

City of Monroe
Special Meeting of Council
October 10, 2020
6 East Avenue, Monroe, Ohio

Mayor Frentzel opened the special meeting of Council at 8:33 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Council members present: Tom Callahan, Jason Frentzel, Keith Funk, Todd Hickman (remote), and Christina McElfresh (remote).

Staff members present: William J. Brock, City Manager/City Engineer; Kacey L. Waggaman, Assistant City Manager; and Angela S. Wasson, Clerk of Council/Assistant to the City Manager.

Also present were: Jennifer Teal and Morgan Daniel of the Novak Consulting Group.

Mr. Funk moved to excuse Mrs. Hale and Mr. Routson; seconded by Mr. Callahan. Voice vote. Motion carried.

Mr. Brock thanked everyone for attending and introduced Ms. Teal and Ms. Daniel.

Ms. Teal advised that part of the goal for today is not just to develop retreat norms, but to listen and listen with respect. This is particularly important in a hybrid arrangement. When we listen with respect we are letting the other person finish and we are being attentive. When we disagree, we disagree agreeably. She would like people to be bold, candid, and honest. There will be times when it is okay to not agree and to come up with a consensus.

Mr. Brock informed Council to set this up we talk about an operational update and we start talking about those types of things. The second and fourth Tuesday of every month we talk about things and we don't often look at that five year/ten year big picture. Over time when we look at these things we need to reflect upon where we are at and where we are going. The last time we did that was quite some time ago. We want to look at the City's organizational structure and the assumptions that we are using on an everyday basis as we go forward. A lot of what we have set up organizationally was set up with strategic planning that was done ten to fifteen years ago and a lot of the assumptions that we are using are just not true anymore. The hard work, the deep work, that we need Council to do is to make sure that what we are doing within the organization is aligned with your vision. As we move out into the future we need to think about what are the hard truths we need to move forward. Again, the vision/strategic plan has not really been deep dived. We have touched on it a couple of times when we tried to get a meeting together. We tried looking at the values and realigned with those. That is not what really needs to be done. What needs to be done is to take a look at what's our future look like and what do we have coming up. Since that time we have heavily invested in the police and fire departments. We had large staffing increases, both in frontline and administration/supervisory in each department. It has allowed individual advancement; however, the City administration is having a hard time keeping up with their pace. They have a lot of employees that they need to think about

how to improve those operations. We haven't focused on the administration side, finance, human resources, the City Manager's office support for these things is still in a way that it has been for years and years and years. We are hitting up against the wall with that structure.

We have heavy investment in capital infrastructure. Whether that was a developer that came in and created the roads or what the City has done. We are trying to build parks and trying to make sure our infrastructure is where we need to be. We haven't focused on the maintenance plan. We now need to focus on how we get that in the plan so those items do not fall apart on us. We need to make sure public works staffing is aligned with the workload. Public works needs facilities. As we go forward we have to reflect on how we got here. My management style is trying to stay lean. It has been who has knowledge in that area and who has a little bit of time to put in those areas. It has developed a very diverse set of people who are very good at those things, but as we continue to grow the time constraints are not where they need to be to fully focus in those areas. We have a lot of people doing multiple rolls and it is just not sustainable. We need to look at what we need in the future as we look at the long term plan and what are the job responsibilities that we need to align so that we are getting the full benefit for everybody in that position. We have confusion on who to go to sometimes and inefficiencies within that operation that we need to reflect upon and improve upon and separate out. We want to keep up with the best practices, not only managerially, and give those out in the field to keep the public happy we need to look internally as well. We have day-to-day issues that we are falling behind in. We have this culture of resistance in using consultants or the addition of administrative staff that we need to reflect upon and get to understand where Council is at and get you the data that you want to be asking for and say here is why and here is how and can we move forward in the big picture. What we have right now we have staff that is doing multiple roles that is getting burned out and overwhelmed. The system is just not working.

As we look out we see some significant possible retirements in the next five years. I am eligible to retirement from the system in May. I'm not saying I am going to retire, but I become eligible and I need to think about my future and where I want to be. The Law Director, Clerk of Council, and Fire Chief are eligible within the next five years. What will the Council desire in the next City Manager? It is part of the conversation so we have an easy transfer from city manager to city manager. Will Council come to a consensus on these positions? Does Council support retire/rehire options for administrative positions? Some of these administrative positions has been talked about, both positive and negative, but that will be an option of Council. It will require a strong vision so you know what you are looking for in the future. We have Charter Review next year and we have done a lot of things the Council operates in a certain way you need to reflect on if that was the intent when the Charter was written. There are Committees of Council that I do not think are operating as was intended when that Charter was first written and is this how you want to continue to operate. Council is governed by the Charter, the boards and commissions are set up to operate that way. That is all within that conversation. Have you put the right people in place to make sure the ordinances that Council has passed to make sure are being reflected on from month-to-month do you have an evaluation process in place to come back and evaluate those boards and commissions. At this point, I see a little bit of disconnect there in what is going on and it will just lead to more of a need to set these priorities and this vision and make sure they are understood throughout the organization.

