solve problems, which is easier if the goal is kept in sight. Another obstacle is under-estimating the abilities of staff. Staff relies on reports and information; the community relies on stories; Council relies on what it hears while the City Manager acts as translator. Elected officials and professional staff bring fundamentally different perspectives to their work, which if not understood, can foster distrust.

Ms. Novak stated a Councils' job description includes acting on behalf of the constituents; directing the aim of the community; setting outcomes and results; identifying risks – economic, political and social; delegating the work, including roles, relationships and expectations; assessing performance; practicing discipline – governance vs. customer service, and communicating with the community – report back on accomplishments.

The keys to a successful Council include vision and strategic thinking, clarifying roles and expectations, developing and holding to protocols and practices, establishing and maintaining trust, helping to build capacity and communication.

Ms. Novak suggested the Council discuss What's working, What we do well, What's not working, What could we do better, What's missing, What needs action, Where are we now, 2010 accomplishments and finally determining the Council's highest priorities. Ms. Novak inquired in terms of roles and expectations what does the Council do well. Responses included listening to citizens; consideration of budget; open to suggestions; inclusive of the community; fiscally responsive; forward thinking; communicating what the Council is doing; getting along with each other; practical, realistic, good staff – not overly formal.

In response to the question, "What could you be doing better/what's missing?" Council responses included constantly trying to be clear with intentions; accepting conflict and being comfortable with it; sometimes roles are unclear - should not be telling staff what to do; struggling to build consensus in the City; and reaching consensus on how to approach certain issues.

Mayor Pro Tem Maciel suggested the Council's role should be governance; staff's role is customer service. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel added he refers citizens to staff then steps back. Council Member Rickman prefers to follow up. Council Member Elliott refers issues to the City Manager. Mayor Ives never calls staff, always calls the City Manager. Mayor Ives suggested doing what is within your authority and then bringing the issue back to Council for direction. Mayor Ives added Council Members need to be aware that they lose some of the rights they had as citizens when they become members of the Council.

Ms. Novak asked Mr. Churchill for his perspective on the issue. Mr. Churchill stated he has delegated responsibility to his Executive Assistant to get the message out, but added he needs to be kept informed of any decisions. Mayor Ives stated that Council should be clear on what can be requested of staff. Mr. Churchill added he has purposefully blurred the lines for the sake of relationship building, but added specific requests that need resources should be brought to his attention.

Council Member Abercrombie stated he is seen as the community advocate and appreciates the City Manager allowing him to contact staff to resolve issues. However, all major issues are discussed with the City Manager. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel stated staff and the community have varying expectations, and Council has to be careful not to become advocates for the community since it could make staffs' job more difficult. Council Member Elliott referred to a resident's issue which had been resolved, yet was resurrected. Mayor Ives suggested that when issues which have been resolved come back, it's hard to know if the issue is ever resolved. Dan Sodergren, City Attorney, referred to the City's adopted Policies and Procedures and added that when Council wants to change direction, the expectation is that the issue will go back to Council before giving staff direction. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel agreed with the process going forward. Council agreed the process had worked the way it should work.

With regard to personnel issues, Mr. Churchill stated responses to personnel issues come from the City Manager's office. If there is a deadline, the Department Head can be contacted, and the City Manager copied. Mayor Ives reminded the Council that individual Council Members cannot direct the City Manager. Rod Buchanan, Director of Parks and Community Services, indicated his frustration with commissions and how they want to interact more with the Council.

Mayor Ives called for a recess at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 7:10 p.m.

Ms. Novak referred to the Council's role in setting priorities and asked for one or two things the Council was proud of. Council's responses included economic development, especially bringing a Macy's to town; progress in attracting development; being a fiscally responsive city; progress on the Holly Sugar sports park; Gateway; master plans almost complete which will lead to an enhanced quality of life for the community; GIS; the Grand Theatre, and compassion shown during the rightsizing efforts.

Ms. Novak referred to the City's seven strategic priorities - economic development, public safety, communication/marketing, environmental sustainability, traffic mobility and connectivity, community amenities, and organizational efficiencies - and asked Council what they want to see happen in the future and what success would look like to them.

