

Aiken City Council MinutesWORK SESSIONCouncil Strategic Planning Retreat

February 12, 2016

Present: Mayor Osbon, Councilmembers Dewar, Diggs, Ebner, Homoki, Merry and Price.

Others Present: John Klimm, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Gary Smith, Sara Ridout, Gary Allington, of the Chamber of Commerce, Irene Tyson, of the Boudeaux Group, and Dan Brown, of the Aiken Standard.

Mayor Osbon called the meeting to order at 8:15 A.M. after a breakfast prepared by Public Safety staff. He stated as a new person on Council he appreciates the conversations and relationships with each one. He said he felt lucky to be serving on Council. He said he feels Aiken is a fantastic city that Council has the opportunity to represent. He said he was excited about where we are going and sometimes that is a hard step. He felt with the ability the group has and the relationships they have, they will move Aiken forward, and he is excited about the future of Aiken. He pointed out the visioning process that has been going on in the last few months and also the work with the Main Street program. He stated the citizens turned out in support of the vision for Aiken. He welcomed Ms. Irene Tyson of the Boudreaux Group to facilitate the program for Council.

STRATEGIC PLANNING2016-17 Fiscal YearGoalsVisionIrene TysonBoudreaux Group

Ms. Tyson started by asking those present to introduce themselves. Ms. Tyson stated she had had conversations with Beppie LeGrand and Randy Wilson regarding the activities and work that is happening with Main Street over the past few days. She stated that was in concert with what she has been doing with the city-wide visioning and setting priorities.

Ms. Tyson pointed out that part of what Council is to do is craft a vision for Aiken. She stated that Council needs to leave the meeting with a statement or direction of what Council wants. She pointed out the workbook that had been given to Councilmembers. She stated priorities from the January 26, 2016, visioning meeting were listed in the workbook. They give ideas for a vision based on public input and represent the hopes for the City of Aiken. She said Council needs to reach some consensus on the priorities. She said she was going to break Council up into two groups to review the priorities and decide how Aiken will accomplish those priorities and establish some strategies. Then Council will come back together and share those strategies and priorities and reach a consensus. Then they will develop the draft strategic plan before leaving today at 2 p.m. She said it does not mean that it will be a set in concrete plan. It will be very strong direction. We will not necessarily have to talk about specific projects, but there will be discussion on a game plan for projects. She said they will not go into the weeds of the details, as that is what Council will begin to work out with staff. She said they do need to go away with a list of things that they want to accomplish in the next three years and have a game plan as to what they do. Part of that is understanding what it is, when they want to do it, who are the people that need to be engaged to make it happen, what some of the funding implications might be, and any benchmarks that we have.

Ms. Tyson pointed out some of Council may have seen some of the information at the public meeting on January 26, 2016. She said they had 165 interviews with various citizens of Aiken for the visioning process over three days. She said it was an amazing experience. She said the message and what they were hearing were pretty much in line. She said it came down to about four major topics: 1. the spirit of the community--quality of life, diversity. 2. the economy. 3. the cultural assets, the history, architecture, horses, golf, and arts, and 4. the landscape and architecture. Those were the major headings.

Ms. Tyson stated she would discuss those very quickly. The small town spirit—when asking what is sacred in Aiken, it is the small town charm. That is what appealed to those who live here, to those who visit—the historic character. The Downtown came up many times as being what is sacred. She said the heart and soul of a place is the downtown. There needs to be more equitable development in other parts of the city as well. The business and industry that Aiken does have is sacred. Aiken needs to do what it can to maintain what we have and needs to grow and diversify the economy. In order to move Aiken from being good to great is to diversify the economy and the businesses. About 99% of the people said that the K-12 school facilities are a problem, not the quality of education, but the quality of the facilities. It was pointed out many times that Aiken has lost 1,500 to 4,500 families to Columbia County schools over a period of time because of the investment that Columbia County made in their school facilities. Diversify housing—she stated Aiken has wonderful, beautiful historic homes, housing that needs to be improved, but there is not enough quality housing for young professionals and middle class. The young professionals want housing downtown. A lot of that is price driven and location. A lot of people want to live downtown, but either they can't afford it or it is not quality housing. When you say affordable housing, it is not necessarily subsidized housing, but it is looking at young families able to move into something downtown. She pointed out there are students who need affordable housing and even retirees are looking for something affordable. She pointed out that Aiken had done a great job in marketing and recruiting the retirees. She felt Aiken needs to focus on the needs of the young professionals and young families.