Operationally, we need to make some essential shifts. We need to increase staffing in administration and public works and reflect upon those needs. We need to keep police and fire at current levels. We need to look at policies that Council has set that affect that. Most recently we made a policy of where our fund balance needs to be. That becomes a challenge of keeping those staffing levels in doing what we need to be in administration and public works. You have a desire to keep a \$4 million fund balance. That is fine, but that changes where we are at with the budget and how we get there to meet the other goals that you have set. The last time we did this we set some policies and created the industrial subdivisions. They have done what was expected, but Council has changed policy in saying that is not what we want. That is fine, but what we need is what do you want in the future and what do you want that growth to be so that if we want to continue to provide services at a certain level is that income generation where it needs to be. All of these things are tied together. Part of this process is looking at the big picture to align with one another. We have been working internally to define those core functions and those services as we build a priority based budgeting system. What that is going to do as we build these systems. We will say here are our programs and the departments are saying here is how we are operating. Council then decides how it wants to fund them. That is a done at a policy level and getting the priorities set. We need to prepare for those upcoming changes over the next five to ten years.

Mrs. Waggaman advised that there will still be a line item budget and, with priority based budgets, it breaks it down to the programs that it is tied to. It will look at staffing and consultants. It is hard to set the priorities without the input from Council.

Ms. Teal asked each person what would make a good day for you.

Mayor Frentzel – With Mr. Brock's presentation he is interested to know what Council's direction will take and reviewing the items that Mr. Brock brought up.

Mr. Hickman – How are we going to fund all of these changes? Everything Mr. Brock brings out gets passed and I would like to know why he thinks Council is holding the City back.

Mrs. McElfresh – The one thing I would like to see for all of us to basically be on the same page. Some defined focus, priorities, and are we all in agreement if that is the direction we want to go.

Mr. Callahan – Take in everything I can and envision better for the future.

Mr. Funk – City management, Mr. Brock and Mrs. Waggaman leave here with their questions answered and the direction that they are seeking.

Mr. Brock – Make sure that Council is aware of the big picture of where this City wants to go. How everything ties together. Day-by-day, we try to meet those goals and expectations. This meeting is a start. This is more than today. This is working today and continue the good stuff we have been doing.

Mrs. Waggaman – Sense of partnership meaning that we all understand and transparent of where we are and defining of how we are going to work together going forward through the

communication channels that are preferred. Also, some sort of structure defined going forward so that we don't lose the work that we do today doesn't get forgotten about.

Mr. Callahan – More communication between Council members.

Ms. Teal noted that Council will receive a report of the retreat. When I asked all of you to think about what is true today and what you hope will be true in 10 years and, if there are things that are not true yet, but you want them to be.

True Today-True in 10 Years

Mr. Funk – Monroe is attracting families – core relation to our school and City services; we have a small town feel; our City and school district is realigned and a relationship we should keep.

Mr. Callahan – Small town feel; do not feel like we need more people in town.

Mrs. McElfresh – We have a small town feel with city amenities; people of Monroe take pride in Monroe; neighborly and family oriented.

Mr. Hickman – Move traffic flow on State Route 63 to I-75 – not much traffic right now. Fire and police services are the best. The public works services are really great.

Mayor Frentzel – Monroe continues to be a great place to live and raise a family; Monroe has a small town feel while offering city amenities; safe place to live, work, and play.

Mrs. Waggaman – fiscally stable; very supportive community between the residents and the City; really innovative executive leadership team.

Mr. Brock – Great and dedicated staff in all areas; which has created a stable foundation in all of the service levels we provide; diverse and proud population;

True about Monroe in the future that are not necessarily true today. What you hope is true in the future.

Mr. Brock – Have an established park system in place; properly align City functions that play off each well, engaged and digitally connected to all of our citizens.

Mrs. Waggaman – Clear identity; be considered premier employer best place to work where people do not want to leave; overall culture of excellence where everybody is doing quality work every day and we value each other and the service level to the residents is top notch.

Mr. Funk – Increase quality of life that include robust parks, used sports facilities, dog parks, walking trails. Things I think residents are yearning for at the moment; to create a parks department; expanding health and wellness ideas; we are unique in the way the City is laid out to different communities, home, mall, entertainment district without driving.

Mayor Frentzel – Residents of Monroe want more amenities such as parks than they do now; Monroe thought more than a bedroom community; residents will not feel they would have to leave Monroe for entertainment or a good meal.

Mr. Callahan – We could acquire the old high school property put some restaurants in for the local community, put some nice streets in there with a fountain; old element school tore down and put some condominiums up; no more warehouses built.

Mrs. McElfresh – Connectivity is a key word with me, both physical through sidewalks, bike trails, parks and you can get from one side of the City to the other in a safe way. And connectivity via communication so, I want to see our City really capture how we are going to connect with the residents, I am not sure what we re doing is wrong or bad, but how do we capture that in the future so that everyone feels included; growth and I do not want to lose that small town feel so there is a balance with that. I want to grow business and not warehouse. Companies will come and their employees can live and residentially. I think there is a way we can capture that and with that will come community diversity and acceptance.

Mr. Hickman – The bike path will be completed and connects to Hamilton and Middletown and a bike path through Monroe to the old Armco Park that will probably be connected to Lebanon. I would like to see sidewalks people walking the streets trying to get from place to place and it is very dangerous; the village mentality that people have I hope it is gone in 10 years.

