

**Garner Town Council
2016 Planning Retreat Minutes
February 10-11, 2016
Quorum Center – Raleigh**

Wednesday, February 10, 2016

Attending:

Mayor Ronnie Williams, Mayor Pro-Tem Kathy Behringer, Council Member Jackie Johns, Council Member Buck Kennedy, Council Member Ken Marshburn, Council Member Gra Singleton

Staff: Rodney Dickerson, Interim Town Manager; John Hodges, Asst. Town Manager-Development Services.; Bill Anderson, Town Attorney; Brad Bass, Planning Director; Tony Beasley, Inspections Director; Tony Chalk, Town Engineer; Paul Cox, Public Works Director; Michael Gammon, Budget & Special Projects Manager; Stella Gibson, Town Clerk; Mari Howe, Downtown Development Manager; BD Sechler, Human Resources Director, Joe Stallings, Economic Development Director; Jeff Triezenberg, Assistant Planning Director; Pam Wortham, Interim Finance Director; Rick Mercier, Communications Manager, Brandon Zuidema, Police Chief

Guests: Matt Poole, Fire Chief-Garner Volunteer Fire-Rescue Department

Welcome and Introduction to Today's Session: Rodney Dickerson

Overview of Retreat and Agenda: Dr. Peg Carlson, Facilitator

Dr. Carlson offered the following discussion guidelines:

- Explain reasoning and intent
- Be curious – ask genuine questions (as opposed to hoping people know what you really mean or want to know)
- Identify and build on shared interests (difference in a *position* (a solution or choice) and an *interest* – what leads you to take a position; what matters to you)
- Remember retreat theme – focus on the big picture
- Use the “parking lot” as needed

Mr. Dickerson introduced Maurice Smith, President/CEO of Local Government Federal Credit Union.

Dr. Carlson introduction question for attendees: “What is one example from the past year that illustrates something you are particularly proud of for the Town of Garner?”

Council and staff responded as follows:

- There were no contenders for the recent Council elections; says we are providing good leadership for Town and people are happy.
- Completion and opening of new police station
- Garner 101 courses completed; PD Citizens’ Academy also completed

- Managing change and turmoil, including staffing changes, while also moving locations for most Town staff, there was no impact on the public or services provided.
- When issues are put forth to the community, the community responds and should be applauded for doing its job. The community is interested. Have had citizens already comment on agenda for this retreat.
- Town's ability to ensure library services during renovation, provided space and utilities when County had made no provisions.
- Progress being made on all bond projects; Police Department, Town Hall, sidewalks, storm water, etc.
- Attendance at Veteran's Day ceremony; hear comments from outside on how our residents respond to community events / make it a "community effort".
- Sense of community that exists; in particular the loss of Faye Gardner and the reaction, encouragement to carry on tradition, keep the Town of Garner moving in positive direction.
- Number of accredited Departments; speaks to leadership and staff, Police Department, Public Works and Parks & Recreation, as well as Finance recognition and Fire efforts.
- The way the Council handled WCPPS and NCDOT on issues brought before them.
- The announcement on the defeat of the Red Route; community effort.
- Community response to YMCA funding for new facility
- Garner will have the first AT&T fiber-ready business park in the Triangle (Greenfield South).

"Celebrate our Successes" - John Hodges

Mr. Hodges provided an overview of the revised summary of Strategic Priority Analysis, placing emphasis on Town of Garner being only community in US since 2000 with an All-America City designation and three accredited Departments (Police Department, Public Works, Parks and Recreation).

Council Member Kennedy asked when an update on the Comprehensive Plan would be provided and Mr. Hodges explained the revised scope of work should be received from the consultant late this week and if so, it would be presented at the February Work Session with final approval request in March.

Overview of Financial Outlook – Michael Gammon

Mr. Gammon reported that overall there are positive economic indicators; unemployment improved across the board the last year; unemployment down, labor force growing.

- Nationwide construction spending is up overall, including residential, non-residential, and public as well as Wake County.
- Slight decrease in Town of Garner building activity, but home sales are up from previous years (147 sold in 2011, 430 in 2015).
- 2016 outlook (Wells Fargo) – economy enters 2016 with solid momentum. Some concern with those tied to global economy (concerns overseas). Housing will continue to grow, personal consumption will continue to grow.
- Inflation expected to rise in 2016, but stay under 2%. Core inflation expected to maintain 2% growth.
- Federal Reserve expected to raise key interest rates during late 2016.

