

MINUTES
October 12, 2020
Committee of the Whole Special Meeting
City of Batavia

Please **NOTE:** These minutes are not a word-for-word transcription of the statements made at the meeting, nor intended to be a comprehensive review of all discussions. They are intended to make an official record of the actions taken by the Committee/City Council, and to include some description of discussion points as understood by the minute-taker. They may not reference some of the individual attendee's comments, nor the complete comments if referenced.

Chair Wolff called the special meeting to order at 7:00pm.

1. Roll Call

Members Present: Chair Wolff; Ald. Miller, Russotto, Beck, Knopp, Baerren, O'Brien (entered at 7:06pm), Callahan, Malay, Cerone, and McFadden

Members Absent: Aldermen Chanzit, Meitzler and Uher

Also Present: Mayor Schielke; Laura Newman, City Administrator; Chief Deicke, City of Batavia Fire Department; Gary Holm, Director of Public Works; Wendy Bednarek, Director of Human Resources; Peggy Colby, Director of Finance (on phone); Howard Chason, Director of Information Technology; and Jennifer Austin-Smith, Recording Secretary

2. Reminder: Please speak into the microphone for BATV recording

3. Items to be Removed/Added/Changed

There were no items to be removed, added or changed.

4. Matters From the Public (For Items NOT on the Agenda)

There were no matters from the public at this time.

5. Discussion: Update of the City's Strategic Plan

Laura Newman presented a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee that discussed the following:

- SWOT Analysis
- Deliverables from this Session
- Definitions
 - Vision
 - Mission Statement
 - Values
- Vision (current)
- Mission Statement (current)
- Fundamental Values (current)

The Committee revised the Vision, Mission Statement and Fundamental Values. The revised Vision, Mission and Values read as follows:

Vision

The City of Batavia, with its rich history and natural resources, is committed to fulfilling the needs of the community by providing a variety of housing, business, cultural and recreational opportunities in a safe, inclusive, sustainable and adaptive environment.

Mission Statement

To enhance the quality of life within our community through the development and delivery of reliable and efficient municipal services in a fiscally responsible manner.

Fundamental Values

- **Diversity:** We take pride in the history of diversity of our residents and strive to provide a sense of belonging in which people from all backgrounds and ages can live and thrive.
- **Economic Vitality:** We support local economic revitalization and prosperity.

The Committee added the wording ‘a sense of belonging’ to the Diversity Fundamental Value. Mayor Schielke asked that the historical diversity be included in the fundamental values under Diversity. He explained that the historical diversity has been here since the 1850’s and that is one of the true strengths of Batavia. There is history there that we should be proud of. There was no objection from the Committee and the value was revised. Holm suggested that Economic Vitality be included as a Fundamental Value. He explained that the City Council always supports providing financial resources to support the economic vitality of private business enterprises. Therefore, this is obviously a value of City Council. There was no objection from the Committee to add Economic Vitality to the Fundamental Values and crafted the title and description.

2020 SWOT Survey

The Committee reviewed a handout titled “2020 SWOT Survey” and discussed the contents utilizing a PowerPoint presentation administered by Newman. The Committee was given ten minutes to conduct an exercise focusing on the Weaknesses, Opportunities and Strengths and how the strengths could help with those items.

The responses of the exercise were as follows:

- **Knopp:** Strength is the walkability. The opportunity that was identified as a potential leader in a walk-able community. The weakness that was identified is sidewalk connectivity. The threat would be loss of tax revenue from either people leaving or retail that is moving away. How do you pay for that to make that weakness go away. Those four things tie in to walkability. Newman asked Knopp what would end up on the strategic plan as a goal meshing all of that together. Knopp stated that we talked about this before about the one hundred year plan on connecting all of the sidewalks. The Strategic Plan would be to shorten that from a one hundred year goal to a twenty-five year goal. But the big threat is how do you pay for it.