With the comments made, Ms. Teal put the following categories together:

Vision Statement – Common Themes to Include

Family Focus

Small town feel with city amenities

Well managed

Parks and connectivity

Managed growth

Communication

Ms. Teal stated that in order to develop a strategic plan is to answer these questions: 1. what do we know to be true today; 2. what do we want to be true in the future; and 3. how do we get there. Then we think about roles and responsibilities. The job of the elected is to develop the mission and set the priorities. The role of the staff is to identify the mission and they typically will embody the values of the staff organization.

Ms. Teal provided sample vision statements:

- <City Name> A vibrant community ensuring the finest quality of life for all generations
- <City Name> will offer an exceptional quality of life for residents and visitors by embracing opportunities to enhance commerce and economic activity, while preserving the community's historic charm, attractive character and unique national environment.
- The City of <City Name> supporting an unmistakably vibrant community with innovative, equitable, transparent, and responsible local government.

Ms. Teal referred to typical vision statement framework included in the packet. She hoped a goal coming out of the day was to develop clarity around the vision and clarity around priorities so staff can do what they need to do to move forward. My question for Council is a succinct one-liner vision statement. A vision statement is short enough that you can remember it and live it. It captures the most important big picture things for the future. What would Monroe's vision statement be? If we are going to create this long-term framework by which priorities get developed, starting with vision is one of the most important things a Council can do. Monroe has a great framework that lays out ideas that are not in conflict.

Mayor Frentzel thought that we already had a vision statement when we went through the previous strategic planning process. Ms. Teal replied that there was a paragraph that says if we do all of these things right we will be where we want to be. Monroe does not have a vision statement.

Ms. Teal gave an example if Council wanted to do a search for a City Manager it is common to hand out a one-pager that lists the vision, mission, and it shows this is who we are.

Mrs. McElfresh asked how this activity works in conjunction with the steering committee for the comprehensive plan. I feel like we went through this with that as well. Mr. Brock advised that as part of the comprehensive plan process we developed a strategic vision for the comprehensive plan. Some of it overlaps, but realistically this is going to sit over that comprehensive plan and make sure when you come back in the next few months it is going to be what Council wants. They will be similar. This is going to touch more places in the organization.

Ms. Teal noted that this is the top of the hierarchy. There may be subsidiary plans, but all of those other plans have to align with what Council has set for the vision of the City. It is common to start with some of the subsidiary plans, but what you don't want to have is those plans going in a different direction.

Mr. Funk suggested "small town community striving to engage and support residents through superior quality of life and public services." Ms. Teal referenced the word strive. Because it is a vision statement, it is not what we are trying to do, it is where we are.

Mrs. McElfresh asked if it is possible to go around and ask for everyone's input and see where the similarities are and then combine it. Mrs. McElfresh one thing I do not want to lose is our one great asset the feel of a small community and still all of the perks of a big city. We are a caring community and offer superior services.

Mr. Hickman asked if a vision statement is what you want today. Ms. Teal would like to have is what it might include and she would then include what she believes she heard and something Council can react to that will be in her report.

Ms. Teal asked if there is anything that Council did not want to include. Mr. Hickman stated that he would have to look at a lot of cities vision statement or even go with what Ms. Teal brings to Council.

Mayor Frentzel agreed with a lot of what Mrs. McElfresh said, but a lot of what people agreed with is connectivity, parks, and family focus.

Ms. Teal emphasized the importance of setting priorities.

Expectations – City Council. What expectations do I have for my colleagues on City Council?

Mr. Funk – Objectivity.

Mayor Frentzel – Doing what is best for the community and not what is best as you as an individual.

Mrs. McElfresh – Open mindedness,

Mr. Funk – Respect.

Mr. Callahan – More communication.

Mr. Hickman – when making decisions today think about how they affect the future.

Mr. Funk – Support for City staff without micromanaging.

Mrs. McElfresh - The ability to agree to disagree amicably.

Mayor Frentzel – more constructive communication.

What am I willing to give my colleagues?

Mrs. McElfresh – All of those things.

Mayor Frentzel – Hear everyone’s opinion even if I do not agree with it.

Mr. Funk – Dedication.

Mrs. McElfresh – Participation.

Mr. Funk - Attention and effort.

Mr. Hickman – My opinion.

Mayor Frentzel – Giving more than what the job description entails. More than just showing up to Council meetings.

Mr. Hickman – Just show up to meetings.

Mr. Funk – Respect.

Mayor Frentzel – Being open minded to new ideas.

Expectations – Manager and Staff. What does the city management need from Council?

Mr. Brock – In preparation for this meeting being prepared, being present, and being focused on progress. To be able to work a solution when there is a disagreement. Build that consensus.

Mrs. Waggaman – I would like to see more direct communication and along those lines of being prepared have that communication with staff outside of the meetings so we can have time to research and get answers and provide alternative solutions so that the meeting is more productive. Just so we have a better understanding if a Council member doesn't agree with something that we understand the why because there is not a lot of opportunity because sometimes people give that and then sometimes they don't because there is just a vote. Staff is not really sure why someone voted no or yes.

Mr. Callahan – I ask Mr. Routson his opinion on a lot of stuff because I want to understand why they disagree and I ask Mr. Hickman a lot too.

What does Council need from city management?

Mr. Hickman – Honesty.

Mr. Funk – Projections and transparency of potential issues for the City.

Mrs. McElfresh – Transparency and explaining how or why. When a question is asked as far as the fund balance if there is more explanation there other than yes or no, I want to know how you came up with that answer.

Mayor Frentzel – Following up with unanswered questions from communications.

