

During the Elizabeth City Council Strategic Planning Retreat held on November 7, 2022, the attending members discussed and deliberated their goals and plans for the Council and the City, both short and long term. As requested, staff has compiled those notes into a concise format for ease of reference.

Mission Statement

To engage in professional, collaborative leadership to guide our city with integrity through sound decision-making in an effort to provide an economically sustainable and attractive quality of life for all residents.

Overarching Pre-Existing Goals

1. Ensure sound fiscal responsibility
2. Improve the City's infrastructure
3. Strengthen inter-governmental relationships, including institutes of higher learning
4. Provide youth and senior activities
5. Deliver cost effective, quality services
6. Improve the quality and safety of neighborhoods
7. Increase business development opportunities to increase the quantity and quality of job

Seven goals outlined by previous Councils still remain at the core of the City's planning goals. The current Council's objectives and desires have been divided into those preexisting goals.

Objectives

Fiscal Responsibility

1. Council identified several areas they'd be interested in looking into for potential money savings, including leasing of police vehicles instead of outright purchase each year and possibly outsourcing trash collection. Budget to Actuals will be distributed amongst the Council each month for review and reference. Short-term goal established to complete both delayed audits and remain in compliance and on time with each subsequent audit going forward. There is a consensus amongst the Council that they do not wish to have a tax increase present within the 2023-2024 Budget. Important to let the constituents know that they can and should be involved in the Budget process and encourage them to take part. Want to put a

spending plan in place for ARPA funds and any potential federal dollars that may be out there. Additionally, expressed a desire to really “dig in” as far as grant funding goes and find additional ways to possibly help not just our organization but our community members if possible.

Improve Infrastructure

1. General consensus is that there will likely be a water and sewer increase present in the 2023-2024 Budget, as was recommended by the previous Raftelis study and necessary to fund desperately needed infrastructure repairs and improvements. Council expressed concern with the lack of a plan for fixing the infrastructure and has labeled the need for putting an infrastructure repair plan in place as a top priority.

Strengthen Inter-Governmental Relationships

1. Council’s word of the day was “collaboration”, and the importance of working with other governmental units, as well as our institutes of higher learning was stressed as an item of utmost importance. Council recognizes that there are many areas that they may be unable to tackle alone, but likes the idea of joining forces with other local entities to create task forces to take on problems. Collaborative relationships / task force groups were suggested to address the concerns of homelessness, police recruiting and service, community engagement and issues within some of our rental housing.

Youth and Senior Activities

1. EC-PC Parks & Recreation hosts a number of recreation and special events for our local youth and children, including: volleyball, T-ball, basketball, little league baseball / softball, Summer Camps – featuring cheerleading, ninja, sailing, tennis, flag football, and activity camp, Kids Flix, Independence Day Family & Community Celebration, and the Elizabeth City Christmas Holiday Parade. The recently acquired, standalone Senior Center is teeming with activities and events for our mature population. Council was proud of the direction of Parks and Recreation staff has been taking and encouraged the idea of more promotion so the community will be aware of exactly how much we’re doing and how many opportunities for different age groups we’re offering.

Cost Effective, Quality Services

1. Council discussed our trash truck problems and how best to tackle those for our citizens, be it through outsourcing refuse collection to a third party or purchasing / leasing new vehicles. Most of our services appear up to par, but there are significant concerns with the water and sewer infrastructure, which were mentioned previously, and how best to address that issue. Community Development and Inspections was identified as a department that potentially needed to be “beefed up” with additional employees during the budget process if we wish to continue to serve our community efficiently.

Improve Neighborhoods

1. Blighted homes, properties and boats were identified as a major problem in many of the wards and an area of some concern for all Councilors. All citizens deserve to live in a clean, safe neighborhood and the City should help make that a reality.
2. Increase police presence in neighborhoods, but in order to do that, we’ll need to increase the police force. Recruiting and retention is at a low and staff is working on ways to improve that problem. Working with the county and possibly ECSU for assistance was encouraged.

Business Development & Jobs

1. Continue to grow the downtown with diverse and inclusive businesses. Stressed the importance of being part of the community and frequenting our local businesses. Encourage new businesses to meet with staff about potential grant opportunities and/or to get assistance with applying for grants to drive new business and jobs to our area.

Strengths – What We’ve Got Going For Us

The Council identified the following areas as our biggest strengths:

- Strong Team / Ability to Work Together
- Great Citizens and Welcoming Employees
- Community Engagement / Sense of Community
- Unlimited Opportunities
- Location / Beautiful Downtown

- Transparency

Weakness – Where We Need Work

The Council identified the following areas as weaknesses or places that we may need improvement. These will be reanalyzed in six months for signs of growth and progress.

- Advertising / Telling Our Own Story
- Finances
- Employee Turnover / Staff Retention
- Infrastructure / Planning for Infrastructure
- Salaries
- Police Force Recruitment and Retention
- Shortcomings in Community Safety (Shootings / Overdoses / Lack of Mental Health Outreach)