Ms. Tyson stated that connectivity came up many times. She felt Aiken needs to make better use of the parkways as they are some of the most unique assets of Aiken. Perhaps they could be better maintained and upkeep improved so they become part of the connectivity. Connect downtown to other parts of town by a bike or walking, connect downtown and other parts of town out to USCAiken. She said Aiken has a great framework in place. Another asset heard many times was the street grid. It is historic and unique. Aiken has great structure and needs to continue to build on enhancing the character of the city.

Ms. Tyson pointed out the listing of priorities listed in the workbook for the next one to three years that were established through the individual interviews and ranked at the public meeting. She said Council needs to discuss the priority listing and make sure Council agrees with the listing.

#### **Primary Priorities (in ranked order)**

Improve K-12 facilities

Redevelop the Aiken Mall site

Increase connectivity – pedestrian and bikes

Focus and incentivize development in the north side

Provide quality, affordable and diverse housing options for all, particularly workforce, young professionals, students

Promote and market Aiken to the greater Aiken/Augusta MSA as THE place to live and work create a vibrant entrepreneurial environment by diversifying the economy beyond SRS, the equestrian community and the retirement community and by more strategically tapping into USCA, Aiken Tech and the intellectual capital of existing business and industry and retirees.

Improve city processes for businesses, particularly small local businesses

Improve the parkways – accessibility, safety, increased usage, celebrate this key, unique asset.

Celebrate and enhance Aiken's authentic character

### **Secondary Priorities**

Provide strategic and relevant opportunities (jobs, social, housing) for millennials, young professionals, young families

Continue strengthening the foundational pillars of Aiken history, horses, golf, art and nature-based recreation

Ms. Tyson pointed out that redevelopment of the Aiken Mall site was a high priority. She pointed out that the students they interviewed from the high schools, young families, young professionals, and USCA and Aiken Tech students see this area as a great place to begin to provide what they need.

Ms. Tyson pointed out the priority regarding promoting and marketing Aiken as THE place to live and work. There were strong feelings that the city is not doing enough to put itself out there and not aggressive enough. It was felt that the City of Aiken should be out there showing potential residents that Aiken is the place to live. She pointed out that Aiken has an intellectual capital that most cities don't have with SRS, the retirees, USCAiken and Aiken Tech. She said there are many entrepreneurial opportunities that could happen.

Ms. Tyson stated she would like for Council to discuss the priorities listed by the citizens. She asked Mr. Klimm, City Manager, to share from his perspective some of the needs of the city.

Councilman Dewar asked how confident we could be that the 165 persons interviewed represent the community. Ms. Tyson stated from her company's perspective, they were very impressed by the depth of those interviewed, not only were there those who were new to Aiken, there were those who grew up in Aiken, to high school students, to retirees, to racial diversity, to income diversity, there was city and county representation, school board representation, the arts. She felt the selection of those interviewed was as fair as it could be. She pointed out then that there was the public meeting on January 26, 2016 for everyone to comment and there were 202 citizens present at the public meeting. She pointed out that well over half of those present at the public meeting were not those interviewed.

Mr. Klimm, City Manager, stated it was not a scientific random sample. However, there were people who came out and attended the public meeting who were not interviewed so we are talking about 200 to 300 people. He pointed out that we are going to do a random sample, scientific survey in the next month or two. The results of the surveys will be as close as we can get to understanding what the majority of our citizens wants and desires are. He said the sample we had gone through was not a random sample, but it was a good start. He pointed out we had young people, we had high school students and college students. We had various segments of the community in the interviews to try to be representative. He felt it was a good start. He felt in combination of these interviews, public meeting and the random sample survey we will present information that most communities do not have.