Mr. Funk – Prompt information. Timely reporting.

Mr. Hickman – Transparency has always been an issue.

Mayor Frentzel – Open to change if Council doesn't agree with the direction they have laid out make sure there is a clear path they can go.

What is Council willing to give management?

Mayor Frentzel – I would give the City Manager the same respect that I give my other Council members.

Mr. Funk – Dedication.

Mrs. McElfresh – I will give the City Manager and staff my full attention.

Mayor Frentzel – To communicate in a timely manner.

Mr. Funk – Availability.

Mr. Callahan – I think we should talk more.

Mayor Frentzel – Being open minded that are brought forth by City management and being open to change.

Mr. Funk – Direction. Autonomy.

Mr. Hickman – My honest opinions.

Mr. Hickman – He gets clear direction from all of us, but just different directions. There are seven Council members he has to work with what he has got.

Mr. Brock – I do receive a lot of direction from Council or opinion that turns into direction but it is the hard work to put that all together and try to make that work as a Council priority.

What is the City Manager willing to give to Council

Mr. Brock – The honest and transparent information dialogue reporting to Council. Dedicated to that vision Council sets. Willing to seek more feedback on the decision and direction that staff is making and be available.

Ms. Teal asked if Council had anything they needed and is not getting from management.

Mayor Frentzel – There are times it feels like in Council meetings items are brought up and people are asking for more information and the information isn't provided until right before the next Council meeting. He understands time is needed to gather the information and Council doesn't give you a heads up. Council should give Mr. Brock a heads up so he knows ahead of time.

Ms. Teal is working with a large community to log in Council questions and there is software involved and if it was logged in so many days prior to the meeting staff has sufficient time to prepare an answer to these questions. Having a strong foundation of how you work together will help you. Mr. Brock will retire someday and no one loves a manager that they don't give clear direction to and good strong communication systems in place.

Mrs. Waggaman – I would like to see a way for Council and staff to have more opportunities for more individual conversations so that we can fully explain things or give those answers and have a back and forth contacts because again a meeting isn't the right place for that. People are at different experience levels and different ideas and I just think we need some sort of vehicle to have that direct communication and we need you guys to bother us and we are willing to give

you as much time as you need. Communicating with you and then communicating with staff. A lot of times it seems that your sending all of your communication to the Clerk and that is not always connected to us. There is missing context and it is very hard to say what is your real concern or is this what you are talking about to make sure we understand. I would like to see more direct questions, concerns, or criticisms or whatever it is. I'm a big believer in you should have these hard conversations all the time. That is how you improve things and make things better and I will tell you if things are working or not working. I am pretty open book about it. But we need that opportunity to have that discussion.

Mayor Frentzel - I will say along those same lines there is times I will have a conversation with Mrs. Wasson and the conversations are more of a Council question at that point and it may transition into something else. Sometimes I will ask Mrs. Wasson to talk to one of you guys about it mainly just because I am busy doing my normal job and at the same time too if you guys need more context you are free to call or text me and be like hey what are you looking for. Mrs. Waggaman – that would be helpful to know what your preferred method of communication is. Clearly there is seven of you so we are trying to communicate the same message to everybody. Some prefer to talk on the phone, in person, email, or a text saying there is an email. Just knowing that would be helpful.

Mayor Frentzel – sometimes a phone call works, sometimes a text or email works. There are some that do not check their email every day and a phone call would work better. What your original thought was on having more one on one communication and it is something that should be brought up to everybody else. I feel there have been some times where you guys have had one on one conversations and I am hearing about it third-hand like oh yeah I talked to Mr. Brock or I talked to Mrs. Waggaman about that. Mrs. Waggaman I think it is important that we work it out though. It should be an expectation if you are having a conversation whatever the result is should be communicated out to everybody else.

Mr. Callahan – Communication means a lot.

Mrs. McElfresh – I will say in response to Mrs. Waggaman's comment Mrs. Wasson is the Clerk of Council so she is the one that I will go to first. I feel like she is our clerk I will often times reach out to Mrs. Wasson and often times she will say you know what that is a great question for Mr. Brock. Then I will reach out to Mr. Brock, but I feel like she is kind of our glue and she is an important element and she has been a tremendous help to me personally, especially when I first started. She is a wealth of information. I have a comfort level there. It is not like I am not comfortable with anybody else that is not what I am saying. I tend to gravitate to at least initially reaching out to Clerk of Council and then expand upon that point. So I was trying to offer some understanding.

Mr. Hickman - I get with the Clerk and with Mr. Brock. I want everybody to remember there are seven Council members so if seven of us are calling different people in the City asking for different things and having these conversations by themselves, setting up meetings by themselves, and not having the rest of Council involved I see a problem with that.

Mayor Frentzel - I am not saying that Mrs. Wasson is not busy, I know that she has a lot on her plate not only with City Council, but with the City Manager's office as well. I think there are times I know that Mr. Brock is not just the City Manager you are the acting City Engineer and with all the projects going on throughout the City you are not always available. That is why I kind of rely on talking more with Mrs. Wasson not to mention that sometimes it is more Council related items. Like Mrs. Waggaman, you are heavily involved in Finance and so you have split priorities that is why it is an easier communication I know Mrs. Wasson is more available.