- NC Outlook (Dr. Walden – NCSU) – growth will continue, will outpace US growth rate. 90,000 new jobs to be added. Unemployment at 5% by end of 2016 for NC (Garner has lower rate now). Expect increased household income will generate new spending; end of oil and gas drops could have negative impact. Urban / rural divide will deepen in NC.
- Property value – expect more growth than predicted
- Required to publish a revenue neutral tax rate for FY'17; for Garner that would be 50.73 cents per \$100 (current is 51.75 cents per \$100). The Town is required to publish it, however, it is not required to adopt it. Council's feedback will be needed on this as we go through budget process.

Council Member Marshburn asked if the Town sets the tax rate at the neutral rate, would the Town still generate additional revenue and Mr. Gammon responded that that revenue at the neutral rate would be approximately \$148,000.

Development-related fees:

- Water & Sewer ahead of budget - \$849K
- Building permit fees - \$129K ahead
- Other fees expected to be ahead of projections

Sales tax is up 2.97% over prior year-to-date (July – October); the Town used a 4.5% projection for FY'16, but collections are seasonal and increases can be expected in coming quarters. With seasonal adjustment, the Town is 8% ahead (early to accurately project).

Intergovernmental Revenue – unrestricted fees should be consistent (Beer & Wine, Utility Franchise, Video Programming). Restricted fees – Powell Bill better than budgeted, "Build America Bond" reimbursement goes down, other grants to be determined.

Sales and Service fee revenues are down for recreation fees and facility rentals, but increased activity is expected in the summer/spring.

Investments are performing well, particularly with switch to PFM (Investment company). Already doubled budget figure.

Very early revenue projections look low, but partly due to "other revenue" and "other sources" such as loans / borrowing, especially for vehicles. Still some volatility in predictions, but early outlook is generally positive.

Visioning Exercise - Dr. Carlson

Council was asked to put themselves in the year 2030 and consider the series of questions in the packet. Process:

- 1) Pair up with someone (Council with Council)
- 2) Take turns being the interviewer and share responses to questions 1 – 3 (10 minutes each – total of 20 minutes)
- 3) Take notes – prepare to report out your partner's key points
- 4) Reconvene as full group to discuss and reach agreement on the elements of our vision

Council "assignments": Kennedy and Behringer, Singleton and Johns, Williams and Marshburn

1.A. What Garner has accomplished – Economic Development:

Kennedy and Behringer:

- Empty store fronts filled with “above Tier III” businesses
- Garner is epitome of community involvement, investments have been effective, school performance has increased dramatically
- We did not necessarily follow trends, but did it “our way” – Town is inclusive and diverse
- Schools are well-funded, part of what attracts people to Garner

Singleton and Johns

- Completed Timber Drive over I40 to Greenfield Parkway
- Multiple businesses located at former ConAgra site
- Continue to support public safety to keep Garner a safe place to live, work, and play – including Police, Fire, Rescue
- Mix of jobs in all areas of the Town of Garner

Williams and Marshburn:

- Built more parks and more sidewalks
- Greenfield South built out with diverse businesses including medical technology
- More than 3,000 employed at former ConAgra site
- Downtown is a center for arts & entertainment with Rec Center, new GPAC, art galleries, and sandwich shops
- Transit station is the hub of activity including housing for young people in the area
- North-South Station re-energized, including anchor for Wake Tech

1.B. What Garner has accomplished – Specific Areas:

Kennedy and Behringer:

- Garner is no longer identified as center of low-performing schools
- Garner of fifty years ago is transformed into a destination community

Singleton and Johns:

- Number of jobs have come to Garner to replace those lost from ConAgra
- Commercial growth in the White Oak area

Williams and Marshburn:

- Timber Dr corridor is a busy mix of commercial, residential, and churches. Preparing for extension to Greenfield Parkway / I540 connector
- New athletic complex and rec space in fast-growing White Oak area
- New walking, biking, boat rental shop at Lake Benson
- LBP has expanded with additional 100 acre purchase and expanse of walking/biking trails
- Wake Med has expanded to state-of-the-art 50 bed hospital with additional personnel

