

City of Muskegon Special Meeting
Goal Setting Session
Lakeshore Museum Center
430 W. Clay Avenue, Muskegon, MI 49440
11:30 a.m.

Attendance

Present: Mayor Johnson, Commissioners St.Clair, Emory, Gorman, and Ramsey

Absent: Vice Mayor German and Commissioner Hood

Staff Members present: Mike Franzak, Ann Meisch, Kyle Karczewski, Jason Boes, Dan VanderHeide, Pete Wills, Deborah Santiago-Sweet, Dave Alexander, Jake Lamie, Jessica Rabe, Jake Eckholm, Sarah Peterson, Dwana Thompson, Sharonda Carson, Captain Tim Bahorski, Peggy Thorsen-Straley, Rachel Gorman, LeighAnn Mikesell, Todd Myers, Ken Grant, Jonathan Seyferth, Barb Shullenberger, Wendy Webster (to do minutes), and Kim Young (to do minutes)

Paula Kendra (Facilitator)

The Goal Setting session is being led by Paula Kendra, owner of Kendra Consulting.

Review the Four Major Goal Areas and Key Take-a-ways from 2022 - 2027 Vision

- Community Connection/Manager's Office
- Destination & Quality of Life/DPW/Parks
- Financial Infrastructure/Finance/Manager
- Economic Development, Housing, and Business/Development Services

Review each key focus area and discuss next steps/new action items

City Manager Jonathan Seyferth reviewed of the "rules" - use first names, no interrupting - let others finish, raise your hand to follow up on an idea - let everyone speak on a topic if they wish - respect by debating ideas, not individuals, stay on topic, ask questions, be present - engaged - and actively listening.

Paula Kendra is here to help us continue our strategy and is impressed with the visions the city came up with.

Deborah Santiago-Sweet and Ann Meisch presented updates on

2027 Goal 3: Community Connection: *Create an environment of mutual respect and trust between local government and the community we serve. Increase communication with residents, workers, business owners, and visitors to inform, educate, and create opportunities for input.*

Focus Areas:

- Enhanced internal and community communications
- Focus on neighborhood associations
- Foster strong ties among government and community agencies
- Help increase public participation
- More integrated community
- Increased range of options for communications
- Staff reflective of the diverse community
- Increased election turnout

Progress made on this goal includes:

- Hired Community Engagement Director
- Created C2EM (Communication, Community Engagement, and Marketing) Committee
- We will be publishing a newsletter
- Launched Monday.com
- Providing a monthly update sheet for Neighborhood Associations
- Holding engagement events
- Have approved budget for print newsletter and monthly e-newsletter
- Created internal Human Resources position
- Using Zen City
- Change in law allows early voting beginning in 2024
- We will have early voting available for residents at County Facility and City Hall
- Continued utilization of voting trailer

Highlights from discussion for **recommendations** to build momentum and focus on things that haven't been done include:

- Ensure communication with residents is digestible/understandable/accessible
- Track Community Interaction – metrics (presented with a narrative) such as number of attendees, email open rate, online survey interactions, etc.
- How do we reach and engage with a more diverse range of the city's residents? Including renters? Need for methods and tracking metrics
- Staff should be reflective of Community
- Have more internal staff communication to prepare them to respond to residents
- Need to invest in updating city forms for accessibility for non-English speakers/readers or use sign language
- Focus on neighborhood organizations – provide organizational development support
- Some areas/Residents are not represented by a neighborhood association
- Continue election turnout focus – include education for residents regarding wards in which they reside, who their city commissioner is.
- Continue to support public safety's efforts to build relationships with residents

- Prioritize participation in C2EM
- Specific and targeted outreach to people in areas we don't usually hear from.
- Identify agencies in community that do similar work, better tell these stories when we're already working with partners (GARE)
- Diversity (recruit and retain) public safety department
- Focus on retaining youth and young adults in the city

Dan VanderHeide and Kyle Karczewski provided updates on

2027 Goal 1: Destination Community & Quality of Life: *Create an environment that puts an emphasis on improving amenities and investing in the traits that positively affect residents' quality of life and attract visitors.*

Focus Areas:

- Improved access to the waterfront
- Improved connections between downtown and the beaches
- Passenger transit service to Chicago
- Blight cleanup
- Enhanced Parks and Recreation Department and Services
- Events and activities
- Public transportation options (tram, scooters, trolley biking network)
- Public restrooms that remain open

Progress made on this goal includes:

- Many of new developments are on the water and are providing waterfront access on their own or with encouragement
- Parks & Rec officially re-established
- All but one set of bathrooms re-opened - Sheldon park needs work
- About 150 events in 2022; about 125 in 2023

Highlights from discussion for **recommendations** to build momentum and focus on things that haven't been done include:

- Continue exploration of Amtrak service – connect with Representative Scholten, promote bus service to Holland
- Promote Positive attitudes about community by communicating a positive narrative about amenities
- Offering quality recreation opportunities that are attractive to a broader range of residents
- Clean up graffiti quickly
- Improve connections along the Lakeshore (updated language for #2)
- Improved public access and accessibility to the water front (#1)