Mr. Hickman – the City Manager does not want Council calling his employees. It is set up that the Mayor is supposed to get the questions from the City Manager, but we have always been able to get with the City Manager ourselves and ask the questions. As far as going and asking questions from other people we should be getting our answers from the City Manager or the Clerk. The Clerk usually has to get with whoever to get the information to us. I am sure the City Manager doesn't want seven people calling, emailing, or texting him constantly when we can just call or email Mrs. Wasson can you get me this or that. That is basically what her job is. Maybe we need a full time Clerk now.

Mayor Frentzel – We keep talking about Mrs. Wasson like she is not here and she is sitting right here. Is there anything you want to add or an issue that hasn't been brought up that you want to reiterate?

Mrs. Wasson - I am not aware of any issues. Council has three employees. The Law Director, City Manager, and your Clerk of Council. Your Clerk is your secretary, your assistant, that is what I do. That is my job. If there are things that need to be expanded out to staff I think that is the City Manager's role.

Mayor Frentzel – So if someone brings something up to you then you would bring that up to Mr. Brock or Mrs. Waggaman if that is something that they need to know.

Mrs. Wasson – it would be to Mr. Brock because he would make that decision as to where it goes from there and I work directly for him and I also work directly for City Council.

Mr. Hickman – So when those communications are made and, let's just say I ask Mrs. Wasson for something and when she gets that information she can send that out to all Council members. That is how there is an open communication. That is why we really need to go through these three people. The two main people we need to communicate with is the City Manager and the Clerk and the Law Director, of course.

Ms. Teal analyzed what she is hearing is I'm finding out about your questions at the Council meeting and if I had known there were questions I could have answered them ahead of time and so now we are where we are.

Mayor Frentzel – Sometimes not answered ahead of time because there are times they need answered in more of an open forum.

Mr. Hickman – That is where the transparency comes in is at the Council meetings.

Ms. Teal commented so the give is Council I read my packet I know what we are going to be asked to vote on, I have thought about it, and I have a question. I am going to communicate that question in advance using a predetermined way if that happens. Staff will not be blindsided by my question in advance of the meeting and they will have time to prepare to be able to add a robust communication.

Mayor Frentzel – You referenced a question about the packets and it could be something else that is not on the agenda.

Ms. Teal – a heads up does not mean you have come up with this super secret solution and nobody else knows about it, that is not what we are talking about. In a healthy and robust conversation, you may come up with new questions and that is fair. It is not like a moratorium of questions it is just if I knew there were going to be questions I can bring it up to staff and they would be prepared. That would sort of require some sort of a system. Whether the questions go to the Clerk and the Clerk pushes them to Mr. Brock or whether that is something else altogether.

Mrs. Wasson – Unless Council directs me to let Mr. Brock know something. I pride myself on being objectionable. If Mr. Funk calls me about something that is a conversation that is not going to go anywhere it will remain with me. He didn't say hey can you call the Mayor and check with him or can you let Mr. Brock know. That is not my place.

Mr. Funk – I don't that she was saying you have to disseminate all communications, but like Mr. Hickman was saying does questions get funneled through Mayor Frentzel or do they go through you or do you push them to Mr. Brock.

Mayor Frentzel – Technically there is a structure for how Council addresses the City Manager. It is supposed to go through the Mayor I believe that is how Council rules read. My predecessor allowed all of Council to contact Mr. Brock.

Mr. Hickman - Mr. Brock are you okay with Council calling staff?

Mr. Brock – I have always been open with Council calling staff. I always ask staff just let me know what that conversation was and I don't think we have had an issue doing that.

Mr. Hickman – I don't think anyone actually calls staff and staff are hesitant to even say anything. We need to go through you, or Mrs. Wasson, or the Law Director to get our information. No one else.

Mrs. McElfresh – Or the Mayor.

Mr. Hickman – He works a job like the rest of us. That is why the Mayor years ago allowed Council to get with the City Manager because usually when you have a question you send it right then you are not going to wait and it gives Mr. Brock or Mrs. Wasson time to get the answer.

Mayor Frentzel – There are Council members that ask me questions and ask me to bring it to City staff. I don't want to take that out if people are comfortable doing that.

Ms. Teal – let's be clear what it means when we say City staff. It could be seven Council members calling all the department heads with however many questions and that could go crazy quick. There is need for timing and where we are assured that questions are coming through a reasonable channel. Related to communication is there anything else you need from each other to communicate better. One thing I heard is transparency and the why behind things.

Mr. Brock – I will use this as a comparison. I am by nature brief and read headlines. Mr. Chesar will write everything that comes out in his head and hash it out and rehash it out. I have always been known for my brevity and if that is not enough I am not unwilling to explain more, but my normal isn't always to get that all out on paper. I see that as part of the difficulty sometimes. I am trying to include more information from my staff so there is more information out there.

Ms. Teal – Mrs. McElfresh said earlier something along the lines don't just tell me it is okay but explain how or why.

Mrs. McElfresh - When you are dealing with transparency and communication detail is not a bad thing. So explaining more; I don't mean that on every single issue, but the bigger issues to explain why or how you came to the conclusion is better for everyone.

Mayor Frentzel – If there is something you need more detail on don't be afraid to ask for more detail. Don't just take what Mr. Brock says to beat all end all. He just doesn't always get into all of the information all the time.