1.C. What Garner has accomplished – Physical Infrastructure:

Kennedy and Behringer:

- Garner is inviting in business corridors and residential areas; aesthetically pleasing; reflected in home values
- Community understands need for re-creation and re-development – urban renewal as meaning

Singleton and Johns:

- More sidewalks throughout Town with buildings and storefronts full
- New housing development in the White Oak area
- Connected sidewalks and greenways; well-maintained

Williams and Marshburn:

- Sidewalk system connected and well-maintained
- Widened roadways for bike lanes along with “circulator bus” system; connectivity to commuter rail station (multi-modal system)
- Town providing incentives for renovation / upgrade of older properties in Town
- New facilities open to serve growing senior population

1.D. What Garner has accomplished – What the citizens are saying:

Kennedy and Behringer:

- Go Garner! You have our interests at heart.
- Town engages citizens for input in the planning stages and then uses it to formulate and execute a plan
- Town works in a cohesive and progressive manner

Singleton and Johns:

- Pleased with levels of service provided and with amount & speed of growth managed in an efficient way
- Proactive rather than reactive toward the need of citizens
- Williams and Marshburn:
- Used to the massive growth and lower taxes
- Citizens receptive to Council’s efforts to improve ILAs with communities to east (Clayton) and south (Fuquay-Varina) (noted Council is expanded to 7 members)
- Citizens clamoring for a second cafeteria to supplement the one previously built

2. What the news team should photograph / video (still 2030):

Kennedy and Behringer:

- Evidence of transformation from dilapidated housing to good mix of housing products
- Complete redevelopment of I40 interchange at 303 and new I40 interchange
- Corridors in Garner that are now the entrance to RTP / the Triangle
- Downtown sports complex and associated redevelopment

Singleton and Johns:

- Downtown Garner development
- New business throughout Town
- July 3rd celebration (still going strong)

- Newest P&R facility and newest greenway

Williams and Marshburn:

- Another segment on “Inside the Fire Department” with 200 employees, 8 stations, and four aerial trucks
- Old vs new GPAC
- New state-of-the-art library
- New robotics plant at Garner Technology Site – working on new self-driving vehicles

3. Town leaders made these decisions in 2016 to get us to this point:

Kennedy and Behringer:

- Hired a new Town Manager
- Updated and re-affirmed plans for financing infrastructure needs
- Laid groundwork for next Bond Referendum

Singleton and Johns:

- Economic policies put in place to attract new businesses, jobs, and residents
- Approved contracts for new Town Hall and Rec Center
- Approved new school facilities to meet the needs of our citizens

Williams and Marshburn:

- Started construction of a new Town Hall
- Continued to maintain a Town staff that is capable, stable, and responsive to the needs of the citizens
- Laid groundwork for financial responsibility going forward

Council’s general feedback on visioning exercise included:

- Most of the discussions regarding roadways and bike paths involve state roadways.
- Concern regarding the development in Raleigh pushing “affordable housing” out to Garner; we need to make sure housing values improve in order to impact schools issues.
- Optimism is an element of what elected leaders should have and convey to citizens. Leadership is about optimism and laying the groundwork for the next generation.
- Stability and respect need to be an emphasis as we move forward; we don’t need to yell, and don’t need to be yelled at.

Dr. Carlson asked if this exercise built on what was previously done or was there a change or shift in priorities or was this a logical extension?

Council Member Kennedy stated Council can be optimistic but also need to recognize challenges, especially things we don’t control. It’s what politics is all about. Need to focus on relationships, particularly with school system because of impact on our economy. Need to focus on the “end point” as opposed to the route we take to get there and need to be flexible.

Council Member Singleton stated visioning is sometimes just an educated guess. Plans in 1985 included reliance on a Nabisco plant in Greenfield, but never happened due to matters outside of our control. Visioning is “hit and miss.” One of the Town’s faults has been that we are too slow – started talking

about Recreation Center in 1978, passed a bond in 1986, stalled in 1990s, approved again in 2000 and then again in 2013. It will have been 40 years since first discussion. Same process occurred with Town Hall. Public works was built in 1983 and essentially the Town's hasn't built anything new since. We have been lacking in facilities, slow to address.

Dr. Carlson asked Council if there was anything they have seen or learned or actions that can be taken to impact this?

Council responded:

- Need to be aware and take action.
- We don't work in isolation. Need to work with Wake County and others and need to be prepared to spend money when necessary, i.e. supporting transit system.
- We have to have a stronger presence and voice and increase our effectiveness with Wake County and with WCPSS. We have to step up to a new level.
- In regard to next bond referendum, everything has always passed (with one exception); if you are up front with citizens, you will get bonds passed. Be honest and they will support it. Share the message of the value of the projects.

Dr. Carlson reiterated the importance of needing partners and relying on others.

Lunch Session – Working Lunch with Scott Mooneyham, NCLM Director of Public Affairs

Mr. Mooneyham explained the NCLM Vision 2030 Process. NCLM invested in the visioning process based on member needs. NCLM Board of Directors worked with UNC SOG to reflect the visions of members. Task Force included NCLM members.

The process was outward facing, inclusive, expansive, transparent because they wanted a member-driven process with additional input from those outside the NCLM and members, including businesses, legislators, others.

Did CityVision work sessions at 2014 conference and in-person interviews with members and stake holders.

5 Disruptive trends:

- 1) Shifting political landscapes
- 2) Changing demographics
- 3) Changing economics
- 4) Deteriorating infrastructure
- 5) Changing technology

10 Challenges identified:

- 1) Citizens do not understand roles & responsibilities of municipalities; reluctant to support increased taxes or fees
- 2) State legislators restricting authority and resources of municipalities; view municipalities as "another special interest group"
- 3) Patterns of population growth in NC will continue; strong growth in urban & decline in rural
- 4) Significant demographic changes leading to shift in cultures
- 5) Future of many rural and smaller communities as viable economic enterprises / service providers in jeopardy

- 6) Municipal-county and regional collaboration in service delivery is essential, but many relationships are strained or non-existent
- 7) Cohorts of municipalities that share common interests and needs are underrepresented
- 8) Financial support from Federal and State government will continue to decline
- 9) Future support from Federal and State government unlikely to help with costs of infrastructure repair and update
- 10) Technology has potential for improvement but is also a challenge for municipalities

6 Operating Principles (goals – by 2030):

- 1) Municipal governments will exercise greater control over their revenues, structures, and functions
- 2) Municipalities demonstrate the value they add to the community's quality of life
- 3) Technology is widely used for service delivery, citizen engagement, and economic development
- 4) Municipalities widely practice productive partnerships with counties, other governments, and the private sector
- 5) Urban and rural communities routinely work together for economic success
- 6) Municipalities are able to quickly adapt to cultural and demographic changes in their communities

How can municipalities best reach their future? How can NCLM help?

- Help citizens and policymakers see the value of municipalities as it relates to those things that residents value
- Help cities and towns in efforts to improve that value and make those connections
- Develop a media campaign dedicated to the task, focused on municipal investments that promote economic growth

What NCLM has done:

- Branding and messaging
- Polling
- Initial video

What NCLM will do:

- Develop campaign website
- Toolkit (video, ads, strategy sheets)
- Crowdsourcing – let cities and towns tell their stories (launch in April '16?)

NCLM Video – “A Vision for Cities’ Tomorrow” (YouTube)

- “Vision” – the ability to think about and plan for the future.

Council Questions and Feedback:

Council Member Kennedy, referring to Robert Wright’s book on capitalism, mentioned the underlying theme of what politics has done to the federal government and associated costs and can see the same concerns with folks at the state level. An example of this would be the sales tax re-distribution discussion in NC. Legislature seemed more oriented toward the rural environment. Council Member Kennedy asked who they were favoring now?

Mr. Mooneyham responded leadership is now from rural areas; not as many folks in legislature with local government experience as there once was and there was a lack of knowledge as to what a

municipal government does. The number of legislators recently elected were single-issue candidates – including anti-annexation platforms, thus not a positive view of municipal government

Council Member Kennedy suggested perhaps their job is to identify and promote legislators who have local interests in mind and Mr. Mooneyham advised NCLM is looking at that now. Council Member Kennedy asked Mr. Mooneyham what the legislature’s opinion was on broadband providers and Mr. Mooneyham said the legislature does not like municipal broadband because it is seen as government competing against public enterprise; telecom lobby is very powerful.