Mr. Klimm then presented his ideas of some of the needs of the city. He said he had been in Aiken almost ten months, and he wanted to talk a few minutes about his perceptions and what he is seeing and what we are doing. He said he wanted to talk about the organization and what he sees from an organizational standpoint are our greatest challenges. He said he had been through a lot of the strategic plan processes. He pointed out some see the schools, public safety, roads, infrastructure as the most important. He said he always says the most important responsibility we have is the fiduciary responsibility. He said Council can argue where the money is going, but his responsibility is to make sure that money is real money. He said after ten months he sees his job very much like a football coach. His job is to assemble and retain the best management team he can. He said he is in the process of doing that. He said some may like the person hired or may not like the person. That is their right to have their opinion,

but it isn't about the person. It is about the team that is being assembled. He said he would be leaving the job at some point, and he hoped it is in the distant future and through retirement. Without that capacity from an organizational standpoint we are not going to be successful. He said he had observed an organization that for a lot of reasons still sees itself from the inside out more than the outside in. We are not at a point where we fundamentally understand that our sole responsibilities are not about us, but are about the customers, the citizens and taxpayers. While we have terrific employees, there is always room for improvement and we need to work on that. We are there to serve. We are not there to get a pay check. It is not about us. It is about them.

Mr. Klimm stated when he came the city was doing some obvious things that should raise red flags. He pointed out that the City of Aiken was a city that had instituted a policy of using credit cards more than he had ever seen in his life. At one point the city had almost 200 credit cards. Almost half of our employees had a city credit card. He said he had never seen that before, and he does not support one credit card let alone 200 credit cards. He said he had changed that dramatically. He said we had pulled in over 100 credit cards. He said he can't pull all of them because the city made a decision in the past that was going to be our procurement policy. He said the city does not have a procurement department, but we should. He said purchasing is done decentralized so most of our employees became the purchasing department and they are purchasing here and there. He felt it is inefficient and from a management and control standpoint, it is a terrible policy that is being changed. He said he would pull every credit card in if he could, but we have to have some policy in the place. He said in the budget that he will present to Council will be the establishment of a procurement department. He said there will be a more classic operated purchasing operation than in the past. He said Aiken is not the only one in South Carolina that does it that way. He said this is frowned upon nationally so he is changing it.

Mr. Klimm stated we had a system for employee performance evaluation. A lot of employees have not been evaluated, and the system that we have in place needed a dramatic change, and we have done that. The next round of employee performance evaluations will be a totally different system. He pointed out that in the old system the rating was from 1 to 5 with many employees received a rating of 5. That might make our employees feel good. The purpose of an evaluation is to assist and identify strengths and weaknesses and make us better and our system was not doing that. We have totally changed that as well.

Mr. Klimm stated he had mentioned to Council his concern about city automobiles. It is going to be part of the Public Safety audit that is taking place so we will talk about that when it is completed. Mr. Klimm stated he had found an organization that he felt lacked discipline, and we have dealt with that.

Mr. Klimm stated the last issue that is of great concern to him is an issue that is Council's issue which is City Hall. He said we have a system in place, and he understands why it is and what happened, but it is not functional from an organizational standpoint. It is not utilitarian for our organization being out of two buildings for our operation and then having a third property that we don't do anything with. He said we need to come to closure with that issue for a lot of reasons. More than the impact on the operations of our organization, it is really not friendly to the customer. Every single day we have customers coming into the wrong building to pay their water bill or to see the Planning Department or Building Inspections. He said it is not customer friendly to have customers going from one building to another. Thirdly, from a financial standpoint we are holding property, and he really questions whether we should hold it. He said we have three properties downtown. He said we have to come to closure in terms of where we are going. He said in his opinion all the offices need to come into the building on Laurens Street or either all go back to Park Avenue. He said we need to do something and then dispose of the property and get it back on the tax rolls. We have plans. We have consulted with structural engineers. We know what the possibilities are. We have talked to appraisers, and we have a good idea of property value. He said in the next month or two, he will come to Council with some ideas and concepts. He said from an organizational standpoint, it is a big deal. It is a big deal trying to operate out of two buildings with three properties.

Mr. Klimm stated that some time ago a decision was made to reorganize the Public Works Department. We broke it down for the wrong reason. We broke it down because we had a good guy heading it that was too busy so instead of giving him the staff necessary we divided the department. He said he felt it is highly inefficient. There is a reason why most cities have a consolidated Public Works Department because it is an efficient operation. He said he will be recommending to Council that we go back to where we were and consolidate our Public Works Department, especially with all the projects that are presently on the table or that we are talking about. He felt a consolidation would serve us well.