Mr. Funk – I have respect for administration's time. If I need information I will ask for it. Sometimes I appreciate a concise response because I do not have time to read over all those pages. Sometimes just the meat and potatoes is good. That is where the prompt information comes into play.

Ms. Teal – like financial decisions creating a common vocabulary becomes helpful. That way when the words are used later it allows to be more brief later. When I talked to each one of you before hand. Communication between Council and the management every one of you had something to say about that. All of those really boil down to how we communicate with each other.

Mr. Brock added that over the course of 17 years as City Manager and even before that and Mrs. Wasson has been the same way. We have been married to these cell phones and it is very rare that we do not have them on us. We understand and you should understand that we know this is a 24 hour job 7 days a week. We appreciate the time that we get on weekends and holidays and when we take vacations. I have literally been listening through her phone to Council meetings while I was on vacation. It is that important to us. I believe we have demonstrated that to our staff as well, but just to let you know this is always on me unless I am in the hospital or something. I just want to reiterate that and I appreciate the calls to say I don't want to bug your weekend or your evening, but we have always felt it is not a problem.

Mr. Callahan – I don't see how you can't get away from it awhile and get a break.

Mr. Brock – I don't.

Mayor Frentzel – I appreciate that and I know Mrs. Wasson is like that because there are times I will send an email or a text out and do not expect a response back until the next business day, but I will still get a response.

Mrs. McElfresh – I greatly appreciate Mr. Brock and Mrs. Wasson both and I think as far as my perspective they are both extremely responsive and it is shocking sometimes and feel bad, but I have to ask the question in the moment because I am afraid I will forget to ask. I just want to thank them both.

Council recessed for lunch at 11:58 a.m.

At 1:00 p.m. Council continued with the retreat.

Ms. Teal presented a draft vision statement: “Monroe is a family-friendly small town with quality-amenities, well-managed public services, and a connected and engaged community.”

What has to go well to reach the vision statement?

Mrs. McElfresh – We have to have the infrastructure and staff to make it happen.

Mr. Funk – Working relationship with our schools.

Mrs. McElfresh – Park district/system.

Mayor Frentzel – Continue to engage the public to make sure we are going in the right direction.

Mrs. McElfresh – In our hope to be better connected, not just by sidewalks, but to be connected digitally, but it is a huge facet of our lives. I would like to see city-wide fiber optic.

Mr. Funk – Maintain staffing levels.

Mayor Frentzel – Or grow staff to achieve some of these items as well.

Mrs. McElfresh – In respect to dedication I would like to see a dedicated communications director.

Mayor Frentzel – Continuing to grow our parks to attract families, such as programs or activities in the parks. With continuing to grow we need to make sure we are not growing so quickly that it will overwhelm others, such as the school.

Mr. Hickman – The way Monroe is set up we have two cities in one. We have this side, which was the Village at one time, then we have the other side which is basically split between Lemon

Township and the railroad tracks. Those two communities somehow need to meet. We take care of this side more than we do the other side. Hopefully, with this trail and park maybe the other side will feel more connected to the side most of us live on. We still need the connectivity. The only thing really connecting the two sides is the school and not everybody has kids in school. This is an older community. People my age still want bike paths, walking trails, and parks. We really are separated.

Ms. Teal asked if it is beyond physical or is like “east side-west side?” Mr. Hickman did not think so.

Mayor Frentzel - Bicentennial Commons will hopefully bridge some of that, but you do have some farms in the community. Like you said Mr. Hickman, we are a lot different because Lemon Township is right in the center of Monroe.

Mr. Funk – People come to this side to play baseball and the other side to play soccer.

Ms. Teal - What does Monroe need to continue to be family friendly. We talked about the relationship with the schools and parks.

Mayor Frentzel – We probably need to be smarter in how we bring businesses into the City that doesn’t drive people away.

Mr. Funk – Partnering with youth organizations.

Ms. Teal - What must allow in the future for Monroe to keep its small town feel?

Mr. Funk – We have to maintain pride. When you wear your town on your sleeve that is the small town feel.

Ms. Teal - One of the things that came up earlier is managed growth and how you are developing. Is there anything that goes with that for the small town feeling?

Mr. Funk – Having a plaza where everybody in the community comes together for an event.

Mrs. McElfresh – I want to be very careful moving forward so that we do not have a neighborhood next to a warehouse. The obvious thing we have to have what must go well to achieve this vision is the funding to make all of this happen and community buy-in.

Ms. Teal asked what must go well to have quality amenities.

Mr. Funk – We have to prioritize our budget.

Mayor Frentzel – There are some services that the City has that are really good, some that are alright, and we need the ability to maintain the quality of some services while improving others.

Ms. Teal mentioned working in a community where the police department got what they wanted because otherwise people will die. Well we would like some asphalt please. Creating clarity around service levels. Define service levels. Define maintenance standards. If you are going to start doing priority settings.

Mayor Frentzel – Bring all service levels up to the same standard.

Mr. Funk – Nice places to eat, nice places for entertainment, with a community hub if it is built they would come.

Mayor Frentzel – Business partnerships.

Mrs. McElfresh – When you look at an entertainment district or area everyone wants nice sit down restaurants, but you have to have enough rooftops to make that happen. It is my understanding that we are not quite there with the count of rooftops.

Mr. Funk – The hotel being constructed might bring some opportunities.

Ms. Teal what has to go well to have well managed services?

Mrs. McElfresh – Happy staff.