Mayor Ives responded public safety, youth activities, and a higher education institution. In response to what success would look like Mayor Ives responded economic development, public safety, budget and the economy. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel stated community amenities/maintenance, and added organizational effectiveness will be different as we look to cut more in the future. Council Member Rickman suggested economic development and public safety, and suggested sustainability can adversely undermine economic development. Council Member Elliott suggested communication/marketing and sustainability should be a subset of economic development.

In response to a question from Ms. Novak regarding performance measures for economic development, Council Member Elliott responded buildings at Gateway. Council Member Rickman asked what kind of businesses the City wants, and what should Tracy look like 20 years from now. Council Member Rickman added he did not want to drag businesses to Tracy just for the property taxes. Mayor Ives responded an understanding that economic development can press forward in this economy with a program that Council can support. Council Member Rickman suggested that an institute of higher learning would generate mostly low paying jobs, and added he did not want to sell the future for something less today. Council Member Rickman also inquired whether the City wants warehouses scattered all over town. Mayor Ives indicated the City should create an environment for different industries, and referred to the North East Industrial area. Mayor Ives suggested the next challenge would be west Tracy.

Ms. Novak asked what success would look like – what the Council wants Tracy to look like in the future. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel suggested high tech manufacturing jobs, maintaining a positive image, and offering incentives. Council Member Elliott stated recruiting businesses to bring high tech jobs to the City. Ursula Luna-Reynosa, Director of Economic Development, stated the reason Tracy has so many distribution facilities is because of its location. Real estate is cheaper than in the Bay Area, and all west coast locations can be reached within one day. Since a high percentage of residents work in the Bay Area, Tracy needs to be more strategic in targeting high tech businesses. Ms. Luna-Reynosa suggested economic development should include both long term and short term plans. The City also needs to grow businesses already in Tracy since 80 per cent of job growth is through existing businesses.

Ms. Novak asked Council for their idea of strategies or outcomes for staff. Council suggestions included job creation, infrastructure and a deep labor pool.

Mr. Churchill stated some things will happen on their own, although the Council is expending some effort into diversifying the City's job base. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel suggested one strategy would be trying to be the most business friendly city in a state that is not known for being business friendly.

Communication/marketing, sustainability outcomes included projecting Tracy as a place where businesses want to locate; changing the face of Tracy; projecting the City in everything it does; hand painted sign on the water towers; communication marketing cannot be undersold; the City needs to push its image and fix the things that we don't want; projecting the City's image - Eleventh Street, the Grand Theatre, City Hall, and the Transit Station. Council Member Elliott inquired how does the City measure when we've done a good job – through a Trader Joe's or an IKEA. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel suggested the Council needs to be cognizant of what it communicates to staff. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel added he had recently exchanged ideas with a

local newspaper that had understated the City's safety level. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel added Tracy is a well run city, and other cities are envious of us. Council Member Abercrombie's suggestions included when businesses start coming to town and Gateway starts to develop. Mayor Ives added one indicator will be when the fruits of our labor are tangible. Council Member Elliott stated when we have more viable projects than we can handle and need to allocate more resources. Ms. Luna Reynosa stated communication/marketing is used as a tool to tell the economic development story, but it could also be a public safety story. Mayor Ives suggested an important element of economic development is getting staff to rethink how Council wants to do it, and how much we want to spend. Economic development is number one for a while, but we can't lose sight of the goal. Ms. Novak suggested resources, staff capacity, and other people's money, are areas where you can leverage additional resources. However, there are still economy and budget constraints, and it will be 18 months to 2 years before municipalities start seeing improvements in their budget. Sustainability is valued but the City doesn't want to become so sustainable it drives business away. Council Member Elliott stated sustainability will cost a lot of money, so the City needs to prioritize.

Ms. Novak asked what success means, what are the elements with regard to Public Safety. Council Member Elliott stated when the gang problem is under control. Council Member Rickman stated improved community perceptions. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel stated understanding the realities of what the City's gang problems are; what we base our measure on; overstating the level of crime in the City and the ability of the Police Department to deal with the problem. Council Member Rickman suggested the City look at documented gang members and statistics. Council Member Rickman stated one of the mistakes the City made was in not recognizing the problem and added perception is huge in terms of safety.