Council Member Marshburn asked if there were any particular areas of concern for NCLM in the upcoming short session and Mr. Mooneyham advised they will likely look at design aesthetic controls again (see municipalities as a “special interest” vs. the home builders). They will also likely look at the billboard bill.

Council Member Kennedy asked if the legislature would be looking at sales tax anytime soon and Mr. Mooneyham responded that they may discuss it again, but changes during the short session were unlikely.

Town Guidance Strategy

Council was asked to review the Town’s current Vision Statement in comparison to 2030 exercise from earlier and decide if changes were needed. Council responded unanimously that changes were required and proposed the following:

- Change “maximize the desirability” – perhaps to “promote” or “protect”
- “Built environment”
- “Community of Choice” or “Community of Excellence”
- Possibility remove the word “excellence”, possibility use the word “opportunity”

Mr. Hodges advised Council that these suggestions and the feedback from the earlier visioning exercise and interpret themes to implement in a revised vision statement. Mr. Dickerson added that this exercise could be done at the upcoming Staff Retreat.

Mission Statement

Council was asked to review the Town’s current Mission Statement in comparison to 2030 exercise from earlier and decide if changes were needed. Council responded unanimously that changes were required and proposed the following. Dr. Carlson reminded Council that the definition of a mission statement was to define a purpose.

- Remove “success” and possibly replace with “successful strategic planning”
- “committed to successful strategic planning and growth...”
- Possibly use “hometown” in place of “small town”

Preparing for Growth and Development – Water/Sewer Capacity & Infrastructure

Mr. Hodges explained the Town currently charges two Public Utility Fees; a Capacity Fee Replacement Fee and a Utility Development Fee. These fees are allocated to pay off debt associated with prior purchase of water/sewer capacity. The use of these fees is restricted to the purchase of capacity or capital costs of infrastructure to expand capacity and not for extension of transmission or collection

lines. The existing debt will be paid off during FY 16-17. Staff recommends prioritizing work on a plan to develop alternatives to the current fee structure that would not be restricted to capacity and could be used for infrastructure needed to expand residential and commercial tax base in identified growth areas.

Mr. Hodges also explained that staff is encountering feedback from the development community regarding the total amount of Garner's Public Utility Fees are they are perceived to be higher than surrounding communities. A temporary solution would be to reduce the Public Utility Fees from a total of \$18.07/gallon to \$10.89/gallon by suspending collection of the \$7.18/gallon Utility Development Fee until a permanent overhaul of the fee structure is completed. Staff is recommending referral of this matter to the Public Works Committee to analyze the impacts of the short-term recommendation and to work towards revising the utility fee structure.

Strategic Infrastructure Investment(s) prior to 2017 COR Survey

Mr. Hodges advised Council that staff has identified the most reasonable, largest impact project to be a sewer extension up to serve Highway 70 east of Raynor Road which would allow several parcels to be developed. Project costs to build the trunk line are estimated at approximately \$500,000.

Council Member Kennedy said the potential for a pump station in the White Oak area makes sense for future growth and asked if the Town could work with COR to for joint financing of utilities in advance to avoid issues with projects as they develop. Mr. Chalk advised of a conversations at a recent "merged community" meeting was to discuss the idea of joint financing with COR; there is growing interest in this throughout the county. Mr. Bass explained this trunk line would serve the I-540 interchange along with a US 70E employment corridor. Mr. Hodges stated there was a parcel east of Raynor Road on Highway 70 that has a rail spur approved that would also be served (32.5 acre parcel).

Preparing for Growth & Development - ETJ Expansion

Mr. Bass stated staff has been working with Wake County Planning staff regarding a potential expansion, the process, and some locations in question. The Town's last significant expansion was in 1988 to the east and south.

Mr. Triezenberg explained the premise behind ETJ is to help growth occur in a cohesive manner. ETJ development can be hampered if a lot of county development already exists as it impacts more people. It is important to select appropriate "targets" for ETJ expansion and to weigh value vs cost (financial and time). Legislatively, because we are over 25,000 in population the Town can ask for up to 3 miles of ETJ expansion. We must have a resolution adoption process by the Town and then the County to grant it. Review criteria was adopted by Wake Co in 1988-89.

Our three mile limit actually goes into Johnston County; includes all of 540 coming through. There are four significant portions/areas that would be considered. Two are south-west, two are south-east.

County review criteria:

1. Classification as Urban Services Area
2. Commitment to Comprehensive Planning
3. Adoption of special regulations
4. Municipal water and sewer service
5. Evidence of feasibility for urban density development
6. Annexation within 10 years

7. Existing ETJs

Staff does not anticipate issues with 1, 2, 3, and 5; however, there may be an issue with water and sewer – expected to have water/sewer within one mile of area added by ETJ.

Planning staff has “ranked” the areas by how they would score with Wake County. The most attractive is 1.68 sq miles (1,077 acres) out to Rock Quarry Rd area at NE corner of Town (would be helped by proposed sewer project out at White Oak). This would include 540 intersection with 70 and Rock Quarry. There are several small parcels near Rand Rd and Ten-Ten Rd that are adjacent to existing ETJ and/or neighborhoods. The third strong area is near McCullers where many larger parcels are available for developments with water/sewer already in place.

Areas that “may” score well:

- Swift Creek station – west side of 401 across from new development (who will bring water in for their development). No existing neighborhoods.
- Ten-Ten across from Fanny Brown – there are two existing neighborhoods in the area that would need to be included; could have opposition.
- Another parcel off of Ten-Ten
- Area around the new High School – sewer would require a new pump station downstream of the high school. Does make sense to include it.

Mr. Triezenberg also stated the total if the Town proceeded with all property presented is approximately 6,000 acres / 9.37 sq miles.

Other considerations for proposal to Wake Co:

- Highlight steady growth numbers
- Ensure all town-owned property is annexed and complete any pending requests to bump up our numbers
- Highlight the 5-10 year time frame for 540 being completed at least to I40

Timeline:

- Approximately 1 year
- ¾ of time for public notice and comment / meetings
- Involves review and input of 3 or 4 county commissions or subcommittees
- Must allow staff time to draft report and complete any pending or possible annexations

Preparing for Growth and Development – Future Capital Projects

Mr. Dickerson provided an overview of the existing CIP document and asked Council if they were comfortable with projects, timeline, and costs?

Highway 50 Bridge Replacement Project –

Council discussed the possibility of expanding the project to include two to three lanes in each direction along Highway 70 and making the bridge pedestrian-friendly by adding sidewalks. Staff will prepare a Resolution to NCDOT to express the Town’s desire for the expansion.

Storm Water Projects –

Mr. Chalk advised Council the list provided was based on the Town's storm water policy as it relates to flooding streets or homes. There are other infrastructure issues that will need to be addressed.

Council Member Singleton stated the Town may need to consider street resurfacing and storm water in a future bond project. Mr. Chalk agreed and stated the Town's infrastructure is aging, including storm water and curb and gutter replacement and repair. Council Member Kennedy suggested the possibility of performing a formal evaluation of the system to better determine the costs.

Additional Upcoming Needs:

Mr. Hodges reminded Council of the following projects that were identified by Council and/or staff as desired projects or needs that should be addressed in the next five years. These items have not been added to the Capital Improvement Program at this time.

- Storm Water Infrastructure Study and Future Infrastructure Funding Mechanism
- Bryan Road Schools Joint Use Facilities
- Cloverdale Park (replacement)
- Parking Lot at Main and Pearl Streets
- 401 Lighting Project (if action is taken separate from NCDOT planned Super Street Project)
- Parking Lot at Centennial Park (accessibility gained by new development)
- Fiber Ring connecting the Town's facilities (partnership opportunity with Google Fiber installation)
- Software platform for permitting, inspections, plan submission and plan review
- Fire Station and Operations Costs for 401 Corridor (discussions have begun with developers and partners)
- Property for future transit station(s)

Council Member Singleton suggested a gravel lot and vehicle stops for the Parking lot at Main and Pearl Streets until further uses in the area are identified.