Mayor Frentzel – Clear visions.

Mr. Funk – Proactive management.

Mr. Brock – Communication and expectations, being proactive, and happy staff. The communication is a big part of that not only with staff, but with boards and commissions.

Ms. Teal – are there any areas where you do have challenges in public services that maybe you are not up to where you want to be?

Mr. Brock – We are coming in behind on some of the mandated items like storm water, the public works side. Connectivity – they have to be handicap accessible. We have a lot of those federal mandates that we have to work on. We see that through many different areas. Some of our infrastructure we have to make sure we are addressing that. Making sure the staff are properly trained.

Mayor Frentzel – Water related as some of the records we do have of what the infrastructure is we need accurate maps.

Mr. Brock – Wwe have 400 valves on our water system and each one of those valves have to be exercised and the fire department needs to turn on a fire hydrant or shut one down if there is a water main break. Everything is interconnected and we have to understand those interconnectivities.

Mrs. McElfresh – I just want to make sure our pipes, our sewers, and our storm drains are functioning properly. If something is aging it would be good to have a plan moving forward in knowing that something is going to have to be replaced and I think that Mr. Brock is really good about that.

Mayor Frentzel – Some of that stuff we can control, but we need to educate private property owners on infrastructure on their property.

Ms. Teal – Connected and engaged community. What does connected mean? What has to go well for Monroe to be a connected community in the future?

Mr. Hickman – Make it a priority.

Mayor Frentzel – It goes back to communication too. If someone tells you something at Kroger telling someone else about it is good rather than keeping it to themselves.

Mr. Funk – Public information would come into play.

Mrs. McElfresh – If you have a dedicated department for communication that gives it a priority because you have dedicated staff towards that. In Monroe we do have many senior citizens and we cannot be all digital for all people. It is coming from all different directions.

Ms. Teal – we have talked a lot about physical connectivity.

Mrs. McElfresh – Sidewalks.

Mrs. Waggaman – We need to be creative on how we get information from information. I think we focus too much on pushing information out.

Mrs. McElfresh – If you are talking about developing this park program I would like us to be better in asking what their thoughts are.

Ms. Teal – Engaged community. What has to go well to have an engaged community?

Mrs. McElfresh – Happy people.

Mayor Frentzel – Sometimes unhappy people.

Mr. Funk – The constant effort on the City's part in reaching out and asking how is it going. What is going right and what do you think is going wrong.

Mr. Brock – A lot of communities do community surveys.

Ms. Teal – Do you only mean engaged in Monroe government only or do you mean in other ways too.

Mr. Funk – I think in other ways, such as what is available like sports from different areas.

Ms. Teal – It doesn't all have to be your services and if you help people connect with those opportunities.

Mr. Funk – Similar to your citizens surveys you would reach out to your cooperate partners.

Mayor Frentzel – How can we help businesses.

Ms. Teal – Anything else that has to go out in order to achieve this vision?

Mayor Frentzel – I think there are not enough engaged in their community. I see multiple times where we have kids that want to play sports, but we do not have enough adults for coaches.

Ms. Teal – We have to go to a couple of priority areas. For example, well managed and well maintained infrastructure, or a well connected city, or well developed park and recreation system.

Ms. Teal felt that you would have family friendly focused and small-town feel if the other items were met.

Council Member Strategic Priorities

Communication and Personal Connections

- Dedicated communications resources
- Community input
- Engagement

Parks and Connectivity

- Organizational structure/staffing
- Growing parks and recreation
- Trails/connectivity

Well Managed Systems and Infrastructure

- Proactive management approach
- Asset/infrastructure management
- Staff resources
- Fiscal resources

Careful Planning and Development

- Strategic approach/small-town
- Community hub

Mr. Funk felt that the trails/connectivity should include sidewalks.

Ms. Teal spoke about the vision statements in the strategic plan completed in 2006 to see if there was an opportunity for a wording transfer or connections to be drawn.

“Pride of Place: A Monroe Tradition.” The Mayor stated that it lives in every section of it.

“Responsive and Caring Service Delivery.” The Mayor felt this was covered as well. Ms. Teal noted that the word responsive was not used today; however, we talked about getting community input.

“Managed Growth and Development.” Ms. Teal advised that this is the same as careful planning and development. Mr. Funk preferred the word “strategic” rather than “careful.”

“Community Engagement.” Ms. Teal indicated this falls under “Communication and Personal Connections.”

“Fiscal Responsibility and Stability.” Ms. Teal pointed out this falls under Well Managed Systems and Infrastructure.”

“Exceptional Schools” – “Communication and Personal Connections.”

“Invest in Employees.” – “Well Managed Systems and Infrastructure”

Individual Council Member Priorities

Mayor Frentzel

- Being an inviting place for businesses of all size, but not at the cost of our residents.
- To continue develop and grow the park system and open the Bicentennial Commons Park to the public for events.
- Continue to expand the walkability and connectivity of the City.

Mr. Hickman

- Would like to see the Bicentennial Commons Park open by September.
- The bike path opened by Labor Day weekend.
- Bike path that goes from one park to the other through the middle of Monroe.
- Sidewalk on Britton Lane from Todhunter Road to State Route 63.

Mrs. McElfresh

- To have City-wide fiber optic.
- Physical connectivity of our City and neighborhoods.
- Bicentennial Commons Park open at least in the first phase by the end of September.

