

City of Mesa
City Council Retreat
Friday, November 17, 2006
8:35 a.m. – 1:10 p.m.
Saguaro Room, Second Floor
Mesa Public Library

Retreat Notes

PARTICIPANTS

City Council Members:

Keno Hawker
Tom Rawles
Scott Somers

Claudia Walters
Kyle Jones

Mike Whalen
Rex Griswold

City Staff:

Chris Brady
Jack Friedline
Denny Haywood
Carla Wagner

Debbi Dollar
Bill Follette
Heidi Gast
Marquisha Griffin

Bryan Raines
Jim Huling
Rodney Ross

Bob Ashcroft, Retreat Facilitator

OUR WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Are there things we can fine tune or adjust to improve the working relationship among the Mayor and Council members?

- assess/adjust how we do Council committees (e.g., clarify purpose, charge, role, process, role of committee chair, Open Meeting laws restrictions on interactions, etc.)
- improve/encourage our regional networks (i.e., more Council member involvement)
- work on Council succession planning (helping new members get up to speed and effectively participate, leadership development, etc.)
- have Council committee's develop a two year agenda
- use Council member rotation among committees as a way for learning
- work with Attorney General to define/clarity Open Meeting laws (what Council members can and cannot do)
- explore how national and regional associations help Mesa and the Council learn and obtain ideas on how we can better do things (i.e., interacting with other officials for new ideas)
- concern with low voter turnout in districts and its potential impacts on Mesa governance (can things be done to avoid these negative impacts, e.g., adjust Council size, more positions elected at large, etc.)
- Council committee chairs should give heads-up to Council members on upcoming issues

Summary/Key Points:

- generally our working relationship is good and the Mayor helps contribute to this
- assess/adjust Council committees
- Council member involvement in national and regional associations
- Council succession planning (to help continue good government for Mesa)

OUR WORKING RELATIONSHIPS (continued)

Are there things we can fine tune or adjust to improve the working relationship between the City Council and the City Manager?

- use monthly/quarterly written reports to Council to highlight what is happening on important items/issues the Council wants/needs to know (report on appropriate items, not everything)
- Council committee chairs regularly meet with their appropriate department heads
- identify “appropriate” ways for the Council to use Chris and staff’s knowledge/experience/expertise (find a forum/process for doing this)
- more effective use by Council of their reps – look at this, identify ways to strengthen reps, how they can help make Council members more effective, tools for the reps to do their work effectively, ways to increase the number of reps, etc.)

COUNCIL’S EXPECTATIONS FOR MESA

Give time (two years) and constraints (fiscal, legal, political, practical) what should this council collectively seek to leave behind for Mesa?

- a changed perception of Mesa – people feel that they are being well served
- an improved political structure for Mesa (Mesa works better, define this & seek to achieve)
- higher/better level of trust between City and community/citizens
- better constituent contact/communication
- Mesa is no longer dependent on state support, sales tax and fees
- neighborhoods more in control of their destiny
- Mesa is effectively working with others on transit issues and allocation of transit resources (concern expressed with this)
- better planning, plans, processes and results
- Mesa is a “big kid” (size, etc.) – people in Mesa and elsewhere realize this and what it means
- Mesa is in position for a smooth leadership transition
- a vibrant Williams Gateway job center
- working with appropriate patience – some things take time
- Charter which blends revenue sources and costs to citizens (allow various revenue sources, concern expressed with this)
- providing more than basic services and users pay for additional ones (caution here, needs to be defined, decide who will provide service, etc.)
- in some areas services/programs subsidize others

NOTE: if all of the above are worked on and accomplished, will result in a higher level of trust by citizens for both Mesa and the Council

Ultimately what should Mesa look like, feel like or how should it function as a city (e.g., a bedroom community, an employment center, a technology center, or some composite)?

- a balanced community – citizens able to live, work and play within 20 minutes
- since Mesa is a large geographic area, may contain many sub areas that look/feel different
- diversity and choice – a variety of neighborhoods/communities from which to choose
- a balance that is sustainable – provide choice within a reasonable distance
- Mesa is whatever the market produces
- Council/Mesa makes it possible for development to occur
- we are already a lot of what we are going to be

Some Common Threads about What Mesa should Look/Feel Like?

- balanced and diverse
- provide convenient choice for its citizens

2007-2008 AREAS OF FOCUS

Over the next two years (2007-2008) generally where should the City of Mesa focus its time, energy and resources?

- improve trust and perception
- improve financial sustainability
- economic development
- improve city processes

2007-2008 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

For each 2007-2008 area of focus, what specific objectives should we seek to achieve by December 31, 2008? The end/target/result we seek by December 31, 2008.