- Equitable and judicious enforcement of blight clean up laws – particularly commercial buildings
- Pilot a community tool shed – use tool trailer?
- Analysis of current property management policies
- Kruse Park stairway restoration
- Develop plan for recurring revenue for parks
- More focus on combatting, reducing, preventing gun violence in the community
- Identify ways for city government to be supportive of organizations focused on reducing poverty beyond monetary support

Ken Grant presented updates on:

2027 Goal 4: Financial Infrastructure: *Create an environment that naturally affects the city's revenues in a positive manner, with a focus on reclaiming city investments in housing, nurturing startup projects proposed throughout the city, and exploring staff recommendations related to new revenues.*

Focus Areas and progress on this goal:

- Decrease infrastructure burden on residents
 - a. DPW has been awesome about securing grants/loans for projects
- Sustainability in financial practices and infrastructure
 - a. Continue to follow guidelines with sound practices
 - b. DPW doing great here too
- Increase Revenue
 - a. Getting more housing/developments - this helps the bottom line
 - b. Economic Development and Income Tax; public safety - everyone plays a role in increasing tax income

Highlights from discussion for **recommendations** to build momentum and focus on things that haven't been done include:

- Improve communication with residents about how tax dollars are used – make city budget “digestible”
- Capture tourism revenue
- Educate the public on how the city raises funds
- Thank residents for support – make communication positive
- Share expenses information to help residents understand
- Continue infill housing work and increase density to address infrastructure burden
- Explore building an endowment for parks and rec while managing expectations of donors
- Keep an eye on costs – continually become more cost efficient.

10-minute Break

Jake Eckholm and Mike Franzak presented updates on:

2027 Goal 2: Economic Development, Housing, and Business: *Create an environment that effectively attracts new residents and retains existing residents by filling existing employment gaps, attracting new and diverse businesses to the city, and expanding access to a variety of high-quality options in Muskegon.*

Focus Areas:

- Diverse Housing types
- Diversity reflected in businesses and business owners
- Improved reputation for inspections department
- Micro-commercial areas in neighborhoods
- Retain youth within the city
- Neighborhood commercial center development
- Progress toward completion of ongoing economic development projects

Progress made on this goal includes:

Highlights from discussion for **recommendations** to build momentum and focus on things that haven't been done include:

- 24,000 people work in the city every day, 20,000 of them do not live in the city
- Commissioners must support staff efforts – votes, communicating to constituents
- Add public safety focus area communicate that our neighborhoods are safe where infill housing is being built – share widely
- Incentive City staff to live within city limits
- Emphasize benefits in job postings
- Identify the next area for investment
- Continued commitment to arena and convention center
- Set clear expectations with residents regarding the role of the inspections department
- Implement customer service evaluation process for inspections department, including a plan for improving customer satisfaction.
- Include SafeBuilt in celebrating residents – provide a different way for them to interact with residents
- Evaluate how/which residents are using the arena
- Greater engagement by DDA in arena costs
- Programs and efforts to increase housing affordability

Other comments/discussion points included:

Mayor Johnson talked about the entrepreneurial eco system of the city, citing Kitchen 424; chalets as examples; reinforcing what we are already doing as an entrepreneur friendly city. We

The city has invested heavily in the arena to revitalize and activate it. We should determine how it's being used by city residents and figure out how to get those that don't use the arena to do so

Discussions need to take place around who to retain youth within the city - no action items were assigned last year and we should put more focus on it this year - young adults and youth - focus on attracting people to our schools. How do we foster strong ties between government and community? The C2EM Committee can be helpful here.

Climate Action - Environmental impact - we will be doing an impact study to figure out how the city impacts the climate...not as a whole (the whole city) but as an entity.

Look at action steps for Community Connection and Economic Development - add action items

Community Connection:

Action Items: barriers were with communication

Goal 3 action item add: Participation in C2EM Committee to take advantage of the Community Engagement department to push out information about your department and increase communication about things that are happening so everyone has the information

Two focus areas did not have action items assigned:

Specific and targeted outreach to communities we don't hear from and don't normally connect with. Use targeted universalism and align with other agencies that do the work.

Action item regarding GARE and how it aligns with organization and schools

Discussion regarding Economic Development, housing, and business. Regarding housing subsidies, we should continue working toward this and expand our efforts. Maybe consider a designated housing fund.

Start on 2022-2.5 - Plaza has been designed for chalets at beach - we need to confirm interest and it will be about 1.5M to get started. It would improve parking but where's the money coming from? Look into potential grant resources. Is this an urgent need? Parking, boardwalk, plaza space - want to see this move forward but need to address Kruse Park Boardwalk first.

Add action item for securing funding for Kruse Park stairway repair/replacement - Destination Community and Quality of Life. Consider establishing "Friends of Muskegon Parks"

Encourage DPW to put together a list of concrete plans/best intentions/ that looks like something we can share and know. Something that explains why we're doing what we're doing when we're doing it.

Long term funding sources for Parks and Recreation, continuously explore recurring revenue options. Develop a plan.

Talk about gun violence in our city and how to get a handle on it - how to combat and prevent. It should go under quality of life. We should we include public safety in all of our goals, like climate change, we need to view all of our goals through a public safety lens. Make this a place you want to be and want to stay.

Create an environment where people can be successful

There are numerous organizations that support kids and we should partner with those.

We need to advertise opportunities for training, job placement, etc.

The goal setting meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann Marie Meisch, MMC – City Clerk