Mr. Funk

- Improve the quality of life through the parks system. Mainly through the Bicentennial Commons Park, but also through youth sports facilities.
- Physical connectivity and planning.
- Economic development strategy. Strategic way to attract businesses that we want. Supporting our local businesses and a vision for the Interchange.

Mr. Callahan

- Listen to the residents of Monroe and their needs.
- Working with businesses to see how we can help them grow.
- Having the park open by the end of the year.

Ms. Teal when I spoke with Mr. Routson his priorities were:

- To continue to make our parks better and continue with that investment.
- To maintain adequate budget for street repairs and other infrastructure maintenance.

Ms. Teal when I spoke with Mrs. Hale her priorities were:

- Communications and involvement beyond just digital.
- Grow and grow well. Not rush into things.

Ms. Teal indicated that to maintain adequate infrastructure falls in the category of “Well Managed Systems and Infrastructure.” For “Strategic Growth and Development” she has working with businesses to see how we can help them grow and being inviting to all businesses not at the cost of residents and having an intentional approach to growth and having an economic strategy that includes a vision for the Interchange that supports local businesses. For “Communication and Interpersonal Connections” we had improve the communication and listen to residents needs. For “Parks and Connectivity” expand walkability and connectivity, expand and make parks better, Bicentennial Commons Park open in Phase One by the end of September and opened by the end of the year, physical connectivity of City and neighborhoods. Improve quality of life by park system, Bicentennial Commons Park, and youth sports, and having a physical connectivity plan. Developing a sidewalk on Britton Lane from Todhunter Road to State Route 63, completed bike path by Labor Day weekend, seeing Bicentennial Commons Park open by September, and continue to improve parks.

Referring to the “Well Managed Systems and Infrastructure” category, Mr. Funk felt to enable the sheets that follow we are probably going to need activity here.

Ms. Teal stated this is where the convergence of the strategic planning framework, the priority based budgeting, and the communications come together. You have a big opportunity with the priority based budgeting in the future. It can be really hard as a council body to make a decision about a budget when you can’t really see how that affects what you have identified as priorities. This gives you good tools to make some really big decisions and everything is so interconnected. To achieve this vision you will need to operate differently than you did before. You will need to make hard but future oriented decisions.

Ms. Teal stated this is not an annual plan. A strategic plan is usually updated every three to five years.

Mayor Frentzel asked if Mr. Brock and Mrs. Waggaman had priorities. Ms. Teal responded that intentionally the policy makers are asked first. Mayor Frentzel would like to hear their priorities.

Mr. Brock - Mine is a little more down in the weeds, but it does tie into some of these things. The public works organizational structure is key in setting these items up. Building our GIS capability. Board and commission evaluation so that we are consistent in our approach in building these bodies with the same vision that Council has.

Mrs. Waggaman - I had collaborative communication both internal and external and more structured like social media and marketing. Progressive where we are heading. Restructured organization with well defined roles and service areas are covered. To make sure we are backing up our own standards making sure everyone is in alignment and holding everyone to those in a consistent manner.

Ms. Teal advised you are going to get a report in the next couple of days that will reflect everything that has been discussed today. Not verbatim, but here is what we talked about. It will start with the planning framework so you can start to move forward in the action plan items. As staff works on more tactical goals the framework is urge you as a body to adopt that framework. Even if it is just a vision and the strategic priorities. What can happen is that this goes away if you do not memorialize it.

Ms. Teal asked for parting thoughts.

Mr. Hickman – The report that you are generating should go to the committee working on the Comprehensive Plan. Most of the items we talked about today have been discussed for years. These are not all things that are a surprise to any of us and they have been written down before. Hopefully, we start seeing things happen with this.

Mrs. McElfresh – I think we accomplished great things today. There was a lot of dialogue and do not want our thoughts and words, to be for naught. I want to know that what we discussed today are meaningful and they are going to be carried through and followed through with. The seven Council members that comprise this team that we have, we are a team that work for the people of Monroe. Moving forward that we continue to be a non-partisan team that has nothing but the best interest of the City and the people of Monroe in mind.

Mr. Callahan – Very educational. A lot to take in and a lot of information.

Mr. Funk – Thanked everyone for coming today. I feel like there was a lot of structure and cannot wait to keep going.

Mrs. Waggaman – Thank everyone for coming and felt that everyone was open and honest to make sure this works and excited to get the report and set the systems in place so we can continue working on it and it doesn't fall off the radar.

Mr. Brock – I think today helped us define clarity and purpose and there are some things out there that there was some uncertainty around and brought everybody together around those topics and really started to get us off in the right direction for priority based budgeting and looking into the future and building the systems that we need to do. It has invigorated me more to develop a list and to have the Council be consistent in those things. It was very refreshing. There is more work to be done both internal and by the Council and the Council is what I need as a resource.

Mayor Frentzel – Thanks for facilitating. You did a good job. Definitely a benefit having them here and having Mr. Brock, Mrs. Waggaman, and Mrs. Wasson for being here and appreciate

their commitment to the City. I am excited to see the final report, but not stopping here. We would do a big disservice if we do not have follow up meetings and it is great groundwork. Even if it is items we talked about before it gives ourselves and staff an idea where we should be heading.

Adjournment

Mr. Funk moved to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Callahan. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The special meeting of Council adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela S. Wasson, MMC
Clerk of Council