Ms. Novak asked what a safe community looks like. Mayor Ives stated it would be if residents can safely walk downtown at 10 p.m. at night. Mayor Ives added perception is fickle and can change rapidly. The Council needs to know if it is doing the right thing to improve the situation. Data collection and how incidents are collected is important. Ms. Novak suggested that an increase in the number of gang contacts can indicate more gang activity, or simply the fact that more contacts are being made. Mayor Ives asked Council Member Rickman for the real problem and the perception. Ms. Novak asked if the reality matters if citizens perceive something different. Council Member Rickman stated the City has a problem, which can go either way. The effect gangs have on the City needs to be controlled. If the City does not get a hold on it right now, it will cost more in the long run. Council Member Rickman suggested identifying gang members, and using police methods to control them. Council Member Abercrombie commented on the increase in violence between two groups of rival gang members. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel stated no one is in denial regarding the gang issue and added other cities have experienced similar problems. Council Member Rickman stated the reality of what has happened in Tracy is that the number of documented gang members has increased from 275 to more than double that number. Mayor Ives stated his concern was that perception is out of control and does not match reality. Council Member Rickman stated that two shootings in one night is huge for a city the size of Tracy. The City has to be aware of the problem and take control. Mr. Churchill stated the problem will take some resources and will be institutionalized. Mayor Ives indicated a reduction in gang violence without quantifying it would indicate a safe community. Zane Johnston, Director of Finance and Administrative Services suggested the City needs to be aware of how much money it is spending on the problem.

Mayor Ives suggested \$250,000 to reduce the number of gang members. Council Member Rickman questioned if that was the most efficient way.

Ms. Novak suggested that while it is difficult to measure perceptions Council needs to give staff parameters. Mayor Ives suggested a reduction in gang crime. Council Member Rickman suggested gang activity could be cut in half by being proactive, and added if staff keeps doing their jobs eventually gang members will move on. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel suggested appropriating money to fund a local prosecutor. Council Member Rickman added that money isn't always the answer – moral issues also come into play. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel suggested maybe things have changed and Police Officers in Tracy are looking to take care of business. Council Member Rickman stated leadership comes from the top – if the leadership focuses on traffic issues then the rest of the department follows. From the top down the target should be focused on gangs. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel stated gangs are only part of the public safety picture and their numbers pale in comparison to traffic accidents. If the City focused as much on traffic accidents as it does on gangs Council would be asked for more traffic cops. Mr. Johnston inquired whether public discussion adds to the perception. Mayor Pro Tem Maciel responded yes; perception might be based on the last person you talked to. Ms. Novak stated perception drives behavior, and what the reality is doesn't matter.

Robert Tanner, 1371 Rusher Street, suggested the Police Department put out a quarterly report on crime in the City, similar to what the Fire Department publishes. Mr. Churchill stated the City has the information and it could be made public. Council Member Elliott stated the City should frame the issues to show it has made progress in keeping gangs under control.

Council consensus was that the current efforts should be sustained to get the gang problem under control. There was some dispute over what to do and how much it would cost. Council requested staff bring suggestions forward for dealing with the issue.

With regard to organizational efficiencies, Ms. Novak asked Council to prioritize what they would like to see happen. Council Member Abercrombie responded at a recent meeting the Council agreed on when it wanted a balanced budget. Council Member Abercrombie added the Council needs to understand what is realistic, and what the fund balance should be. Ms. Novak asked what changes should be made. Council Member Maciel suggested reductions in service, consolidation of services, and other labor solutions. Mr. Johnston stated the challenge to staff is to continue self-evaluation to make sure things that have been done in the past need to be continued. Council Member Elliott suggested contracting out services. Council Member Rickman suggested leasing City property to increase revenue and finding different ways of doing things. Council consensus was on contracting, consolidating, and leasing. Mayor Ives stated the budget should be balanced by fiscal year 12/13, and the City should have a reserve of 25% by fiscal year 13/14.

Ms. Novak concluded by stating the Council's top three priorities were economic development, public safety and organizational efficiencies.

Council consensus was to have staff bring back some measures of how Council can reach its goals.

Mayor Ives adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.

The above agenda was posted at the Tracy Community Center on February 24, 2011. The above are summary minutes. A recording is available at the office of the City Clerk.

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk