

A Strategic Planning Session Meeting of the Lake Wales City Commission was held on May 7, 2015 at the James P. Austin Community Center. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Fultz at 9:13 a.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Terrye Howell; Christopher Lutton; Pete Perez; Eugene Fultz, Mayor

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Jonathan Thornhill

CITY REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Kenneth Fields, City Manager; Clara VanBlargan, City Clerk; Jennifer Nanek, Deputy City Clerk; Tom Moran, Utilities Director; Sarah Kirkland, Utilities Project Manager; Joe Jenkins, Fire Chief; Chris Velasquez Police Chief; Dorothy Ecklund, Finance Director; Kathy Bangley, Assistant Planning and Development Director; Tina Peak, Library Director; Sandra Davis, Human Resources Director; James Slaton, Support/Public Services Director; Teresa Allen, Assistant Support/Public Services Director;

MEETING FACILITATORS:

Bunny Wetzel

Bunny is a career educator, retired from the Polk County Schools and now working part time for the Lake Wales Charter schools. She is a resident of Babson Park and moonlights as a grandmother! She has worked as a facilitator for over 20 years.

Rich Thompson

Rich is a 40 year resident of Lake Wales and retired from Polk State College. He is a former City Commissioner and Mayor of Lake Wales. He is a professional Meeting Facilitator and is the Principal of BOLD Solutions Group, a business, organization, and logistics development consulting group. He also moonlights as a grandfather!

[Meetings are recorded, but not transcribed verbatim. *Strategic Planning Session Priorities at the End*]

Mr. Fields welcomed everyone and reviewed the purpose of the meeting which was to establish priorities for the next few years. He introduced Rich Thompson who will facilitate the meeting.

Mr. Thompson explained visioning process and encouraged dreaming about the direction they envision for the City. There will be 3 categories to discuss, other issues should be set aside for now.

First category to discuss is quality of life, making Lake Wales attractive for new families and businesses.

Commissioner Lutton said we need more parks, jobs, and there should be no empty store fronts. Mayor Fultz said he would like a modern, complete recreation complex and beach access at Lake Wales. Teresa Allen said that we need to expand current facilities. Commissioner Howell said she would like to improve Code Enforcement and residential appearance. Kathy Bangley said that overall community appearance needs improvement. Kenneth Fields said we need more entertainment options and better nightlife. Commissioner Howell said that we need more restaurants, several agreed with this. Rich Thompson said that we need things that appeal to three demographics, families, young adults, and retired folks. Kenneth Fields said that our better restaurants do well and suggested that we should try and attract more start up chains. The City needs its own demographic study to reflect our number of seasonal residents. We should look for fast casual restaurants. If we can get a new larger McDonalds on HWY 60 as well as third one on North US 27, we can support additional restaurants. Mr. Fields described some of the marketing efforts regarding Longleaf Business Park. Commissioner Perez expressed concerns about people going elsewhere for entertainment from all 3 communities white, Hispanic, and African-American. Tina Peak said that we already have a great quality of life, with a great library, schools, and recreation programs among others. Commissioner Lutton suggested that we could market ourselves better to residents. Mayor Fultz said that it is difficult to encourage young leaders to participate in the community. Commissioner Perez observed that it is hard to encourage changes in minority communities. Clara VanBlargan said that we need to have places for younger families as its where minority families mostly

go. Mayor Fultz said that we need to do more to encourage leadership among our students. Chief Jenkins cautioned that we don't leave the northern part of the city behind and include public safety as part of quality of life improvements. Chief Velasquez agreed saying that growth needs to be done right in order to keep public safe. Some entertainment options may require police presence; he urged caution in these decisions. Mr. Fields commended the public safety staff, as it was not identified as a problem at the beginning illustrated that we have excellent public safety here. Mayor Fultz agreed saying that our police department does an excellent job in building community relationships and this plays a big part of keeping things running smooth.

The second topic is Economic Development.

The need for new high tech jobs was mentioned by Mr. Fields who said further that we need companies besides warehouses. Kathy Bangley said that community appearance is a key component of economic development as well as quality of life. Mayor Fultz said that we need more airport improvements, there is lots of potential there, it can help bring more jobs and allow some businesses to expand. Commissioner Howell said that a restaurant was needed at our airport like other cities, Bartow and Winter Haven, have. She said we need new companies to commit to hiring more local workers. Mr. Fields said we need more higher level of housing in the price range of \$200,000 - \$400,000 for executives, doctors and others to live here. Commissioner Lutton said that we need more marketing of Lake Wales. Mr. Fields agreed with the need for more marketing and noted that the upcoming improved city website will help. Commissioner Howell wondered how we can fill up empty buildings. Mr. Fields explained that the current retail stores on SR 60, US HWY 27, and the mall are doing ok, not great but ok. We can grow our retail on South US 27. Downtown Lake Wales was discussed and how the City can help. Commissioner Howell said they need longer evening hours and be open on weekends. Kathy Bangley said that we need more retail business downtown and asked who we should be trying to appeal to. Commissioner Lutton said that downtown should expand beyond Stuart & Park Avenues. Commissioner Perez suggested a casino or other entertainment.

The meeting broke for a lunch break at 11:59am.

The meeting was reconvened at 12:39pm.

The third topic is environment and infrastructure.

City Manager Kenneth Fields explained that water availability is becoming an issue; we need to annex more outside areas to provide utilities. Chief Jenkins cautioned that all new property must be within 5 miles of one of their stations. The topic of water usage, which is served by the city, who isn't and where our lines are was discussed.

Dorothy Ecklund, Finance Director, provided a budget snapshot for the next few years.

Discussion took place regarding the forthcoming change in Fire Services for areas outside the City limits. Mr. Fields explained the change and what some of the results will be.

Everyone ranked the identified priorities, the top ranked included improving community appearance, new multipurpose facilities, and enhancing parks as high priorities. Rich Thompson identified the top priorities and recommended to each department to see how they can work towards these priorities. Mr. Thompson stated that he would work to list and rank all identified priorities and give them to the City Manager. (List is attached)

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05pm.

Mayor/Deputy Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk Clara VanBlargan, MMC

DOWNTOWN	1ST PRIORITY	2ND PRIORITY	3RD PRIORITY	TOTAL	Weighted
Offer various niches – restaurants, antiques, shops, salons. Should we specialize our niche? Or diversity? Not just events.	0	4	0	4	8
Need a local champion	0	3	0	3	6
Expand beyond Park & Stuart. Incentives	0	0	1	1	1
Casino	0	0	0	0	0
Balance between retail and nonprofit	0	0	0	0	0
Stay open – Retail & restaurants stay open evenings & weekends	0	0	0	0	0
Maybe distribute a downtown brochure – take to Lake Ashton, Carlsburg Estates, etc. (Mainstreet should do this)	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL POINTS	0	7	1	8	

ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE	1ST PRIORITY	2ND PRIORITY	3RD PRIORITY	TOTAL	Weighted
Water Availability – Capacity & Disposal	7	4	2	13	31
Annexation – Possibilities, issues availability of utilities. (Fire services w/in 5 miles of annexation)	2	5	5	12	21
Stormwater drainage –have an engineer look at it. Get estimate. Stormwater utilities	2	6	3	11	21
Reclaimed Water; Street Scape; Curbside Recycling	3	1	5	9	16
Annexation impacts sewer. New plant may necessary “ungood!” There are water lines north of Waverly.	3	1	2	6	13
TOTAL POINTS	7	11	3	21	

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (Outside/Downtown)	1ST PRIORITY	2ND PRIORITY	3RD PRIORITY	TOTAL	Weighted
Enhance Community Appearance	8	3	2	13	32
Lakeshore attraction – pavilion, restrooms, lakefront, restaurant	5	0	1	6	16
Development of executive housing	2	1	4	7	12
Concise public relations (PR) /Marketing Brochure & Website	2	1	4	7	12
Tie incentives to jobs & hiring/living locally	0	3	3	6	9
Incentive “neighbors” to “clean it up” – perception!! Make attractive to drive-bys.	0	2	0	2	4
Increase midlevel job opportunities	1	0	0	1	3
Corridor between R.R. tracks & library. Keep tennis courts, etc. as part of downtown.	0	0	3	3	3
Improve alley ways and parking	0	1	0	1	2
Mid-price range restaurants & retailers	0	0	1	1	1
Historic district – help or no? New buildings represent “old.” Local designation	0	0	1	1	1
When tax base grows, quality of life follows	0	0	0	0	0
Rename “Longleaf Business Park” to “Crossroads	0	0	0	0	0
Economic Development is tied to airport, PSC, tech centers	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL POINTS	18	11	19	48	

QUALITY OF LIFE	1 ST PRIORITY	2 ND PRIORITY	3 RD PRIORITY	TOTAL	Weighted
Overall community appearance	5	5	0	10	25
Multipurpose meeting space, gym, facility	5	1	2	8	19
Enhance existing recreation facilities	3	2	0	5	13
"Grow" public safety w/residential growth in Lake Wales – Customer service! Fire, police, & code enforcement work together	1	3	1	5	10
Jobs	2	1	0	3	8
Get younger adults involved in activities – political, recreational, civic. Make them feel welcome, not shut out. (Is it "an age/maturity thing")	0	2	4	6	8
Strong corridor between City of Lake Wales & Library	1	1	1	3	6
Parks (includes small "community parks")	1	0	2	3	5
Diversity of restaurants – Florida based, don't target big chains	0	0	4	4	4
Attract young people back - Welcome them back	0	2	0	2	4
Entertainment options for various age groups – Jazz, dancing, etc (cart center input)	0	1	0	1	2
Continue good community relations with police & fire departments	0	0	2	2	2
Address dilapidated homes, etc. "blight"	0	0	1	1	1
Attract college student to Lake Wales area "eatery"	0	0	1	1	1
No empty storefronts	0	0	0	0	0
Beach on lakefront for water recreation	0	0	0	0	0
Quality venue for music	0	0	0	0	0
Produce our own demographic study (raw data, don't reflect on reality)	0	0	0	0	0
Provide opportunities for and other minority - Hispanic communities – Entertainment, restaurants, employment Strategy to "bring people out of shadows"	0	0	0	0	0
We need to "describe" ourselves better, build on recreation that is here – Market them all as one package	0	0	0	0	0
Get high school young business leaders and schools involved.	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL POINTS	18	18	18	54	