- Chief Deicke: The biggest strength is public safety. Public safety always ranks very high in our community and the people appreciate the safety that we have here and we should flaunt it a little bit. People may want to live here because of the safety. It also combats the fear of change because when you have a good public safety format in your community it is a good foundation. Pension costs is a fear but the way we run the fire department with our paid on call, our pension costs are constrained to a reasonable amount because of the way we run it and that is a plus in our City as well.
- Chair Wolff: The strengths are our river and the pond. The opportunity is that there are unending opportunities for that. One opportunity is providing the reason people want to be here because that is available to them. We could expand the use of the river and pond. We need to get a real plan together for the scope north to south boundary and what we want to handle over a three-year period. Not only formulate the plan but figure out what we can achieve each year when we talk about Strategic Planning. That is real important because if we don't start taking the steps we will have a giant mountain to climb if we don't start taking little steps uphill. Knopp stated that another strength is our volunteer base in Batavia. Newman added that a weakness is the fear of change and the threat of misinformation because that has played into why the referendum failed before. One of the strengths is a stable and knowledgeable workforce. We need to make sure we have programs in place to train those who take the long-time employees places. Succession plans should be engrained in our policies so that knowledge gets passed on.
- Callahan: The river is a strength which ties to business revitalization because businesses would be related that would compliment the use of the river. The fear of change is not necessarily a fear of change by residents but we also have a fear of change to think outside of the room at times. We try to make sure we are progressing along a timeline but things, especially now, have to be highly adaptable to change. One of the weaknesses that he saw listed is not a weakness and that is the concern for the lawlessness out on River Street. That was saying exactly what we are supposed to be doing, which is to make policy decisions to change the regulations that don't work anymore or need to be changed. We need to understand the conditions are no longer what they were five years ago. The next three years will be for Council to really step out and be more creative and forward thinking than what has ever happened. It is a great opportunity in that sense.
- O'Brien: We have had referendums for a second bridge and dam removal. Miscommunication, half-truths and outright lying came about and the Council did nothing to fight it. As a Council, we need to fight half-truths and miscommunications because it cost the City a great deal of money. The City did not have the opportunity to put in a second bridge that was going to be funded by the State and Federal Government. We didn't take out the dam, which was going to be funded by the IDNR. It cost the City a great sum of money. We need a second bridge, we don't have it and we can't afford it. As a Council going forward, we need to combat miscommunication. Mayor Schielke discussed the failed second bridge referendum and commented that he is still of the opinion that the best place to put the bridge is down on Mooseheart Road. We need

another bridge at a location south of Wilson Street because that is where the growth of Batavia has taken place on both sides of town.

- **McFadden:** An opportunity is One Washington because it addresses the lack of downtown density. Building downtown density leads to many benefits such as businesses and taxes. The strength was our good bond rating which enables us to finance that at a reasonable cost. Looking into the future is super hazy right now, but something we could address in the short term that would have immediate impact and we have some control over right now One Washington is the prime opportunity. It would promote walkability and addresses the needs of a changing community. O'Brien stated retail tax base would improve immensely.
- **Russotto:** One of our weaknesses is aging infrastructure and more opportunities like One North Washington will solve that problem. We need more emphasis on river revitalization to create an opportunity for more redevelopment. A weakness has been an inconsistent river plan. Once we start beautifying the river more they will come.
- **Beck:** One of the threats is our aging infrastructure and with development and redevelopment. As long as the development is infill development and not extending our footprint any wider. She explained if we are trying to do development and redevelopment to pay for our aging infrastructure we are just going to end up chasing our tail because we are just adding more infrastructure when doing that development. As long as we are keeping it within our current boundaries we will be in a lot better shape overall. Our strength was the volunteerism and that is one of our key strengths. We have a large number of active volunteers and commissions in our City. Ownership and engagement is important. O'Brien suggested having the Commissions come before us to have a discussion once or twice a year. Baerren commented a threat she sees with volunteerism is the younger generation does not like to volunteer as much. That is a challenge that we could potentially be facing down the road. She stated that it is often the same volunteers who volunteer over and over again on multiple levels.
- **Malay:** The strength and opportunity are the river/pond and recreational enhancements. Weakness collated with an opportunity is the weakness being inconsistent lack of river plan. The opportunity with the river is recreational us. Strength is the stable, knowledgeable workforce and the threat is misinformation and controlling information. We have made improvements as a City in terms of controlling messaging with the survey and the new logo. Finally, the weakness is our electric contract. Our threat is unfunded mandates and regulatory requirements. We may need the community to speak to our legislatures that they could be doing a lot of harm. We want to be environmentally sound but fiscally responsible.
- **Miller:** Using the river to enhance and bring in development connects us to the walkability. We could use public/private partnerships to develop our riverfronts, stabilization of the river, walkability and connectivity. Our bond strength is great to use as leverage to build things. The lack of a detailed plan makes it difficult for developers

to come in and give us what we are looking for because they don't know. If we could come up with a more detailed plan of what we are looking for that may lead to more developments and adding density to downtown. Developments could help us increase our tax revenue. If we focus on our strengths of the river, bringing in developments, and keeping our downtown and Randall Road walk-able.

- Chason: Development and redevelopment opportunities and One Washington Place is a great opportunity for the City. It brings something new to the downtown and brings a lot of people. Brings pressure to other landlords to update their buildings. A threat is aging infrastructure, public and private. A lot of buildings in town may not be maintained very well and scare off development that may come to downtown. If it is not maintained there could be a time where we are focusing resources on catching up to our infrastructure. He does not think we will see development opportunities if private companies see that we are not maintaining our infrastructure. There is a lack of downtown diversity and the opportunity that One Washington place brings a lot of people to downtown. The threat of that build would be misinformation.