Mr. Klimm pointed out to Council that our Human Resources Department Director is leaving since her husband has been promoted, and they will be leaving the state. He said he had wondered about our HR operation. We have a one person HR operation, and it is totally decentralized. We have people in benefits administration over there. We have people in personnel paper work over there. We have Risk Management happening over there. It needs to be addressed. While it is unfortunate that we are losing a good employee and a good friend, it gives us an opportunity to take a look at that organization as well. He said he will be recommending some reorganization.

Mr. Klimm stated operational-wise we have two major operational audits underway—one coming towards completion in Public Safety. He said he knows from talking to the auditors that their list of recommendations is in the 60 to 70 range. He said it is going to be a good audit. He said our employees have been terrific and have not shunned the fact that we are auditing and have not tried to undermine the audit. They have been forthcoming and helpful, and he appreciates that. He felt it will make us a more efficient operation, and it will address some of the longstanding issues that exist in that department. He said his goal is to have an operational audit on every department so it has nothing to do with Public Safety. We are also doing an audit in Public Services. He said another thing he observed early in his tenure is while he believes that the Public Services Department is well run, he questions the efficiency. Our equipment is outdated. We have equipment that you would see in the 60's and 70's. There is robotic equipment that significantly increases efficiency, and we have never really looked at it. He said another thing is the transfer of trash. Every one of our trucks every single day makes a long trip to the dump and back. It has to be hugely costly in terms of manpower. The wear and tear on the trucks has got to be great. He said the question about a transfer station makes sense so every one of our garbage trucks is not making the run and a big vehicle every so often is making the run. This is being evaluated. He said maybe it will show that what we have is efficient.

Mr. Klimm stated those are the things that have jumped out to him in terms of the possibility of cost savings. He said we have talked about infrastructure. He distributed a report from Mr. Grinton, Engineering and Utilities Director, regarding the water, sewer and roads infrastructure. Mr. Grinton is redesigning his presentation in terms of infrastructure. He said he is proud of Council for their understanding and commitment to address these infrastructure issues. He said it will take a lot of discipline and tough decisions by all of us. He pointed out some of the statistics in the report regarding the number of miles of sanitary sewer lines, water mains, and the number of miles of lines that have reached or exceeded their 50 year projected useful life. He also pointed out the projection of costs to replace the lines. He said the costs are tremendous. He also pointed out Roads and the status of roads in the city. He said we do not have a roads program for the city, but we are going to propose a program for the next year which is to appropriate \$500,000 a year, but that will only scratch the surface. He said he was talking about a roads program that takes the worst roads that exist and totally reclaim them. He said that is not a roads program. A roads program is a program that takes a brand new road and over the life of that road implements strategies to extend the life of the road. He said after two or three years of a brand new road, you should start doing things to that road to extend the life. Even the road program that we are proposing at \$500,000 a year will only scratch the surface. He said this is information that no one is surprised about, but when you look at the numbers it is sobering in terms of the challenges we face. He pointed out that is only maintaining existing infrastructure. He said we also know that we need to correct some things, like building of new roads to

solve traffic problems. He said that is a whole different area. He said we have a report from W. R. Toole Engineers that talks about almost \$30 million for new roads to correct the problems that we have created. He said whenever we talk about revenue and where we are going, it becomes mind boggling, but the longer we wait to address the issues the worse it gets.

Mr. Klimm stated we have all these projects under CPST which the citizens approved and funded, but we are not getting them done. He pointed out when he came on board we had Glenn Parker who was only working part time. He said he was not getting why we would appropriate a ton of money from citizens and then have no staff to get the job done. He said he had just hired Joy Gillespie to replace Mr. Parker, and she is terrific. He said he does not know if Ms. Gillespie is enough staff to get the projects done. He said his message to Council is that we need to get these projects done. He said if he needs to hire someone else, he will come to Council to hire someone else. He said we have to get these projects done. There are a lot of projects to accomplish. He said if we don't get the projects done, the citizens will be saying why should they approve the tax when we have not done the projects already approved. He said we can substantially change that course of action over the next year or two, but he has to make sure that we have enough manpower to get the jobs done. He felt the hiring of Ms. Gillespie was a good first step. He said he was not sure at this time if we might need more staff. He said if he decides we need more staff, he will ask Council because we have to get the jobs done.

