

**CITY OF OWOSSO
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF AUGUST 26, 2017
8:00 A.M.**

PRESIDING OFFICER: MAYOR CHRISTOPHER T. EVELETH

PRESENT: Mayor Christopher T. Eveleth, Mayor Pro-Tem Susan J. Osika, Councilpersons Loreen F. Bailey, Burton D. Fox, Elaine M. Greenway, Daniel A. Law (8:15 a.m.), and Robert J. Teich, Jr.

ABSENT: None.

Introductions were given by all those present, noting names and positions.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

City Manager Donald D. Crawford started out the discussion by noting all of the resources available to aid in today's discussion, including the Master Plan, the Parks Plan, a recent audit, the current budget, and the Blue Ribbon Committee Report. Using the Blue Ribbon Committee Report as an example Mr. Crawford indicated that today's discussion would be smaller in scope, saying he hoped to refine a 6-year plan by the end of the meeting. He went on to ask each person present to list one thing that should be a goal for the City in the next twelve months.

The attendees broke into small groups to discuss and develop the following two lists:

Why do people move/stay in Owosso?

Job opportunities	Family members in area
Low crime	Rail line to Chicago
Good school system (academically)	Three state highways
Recreation opportunities	Sense of community
Low cost of living	Hospital
Tourist attractions	Baker College
Business friendly atmosphere	Support for the arts

Why do people leave Owosso?

Schools (poor facilities)	Area's susceptibility to economic downturns
Overabundance of rental properties	Low wages
Limited higher level career opportunities	Negative culture/cynicism
Availability of quality housing	Brain drain

City Manager Crawford challenged the group to think of things the City could do to realistically promote the positives and mitigate the negatives. Ideas mentioned included: doubling down on code enforcement efforts, conducting an educational effort on common code enforcement issues, putting together a package of services to help people fix problems, and doing more to promote the community's assets to both residents and visitors.

Mr. Crawford then switched gears and had the group considering the mission statement. He presented the group with 2 statements to choose from.

Councilmember Bailey asked if there was anything anyone would disagree with either one as a mission statement.

Councilmember Fox felt they were both statements are the same thing, nothing anyone would disagree with.

During the discussion City Manager Crawford pointed out that there are usually 5 concerns for residents:

1. When a resident turns on the faucet water comes out.
2. When a resident flushes the toilet it goes down never to be seen again.
3. When a resident drives down the street it does not ruin my car.
4. After major rainfall the house doesn't flood
5. After calling public safety responses within 5 minutes

Councilmember Bailey would like a diverse and welcoming in mission statement.

Each table took a few minutes to come up with their idea for a mission statement.

There was a discussion on each mission statement with changes and after voting the following was the statement the group decided that best represented the City of Owosso's mission.

“The mission of the City of Owosso is to promote a safe, enjoyable and welcoming environment to live and do business.”

City Manager Crawford then detailed some of the issues with development of the City. Possible issues include housing, education, business development (retail).

Community Development Director/ Assistant City Manager Susan Montenegro, spoke regarding the redevelopment of sites, connecting with developers, possible rezoning, parking issues (getting employee to park in the outer laying parking areas).

Public Safety Director Kevin Lenkart explained public safety's goals are to provide efficient, effective services for both Police and Fire Departments.

There was discussion with Public Safety Director on how to be proactive instead of reactive and education or enforcement.

Glenn Chinavare, Public Services Director, reported on infrastructure.

City Manager Crawford asked if we were in a crisis. Mr. Chinavare reported the city was behind on the replacement of water meters.

Councilmembers questioned what would be the next crisis. Mr. Chinavare reported on several infrastructure issues that could be potential crises and the way to avert them. He reported he felt he had a handle on it.

Mr. Chinavare also reported on the need for more technology at the plants and more technology needed with regard to records.

City Manager Crawford reported on Finance – saying the City has stable or declining revenues. He reported it will continue as is. He stated be prepared for an increase in sewer rates.

Katherine Fagan, City Treasurer/ Accountant, reported that Karen Ruddy, Finance Director, has streamlined things and made the information more transparent.

Human Resources Director/ IT Director, Jessica Unangst reported on recruiting and maintaining employees. She also reported that the city needs to do a better job of succession training. She stated employees are more transient because people do not mind driving further away.

Ms. Unangst also reported she would like IT to have a plan to maintain and upgrade equipment so it doesn't find itself in a crisis situation.

Community Development Director Montenegro presented to the group the following:

REDEVELOPMENT READY CITY FROM THE MEDC

1. Create a 6 year capital improvement plan.
2. Update zoning ordinance.
3. Update the Master Plan.
4. How well does the city work with the community? Goes thru planning commission and then recommend to council.
5. Ways to implement to training staff.
6. Orientation when you're new on a board?
7. Track attendance of board and staff at meetings.
8. Engage the public at the meetings.
9. Steps to identify places to redevelop.
10. How does the City market itself?

There was a discussion regarding the detail of the projects.

Ms. Montenegro also explained that they have 2,200 rentals and cannot keep up with the rental inspections within the 5 years. She also went in detail on some of the issues seen.

Councilmember Fox asked what the problem is in getting to all the rentals. Ms. Montenegro explained sometimes the tenants or the landlords don't want the inspection done. The firefighters do the inspections as time permits. Ms. Montenegro explained they have to do 9 inspections per week to stay on top of it.

Public Safety Director Lenkart, presented a handout and detailed the fire department side of public safety, including ambulance.

Police Lieutenant Eric Cherry detailed the information in the handout related to the police department.

Director Lenkart also presented a rendering of a New Public Safety Building.

Public Services Director Chinavare stepped forward and gave a brief presentation highlighting the on-going activities and future plans of the DPW, utilities, and engineering departments. Mr. Chinavare's presentation was followed by presentations for the Finance and Human Resources departments, and the Historical and Parks & Recreation Commissions.

City Manager Crawford closed the session by reviewing the goals set in 2010 and creating a list of priorities for the coming year as dictated by those present.

- Address downtown parking issues
- Review the Master Plan
- Encouraging every employee to report any issues they encounter
- Bring the bike trail into town
- Build the GIS system
- Create a riverfront development plan
- Address blight issues
- New schools

Review the Zoning ordinance
Bring downtown buildings up to code/educate building owners
Search for a new City Manager
Improve rental stock
Improve city entrances
Automate business processes
Attend to abandoned houses
Workflow process evaluation at city hall
Develop a process for handling constituent complaints
Database system management
Improvements to customer service
Full time IT staff
Lower the level of rentals
Pay attention to Westtown

Mr. Crawford indicated he would compile all the data discussed today and establish a means of tracking the data over the course of the next 5-6 years.

Councilmember Bailey indicated she would like a quarterly report on the goals established today.

Mayor Eveleth thanked everyone for sacrificing their free time to come to the meeting. He said it was nice to put faces with names and was very helpful to hear from everyone.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, September 05, 2017

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Christopher T. Eveleth, Mayor

Amy K. Kirkland, City Clerk

Recording secretaries: Roxane Cramer and Amy Kirkland.