Newman asked the Committee to think of three things that are wildly important for the City to accomplish over the next three years in order for us to achieve the vision that we have for the City. She put the City's Vision Statement on the overhead for the Committee to view. The Committee was given six minutes to develop their list. The responses are listed below:

- McFadden: River plan, One Washington Project, big development project for downtown
- Malay: River plan, funding plan for infrastructure for second bridge, progress on walkability and bike opportunities
- Russotto: River enhancements, increasing walkability, One North Washington to start, keep public informed
- Knopp: River plan that includes implementation schedule, identify areas where walkability issues exist and establish priorities to improve those based on economic impact first followed by resident and tourism convenience, form an Art Council to plan ways to capture art and turn that into a tourism attraction
- Callahan: Set a river vision with a workable timeline, Economic Viability Plan that could encompass the entire city as the whole with planning for eroding cash base, opportunities in the industrial park, looking at it holistically, paring it down further with what the community said about economic revitalization in the downtown and what that means. That would also include some possible zoning revamps to include the way we think about parking and items not currently covered or not applicable anymore. Be creative with what is out there and what are other communities doing that we know works and translate that into our community. The third overarching goal is community engagement and that includes walkability, public art, and the infrastructure aspects. When you feel more included in the community you want to be more a part of the community. There are a lot of small things that could be achieved in the next three years that could have significant impact.

Newman noted that Community Engagement could possibly be added as an umbrella. Callahan agreed and stated that it is overarching.

- O'Brien: One Washington Place and we need to get that done. One Washington Place would force our hand in walkability and help with the retail tax base. We need concentrating on streetscapes to do the same thing. It takes an investment but streetscapes would bring people to Batavia to invest in our downtown and enhance our tax base. River enhancements.
- Wolff: Economic development plan and goals moving forward: Randall Road, industrial park, overall economy that provides for our community, such as what creates tax base and what creates jobs. Diversity of housing DMU goals expanded, making sure One Washington Place is completed that provides a start to what could happen in the downtown. River plan. That has to be not just a plan but laid out with steps and goes to community engagement and the community has to be a part of it, behind it, and fund it. Buy in is important. It is an ongoing management into the future. If we lay a good foundation now they will be able to sustain it into the future.
- Baerren: We need to start utilizing our volunteers of the different commissions to be part of these projects that we are doing and use them as consultants. We need to bring them in on these conversations. The second is partnership with different taxing bodies, trying to understand what their goals are. It is important that we hear what the School District's goals are and the School District hears what our goals are. When people discuss taxes they think of us as one big group so we need to work on making a better community with the different taxing bodies. Survey the residents again in three years to see how we are doing getting that feedback.
- Miller: Having a plan for the river with a schedule and a cost. Beginning developments planned in town and seeking out some more mixed use and industrial to help with the electric cost and additional jobs to bring in more families and residents. Finalized or beginning plan for a second bridge. Have something in place so if an opportunity should arise again we don't lose out on any funding that may become available.
- Beck: Walkability. She has been working on the walk friendly application for years and will put on her personal list over the next three years to finish. She would like to bring it in and show what they ask in the application. Car centric building codes go against walkability. It would be great to shed some light on that to make walkability a great focus. Look at our parking standards and look at minimums and maximums. Downtown density is a priority; density cannot be accomplished with the amount of square footage we dedicate to surface parking in our downtown. Economic Development training group that we all could become a part of and become informed on what the mechanisms are and what role we could play as aldermen.
- Mayor: Economic development/business, the City will greatly need the jobs, the income, revenue and the sales tax. The river redevelopment and the need to have some part of the conversation on the second bridge and where it could go and how it would work and begin to sell the idea to the community. There is real serious concern about the stability of the Illinois Government funding. We should be ready to deal with instability. We have a knowledgeable City Council with energy and vision. We are all thinking the right way on what we can do to make this town a better place and we are the right track.

- Newman: River plan short-term and long-term. How do we plan that to maximize the potential economic and recreational opportunities. Higher density projects are the keys to the future for economic sustainability and vitality. Walkability and bike-ability and place making. Make our downtown and beyond a delightful place to be whether to live, work or visit here.

Newman reported that at the next meeting we will figure out what the umbrellas are, what goals fit under the umbrellas, and the goals will be SMART (specific, measurement, attainable, time-bound and reasonable).

6. Project Status

There was no project status at this time.

7. Other

There were no others at this time.

8. Adjournment

There being no other business to discuss, Chair Wolff asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:50pm; Made by O'Brien; Seconded by Knopp. Motion carried.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jennifer Austin-Smith, Recording Secretary, on October 17, 2020.