Mr. Klimm stated the future of city finances such as the pension plan needs to be addressed long term. He said when we talk about where we are going to get the money for all the infrastructure, part of it is containing the cost of the budget busters. He said we had done a lot with the health care, but for pension we have not. It is a huge cost to the city, and we need to. without impacting retirees and existing employees, long term there are things we can do to save a lot of money. He said his commitment to Council is that in the budget we will have money for evaluation and by the end of this coming fiscal year, June 2017, he will have before Council a package of reforms to the pension. He said over a long period of time, we will be talking about a huge potential savings. Another area is OPEB Other Post Employment Benefits which are the health care costs for young retirees before they go on to Medicare. He said those are the budget busters that have to be contained or we really risk a problem. He said he hoped at the latest of June, 2017, to have a plan. He said he was talking about beginning the evaluation as soon as we can. He said he was hoping that we can get it done sooner than that. He pointed out our pension plan is not that complicated. He said there are things we can consider, but at this time he can't quantify what the savings would be. He said he does not have the money now for the study, but would request the money in the budget for fiscal year 2016-17.

Mr. Klimm stated the items he had mentioned are the concerns that he has. The other concern is revenue generation. He said all this might sound fine and dandy, but none of it will happen without revenue. He said that is really the greatest challenge that elected officials have and the greatest challenge we have is how are we going to fund all these things. He said the answer may be that we will patch something here and something there just to make it all work. He pointed out that none of this will happen without a funding stream. He said Council can see from the numbers that we are talking about a huge number.

Mr. Klimm stated he wanted to quickly talk about economic development. He said he was very pleased with what we have done in terms of the downtown. He said he has had experience with the Main Street program, and that Mr. Wilson and Ms. LeGrand are really talented people that have something to offer us. He said he was excited about that. He said we will talk about the Aiken Mall in the near future.

Mr. Klimm stated regarding the northside strategy sometimes we kick the can because it is too difficult to deal with. He said we don't have a north side strategy, and we need to deal with that and come to grips with that. He said regarding downtown housing, it is high on the list of priorities but you can't have a vital downtown if no one lives there. He said if you look at the opportunities that exist, they are few and far between. He said something that Councilwoman Price had been very helpful with in discussing is that we

really don't have a strategy for the Site. He said we have some terrific retirees that know a lot about the Site, and he felt we need to bring in some of our retirees as a working group so there is a proactive city strategy relating to the Site. They have talked about all the new hires that are going to take place. He asked if we are positioned to welcome those new people. He said he does not see a city strategy to relate to the Site, and he felt that from an economic standpoint is very important.

Mr. Klimm stated he felt this is an extraordinarily exciting time, and he hoped Council felt the same way. With that comes a real responsibility on our part to seize the moment and get the job done. If there is inaction in the next three or four years, he felt we will all be seen very critically in the future because we are at the crux and we can go down different roads. Whatever road we choose, we will have to live with those consequences.

Councilwoman Price stated what Mr. Klimm has stated and proposing is a more organized approach to make our employees' time more efficient in addition to facing the issues head on. Often times when we have met in the past the first thing we talk about is asking the City Manager how he can cut costs, cut it to the bone, and we have spent a lot of time doing that thinking that was efficient. She said she did not think that had gotten us where we want to go. She said we have to be courageous enough to face these matters Mr. Klimm mentioned head on in addition to being prepared to go to the public and letting them know what our weaknesses are and it may cause an increase in taxes, fees, or floating bonds or whatever we need to get this done. We have ignored the problems with infrastructure until it is critical. She felt it is a pretty serious concern.

Councilwoman Price stated Mr. Klimm had mentioned doing an operational audit in all departments, and she wondered if that would mean that we will have to hire additional people.

Mr. Klimm stated the practice is to bring outside consultants in to independently and objectively look at the operations of the department. We don't tell them what we want to hear. They tell us what they observe. He said it might be that you could save money if you have too many employees in a division or it could be that they would say the department is short people. He said we don't in any way try to influence or persuade them to say a certain thing. They say what they observe. We can reject what they say if we disagree. He said it is an independent audit, and it is being funded within the department. He said he was not coming to Council asking for additional money. He said he has said to the department that they have to save to pay for the audit.

Councilwoman Price pointed out that we have had our employees working with the General Fund Budget and the Capital Sales Tax Projects Fund. She said she was not sure the efficiency is there in terms of them trying to double two tasks with the General Fund and the Capital Projects Sales Tax Fund. She felt bringing a person in to do that is a great move. In addition she felt that one staff person is not enough if we are going to do it right and get the job done.

Councilman Ebner pointed out that we have about \$40 million worth of projects to do in Capital Projects Sales Tax I, II, and III. He pointed out the thing not mentioned is the 8% to 12% to maintain these facilities in the future. He pointed out if you use a 10% number for the \$40 million you will be looking at \$4 million just to maintain the new projects being built. He said basically everything we do will create a cost in the future. He felt we need to put that in the cost of doing business.

Council continued to discuss the needs of the city and what can be done. It was pointed out we need to get the right people to do the jobs. It was also pointed out that we don't market the city and have never marketed the city. It was pointed out that for what Mr. Klimm laid out we don't have a chance of getting most of what we need to get to where we want to go as we don't have the revenue. We need to market and get the community ready for what we need to get done. It was pointed out that the show "Aiken this Week" is something to market the city, but it has to go beyond that. It was also pointed out that the schools need to be improved to attract young families to the area. It was pointed out that when there was better marketing and a different strategy the tax was passed to

improve the schools. There were also concerns about the Aiken Mall and the Hotel Aiken and the status of those projects. It was also pointed out that along with our K-12 and university and technical college system which is second to none, we could promote the quality of education here and people would come based on that. It was felt that we need to promote our nuclear site, the kinds of employees we attract with jobs there and building that in with our K-12, technical college and our four year college. It was felt that was an impressive marketing tool to draw people. It was also mentioned that the City of Aiken needs to build a relationship and communication with the County, the Site, and the schools.

Ms. Tyson stated what she wanted Council to do next is to craft a vision. She said Aiken needs to have a vision for the city. When the group went on the Aspirations Tour the other cities had a vision, but Aiken did not have one and that is what is driving this process. She felt it was important to get one statement that represents Aiken. Aiken needs to know where we want to go and to do that we need a vision. Ms. Tyson stated she needed Council to be creative and come up with a vision. She pointed out that she had listed the Truths that had come from the interviews and the public meeting. People were asked to name what says Aiken or what is sacred in Aiken. She reviewed the items that had been listed.

### **The Truths / The Pillars**

The Nuclear Community: SRS, National Lab

The Horse Community: the district, the steeplechase, the events, the people, the visitors

Original Street Grid and Parkways: unique, authentic jewels

Greenspace and Parks: Hopelands Gardens, Hitchcock Woods

Civitas: friendly, southern hospitality and charm, inclusive quality of life, authenticity

Sense of Place: history, architecture, landscape, culture, dirt roads, South Boundary Road

Diversity: racial, ages, economics, faiths, etc.

All local downtown

Intellectual Capital: USC Aiken and Aiken Tech, The Site, Retirees

Golf

The Arts: theater, the Juilliard connection, visual arts, literary arts, museums

The Medical Community and the Hospital

The Regional Airport

She asked that Council craft a vision out of these items that citizens had considered important to Aiken. She said that Council needed to build a vision that is forward thinking but honoring and building on the pillars that Aiken already has. She pointed out that Aiken is a college town, but you don't know it. She brought that up just to get Council thinking of the things that Aiken has. She said a lot of people want Aiken to start really appealing to the millennials and young families, the entrepreneurial opportunities, the entertainment, and education. Another way is to begin to look at what Aiken has and begin to look at the different clusters and how you can build something on them such as the cultural cluster, intellectual cluster, outdoor recreation, and the history. A vision has to be pointed towards prosperity. If it is not about prosperity for all residents now and in the future, then it will not really work. She pointed out some graphic ways to represent what they have heard from the public input. She pointed out the graphic pillar (column) in the workbook. She pointed out that the groups of people, retirees, young families, and young professionals all come together to form the City of Aiken. This is built on the foundation of their needs, looking at the housing, connectivity, health and wellness, history, intellectual capital, education. She said Mr. Klimm had emphasized the importance of having the infrastructure and a government structure to support the needs. She said it is nice to have economic development, the arts, and the major parkways beautiful, but if that cannot be supported by the infrastructure and government, then we would not have the longevity and prosperity you want.

