

Town of Perryville Strategic Planning Meeting

October 26, 2013 9am

**JFK Perryville Barracks Conference Room
15 Turnpike Drive
Perryville, MD 21903**

Attendees: Mayor Eberhardt, Commissioners Brown, Linkey, Fox and Ryan; Denise Breder, Cathy McCardell, Rachel Deaner, Mary Ann Skilling, Chief Wernz, Aaron Ashford, Harvey Cage, Alan Amos, Ralph Ryan

Minutes

The meeting began with Mayor Eberhardt giving welcoming remarks as follows:

He thanked everyone for attending and stated that this is an opportunity to step back and take a broader look. He mentioned that we are doing a lot of things right, but are we doing the right things right? Mayor Eberhardt challenged the attendees to look at the work they do in light of the Mission Statement of the Town to make sure that the two are linked. He stated that the reason that local government exists is to provide services to the local community. The Board, the elected body, is there to legislate and appropriate; the board is there to set the direction and policy of what is going on in town. However, the Board members are not supervisors; that is the function of Denise [Breder] to be the full time manager and supervisor. The way the Board functions is to receive assignments and act as liaisons between the department and the Board for their assigned function. He stated that we have worked under a policy of 'stay in your lane', and that the assignments help the Board to stay in the loop. He said that doesn't mean that they will not sometimes let departments know of an issue or complaint, but that if there is an issue with prioritizing assignments, they should see Denise to resolve it. This is how the Board works with departments, and it is not always perfect. He further stated that today is not about getting into details of individual projects, but to take a broader look at what we are doing, both right and wrong and to move the town along in accordance with the Mission Statement. Finally, he mentioned that a big concern he personally has is communication, both internal and external. He doesn't want to see us placing blame on each other, but to act as one with each other, because that is how the citizens see us, as one unit.

Denise Breder gave some remarks as follows:

Ms. Breder stated that we have been entrusted with a big responsibility of managing and properly utilizing the resources of the Town of Perryville, and that we are not all going to agree on every issue, so it is important that we follow some rules for the meeting. She then went over the rules and objectives (goals) of the meeting:

The rules of the meeting are:

- **Be respectful of each other**
- **Allow others to speak**
- **Choose your words carefully**
- **Listen**
- **Make your points quickly and succinctly – don't dominate the meeting**

Meeting (goals) objectives:

- **Work together**
- **Build trust**
- **Improve Communication (this was a topic in the Staff Meeting as well – improving communication and building trust)**
- **Share common goals (mission / vision)**
- **Use resources wisely**
- **Plan of how to accomplish the goals**

Ms. Breder then identified the documents that were in the meeting packets (Agenda, Mission Statements – both Town and Department level, Goals Listing, Listing of Accomplishments, Listing of Projects in Process). She mentioned that these documents are in the packets for the background knowledge of those present in the meeting. She also mentioned that we are doing a lot of things right and have taken step actions to meet previously set goals and we are seeing results, but that it is good to re-evaluate and move forward. Ms. Breder then went over the goals:

Goals of the Town

1. Improve Communication
2. Work Together and Focus on Town Mission not “I”
3. Increase Residential Population
4. Bring Business
5. Update Codes, Charter & Policies
6. Other???
7. Identify the Biggest Problems facing the Town

A brief discussion of the Other category resulted in the following goals to discuss during the meeting:

8. Abandoned buildings, derelict buildings and sub-standard rentals
9. Improve Communication and **Build Trust**
10. Increase reserves for water and wastewater

Discussion and brainstorming of how to meet the Goals

1. Improve Communication and Build Trust

- a. Training on how to handle public comments
- b. Improved reporting
 - i. Streamlined
 - ii. Digitally vs paper at meeting
 - iii. Monthly reporting on projects
 - iv. Quarterly reporting on stats
- c. Call people back (And is there a need for a Public Information Officer – PIO? Put more thought into who is assigned to respond to questions on specific topics.)
- d. Keep facebook & website updated
- e. Newsletter (also need to establish ground rules for newsletter content)
- f. Events
- g. Another phone line and better phone system
- h. Talk to each other
- i. Explain process

A member of the public that attended the meeting gave support to the town having a Public Communication Officer.

Discussion on meeting reports occurred during the Improve Communication and Build Trust agenda item. The discussion included streamlining the reports at town meeting and instead of reading the reports at the meeting to post the monthly reports on the town's website. Posting reports online would allow the public to be informed as well as the Board. Another suggestion was to prepare quarterly reports with more detail and only project status updates on the monthly reports. One Board member liked the idea, as an effort to build trust with the staff to minimize what is reported on, and including in the town meeting reports only what would require board action. Some of the staff was concerned that the Board and public should know what the daily work is because a common criticism is that the town employees don't work hard enough. An attempt was made to create a common report framework; however, some Board members like seeing the daily work as well as the project updates on the monthly reports, while others only wanted to see the project updates. Ultimately the plan to address this problem was for the Board members to meet with the Department Head for their functional area to create a report format that works for them. Denise is to work with Rachel, Cathy and Ralph to determine a report format for Finance, Administration and Engineering.

2. Focus on Mission

- a. review the Mission statement and make sure as decisions are made that they are made in agreement with the Mission of the Town

3. Residential Population – increase and retain

- a. P&Z Requests are for apartments

- i. Work group – Ray Ryan, Alan Fox, Mary Ann Skilling
- b. Tolls – keep fighting / reduced rate for trucks an absolute necessity

4. Increase Business

- a. Façade and other grants
- b. Code (zoning) updates
- c. Establish Incentives (encourage the desired businesses)
- d. Marketing Perryville
 - i. Website update
 - ii. Facebook utilization
- e. Abandoned properties & improvement to rundown properties
- f. Infrastructure
- g. Time
- h. Invest in ourselves (meaning Town facilities)
- i. Chamber of Commerce involvement???
- j. Events
 - i. Ask Board members to work tables
 - ii. Work with / coordinate with other organizations where applicable

5. Update Codes, Charter & Policies

- a. Chapter 50 (Trash & Recyclables)
- b. Zoning
- c. Charter (distribute Attorney Sussman's comments & Board to return priorities on changes to be done)
- d. Update Goals list with a 'status'
- e. Policy Documents
 - i. Budget
 - ii. Local Impact Budget – scheduled public meeting for 11/21/13 at 6:30 pm

6. Other

- a. Volunteers
 - i. Recognize volunteers (monthly certificates / facebook)
 - ii. Volunteer lunch
 - iii. Newsletter – Board spotlight
 - iv. Look for interested people and make personal contact with them
 - v. Sell ourselves (meaning get the Perryville public to understand all of the good and meaningful things that are done here and hope that they consider volunteering in some capacity)
 - vi. Sell the Town to ourselves (meaning take pride in what we do and invest in ourselves)
 - vii. Survey for Town residents
 - viii. Nix duplicated efforts or partner with others

7. Increase Water and Wastewater Reserves

- a. Raise rates – they have not been raised in 3 years and are not even keeping up with cost of living

- b. Local Impact
 - i. Move salaries to General Fund budget
 - ii. Pay debt service with Local Impact Funds
 - iii. Fund Balance Policy
 - 1. Projects should come from reserves not LIF
 - iv. Prioritize water and wastewater needs (plants)
 - v. Camera for the sewer lines
 - vi. Remember (maintenance and improvements) underground infrastructure & pumping stations
- c. Equipment shared between municipalities
- d. Scrutinize expenses
- e. Increase training for staff

A request was made for final comments. There was a statement that we have too many irons in the fire, since there are many projects already in the works and multiple departments contribute to the projects. A request was made to be allotted time to finish some of the current projects before tackling other projects.

As a parting comment, Mayor Eberhardt reminded everyone to focus on improved communication.

The meeting ended at 1:57pm

Respectfully Submitted:

Denise Breder