Area of Focus: Improve Trust and Perception

- people (citizens/residents) believe us:
 - they are better informed and educated
 - we are more effective in serving them
 - we and they are working together (they are engaged/involved)

Area of Focus: Improve Financial Sustainability

- 2009 City Council knows where money is coming from and they are not financially strapped, this is so because:
 - defined the services we want to provide and how to provide them
 - establish acceptable levels of service
 - reduced debt against bond debt
 - Charter which provides more financial sustainability
 - a more certain situation regarding state-shared revenues
 - a plan for Pinal land
 - improved bond rating
 - we operate with a sustained message: "no new general obligation bond issue without an attached secondary property tax"
 - citizens understand how Mesa raises revenues and the financial limits and challenges that Mesa faces

Area of Focus: Economic Development

- Mesa has a reputation for effective economic development:
 - when a company like Google announces a move to the Valley, Mesa is seriously considered
 - have an Economic Development Director
 - have and be using an Economic Development Strategic Plan (with a SWOT)
 - Mesa's transportation corridors/modes will support economic development
 - know and be effectively using our economic development tools
 - use Mesa's synergy (transportation/education/land use/utility infrastructure)
 - Council and staff builds/maintains personal relationships to support economic development
 - build "suppliers base" to support major companies
 - partner with private sector to support economic development

2007-2008 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES (continued)

Area of Focus: Improve City Processes

- people want to do business with Mesa rather than others in the Valley because:
 - we operate with a “yes we can” attitude
 - we are using best practices to improve our processes
 - have a new modern zoning code (which encourages infill)
 - we have done away with “slum lord loophole”
 - we are constantly re-engineering our processes
 - operating with improved relationship with state legislature
 - working with all appropriate levels of government to deal with the issue of “half way houses”
 - operating with short, efficient processes (have eliminated unnecessary steps)
 - what we select to do we do well – we eliminate what we don’t need to do (look at what other big cities are not doing)

GETTING THINGS DONE DURING 2007-2008

What should the Council and staff do, working together, to ensure that we focus on and get done what we seek over the next two years?

- assign 2007-2008 Areas of Focus and/or Specific Objectives to Council committees
- Council works with staff (theirs and City Manager, etc.) to make assignments, establish timelines, methods of reporting and accountability, resource needed, etc.
- see if any reorganization or changes in reporting are necessary
- develop and use a chart/diagram/picture of our 2007-2008 Areas of Focus and Objectives
- set priorities among what we seek to do (all may not be equal)
- ask city departments to integrate areas of focus and objectives in their plans/planning (i.e., integrate what we seek to do into city plans, processes, budgets, etc.)
- convey our Areas of Focus and Objectives to the entire community (be proactive – share and ask for their help)
- in 30 days use the Council Study Session to review/refine our work plans for achieving what we seek over the next two years, and then regularly (monthly) use Study Sessions to maintain focus/attention, track progress, make adjustments, etc.
- all that we do should build trust
- work on building and maintaining an effective Council/staff team to achieve desired results
- establish and use reporting dates (to ensure that follow-up to tasks occurs)
- City Manager will look at Areas of Focus and Objective and report back to Council on how to achieve them (what it will take, resources needed, impacts, etc.)
- to achieve what we seek, the Council must be more involved, especially commitment at the Council committee level
- Mayor may need to use some ad hoc committees to assist the effort to get things done

RETREAT FOLLOW-UP TASKS/ACTIONS

Given what we have accomplished today, what specific tasks/actions must we pursue, over the coming weeks to continue our work and to position ourselves for success in 2007 and 2008?

- compile and distribute Retreat Notes to all appropriate parties (by Monday, November 20th)
- use the Council’s December 14th Study Session to review/refine plans for acting
- review items in “Idea Parking Lot” – decide what to do, how and when
- examine how our retreat experience (conversations among Council members, etc.) can be used at Study Sessions and committee meetings

RETREAT EVALUATION

Given our experience today (people, place, processes, products, etc.):

What went well?

- talking with each other
- the trust that was demonstrated among Council members
- setting/atmosphere (place, process, seating arrangement different from usual Council meetings)

What needs improvement?

- spending time on the details – how to actually implement what we want to do
- seemed a “bit too esoteric”
- have each Council member identify their key projects, share with colleagues and attempt to secure enough support to move the projects forward
- have the retreats on television (live or videotape for rebroadcast)
- more “free for all” Study Sessions (conversations like the retreat)

IDEA PARKING LOT

At the end of the retreat, the following items remained in the “Idea Parking Lot.”

- have a discussion/conversation about adjusting Council size/composition (more Districts, more at-large positions, etc.)
- staff/representatives for Council members (who hires/fires, who are they responsible to, how they can be more effective to help the Council members, need for more, etc.)
- communications with community/constituents