Ms. Tyson stated one thing heard over and over again is that Aiken is one of the most authentic cities in the Southeast. She said there are so many things and elements that are in Aiken that are uniquely Aiken and you can't get anywhere else. She said the vision

needs to become that driver. If Aiken is to remain authentic then you need to make sure that your landscape and cultural opportunities make Aiken authentic. She said she had just presented some ideas to get Council thinking. She asked that Council make some suggestions for the vision. Council then discussed their thoughts and made suggestions for a vision for Aiken.

Ms. Tyson summarized what she was hearing from Council's discussion is that the value of being unique, authentic, prosperity, connectivity and seamlessness, preserving what we have now but moving forward with plans for development and preservation, opportunities for all, cultivating what we have now, residents, jobs, and looking at connecting the past to the present for the future are important features.

Ms. Tyson stated that next Council needed to divide into two groups. The groups are to take the priority listings and decide what needs to be accomplished first and what is feasible and doable within three years. She said when Council is finished today they need to have a strategic plan so that staff and Council can come up with a way to make the things happen. Also, the groups are to come up with strategies to get the items accomplished and who is to be responsible for getting them accomplished and some ideas for funding.

Ms. Tyson stated after the groups are finished there will be a working lunch. During lunch each group will present what they think are the strategies and then there will be a chance to vote and come together and reach consensus as to what those priorities and strategies are.

After discussion the two groups came back together and each group reported on the priorities for their group with Ms. Tyson recording them on a post-it-pad. Ms. Tyson asked those present to vote on the items listed. The number of dots the item receives will determine its priority in the list. Each person had nine dots and could vote any way with the dots. They could all be for one item or divided among the items listed. She said she would tally the votes for the items, and the top vote getters will be the recommendation for what the city is to move forward with. After the tally the group will spend some time coming up with a time line strategy for the items.

Ms. Tyson stated she will make a report to Council on the results of the Council Strategic Plan Retreat in about two weeks.

Ms. Tyson reviewed the prioritization of the items listed as being important to Aiken.

1. Northside Development
  1. Improve Infrastructure
  2. Improve Parkways and Connectivity
  2. Improve Gateways, Welcome, Landscaping and Cleanliness
  3. Provide Obtainable Housing
  4. Strategy for Existing Projects in Capital Projects Sales Tax
  5. Review Annexation Policy
  6. Marketing of City
  7. Creating an Entrepreneurial Environment

Other items were:

Aiken Mall  
K-12 Facilities

Ms. Tyson asked that the group put a time line on the priority items. The listing is a guide for what the city does over the next three years.

The group discussed the items and set time frames for the items. Ms. Tyson will include this information in her report to Council.

Ms. Tyson stated Council had set some time lines for the items and some recognition as to who needs to lead the effort to make the item happen. She pointed out Council was going to be busy putting together the right groups of people to begin to study the items. She stated at the interviews and public meeting many people signed that they wanted to be involved so there are some residents who are ready to get engaged and make these things happen. She pointed out there is overlap with some of the items and they should work in concert with each other.

Mayor Osbon thanked Council for their efforts on the strategic plan. He said he would like to have a State of the City and celebrate a new initiative. He felt the city should have a kickoff and roll out the initiatives for the city. He felt this is a great time and a lot of opportunities to form partnerships with USCA, the County, the Schools, etc.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Osbon stated Council needs to go into executive session pursuant to Section 30-4-70(a)(2) and (5) to discuss negotiations incident to a proposed contractual arrangement and proposed sale or purchase of property and to receive legal advice where the legal advice relates to a pending, threatened, or potential claim or other matters covered by the attorney-client privilege, settlement of legal claims, or the position of the public agency in other adversary situations involving the assertion against the agency of a claim. City Council will also discuss matters relating to the proposed location, expansion, or the provision of services encouraging location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body.

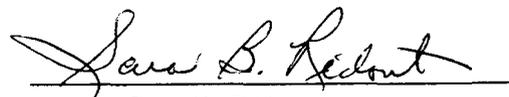
Councilman Merry moved that Council go into executive session to discuss contractual matters and to receive legal advice. The motion was seconded by Councilman Dewar and unanimously approved. Council went into executive session at 2:05 p.m.

After discussion Councilman Dewar moved, seconded by Councilwoman Diggs that Council come out of executive session. The motion was unanimously approved.

Council came out of executive session at 3:06 p.m.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:06 P.M.



Sara B. Ridout  
City Clerk