Council Member Marshburn asked about the timeline for the 401 lighting project and Mr. Hodges stated this was identified prior to the "super street" project and staff feels it is best to let NCDOT proceed with the project and Mr. Bass stated NCDOT has engaged a consultant and should have a discussion this year about how that will progress.

Council Member Kennedy asked where the "super street" project would be and Mr. Hodges advised it is between Legend and Purser on Highway 401. Lighting was raised two years ago for Old Stage going north on east side of Highway 401 up to Lowe's. Mayor Pro Tem Behringer asked if this was considered a short distance for a "super street" and Mr. Bass advised that he has notified NCDOT that this seems to be only half the needed project.

Mr. Dickerson advised the Google Fiber Ring project will consist of a partnership between the Town and Google utilizing joint trenches to allow us to connect our buildings.

Mr. Hodges stated annual subscription cost of software for the Planning and Development Services department is approximately \$40,000 plus first year set-up costs.

Additional Item for CIP Consideration:

- Road Improvements at Ackerman Road/White Oak Road/Hebron Church Intersection

- Council Member Kennedy asked if the Town should expect NCDOT to participate and Mr. Bass stated that would depend on how urgent we think it is versus when NCDOT funding becomes available. He said he has spoken with traffic engineering consultants and they could prepare a design and cost estimate to determine a general cost; this process will take approximately 90 days at a cost of \$20,000. Road improvements from WCPSS development is limited; with no signalization scheduled until after Bryan Road Elementary School is constructed. Council Member Kennedy stated this item needs to be a fast track item as it is immediately going to be problematic and will impact development in the area. Chief Zuidema stated the NCSHP may be interested in assisting the Town as they will work the crashes that occur in that area. Council Member Singleton stated this item needs to be second priority behind the water/sewer fees issues.

Council Member Kennedy stated that for more than 5 years Council had discussed the need for a sports complex and feels the purchase of land for this project needs to be placed on a future bond referendum.

Dr. Carlson asked for a quick assessment of what went well and what needs improvement regarding the format of today's agenda. Council felt the information provided was well prepared and informative and that Dr. Carlson kept them on task and on time.

END OF DAY ONE

DAY TWO

Dr. Carlson provided an overview of topics for discussion today.

Economic Development – Joseph Stallings

- Economy is improving, particularly since 2008-2009; the outlook for NC/USA is positive; should be great year for the economy overall.
- Timeline of recent significant events for 2015 – Google Fiber is announced, Duke Site Readiness program, Overland Contracting, NC Legislature incentives bill, GTCS nominated for the ULI Willie York Award, federal government raises interest rates 25 basis points.
- Categories included in the Economic Development Department’s “Working the Plan” include Key Initiatives, Product Development and Recruitment, Retention and Expansion, Marketing and Promotions.
- List of accomplishments include electronic record keeping, new community profile fliers, response to RFI in timely fashion, Stallings becoming certified economic developer, Howe at Main Street training course, participation in Trojan Business Alliance (GMHS).
- The goal for Commercial/Industrial is to foster a business friendly environment that promotes commercial and industrial growth in a responsible manner. Accomplishments include 56 RFIs received, GTCS submitted for 10 projects, Poole site (south side of 70 out to Raynor Rd) inducted into Duke Site Readiness program, GIS-GPS will be considered for NC Site Certification in February 2016, Creative Economic Development Site Assessment Tool being used to identify key future properties.

Council Member Marshburn asked what the advantages were of participating in the Duke Site Readiness program and Mr. Stallings responded that the Town received \$10K in support to get the property developed. It was a rigorous process that required an “in depth” approach to understanding everything about the property and gave the Town a blueprint to apply to other properties and generate the same report to clients. One of the major advantages to participating in the program is the awareness it brings; not only is the Town marketing this property, so is Duke.

Goals presented for the Retail Sector: to improve the existing retail assets and continue to grow Garner as a destination for shopping and entertainment. Accomplishments include contact with local retail representatives; several store fronts have been filled; staff working to locate second generation retailers for current vacancies; North Station 97% occupied; South Station 46% occupied. Those numbers should both be in the 90s in 2016 (based on square footage vs store fronts). Will continue to partner to fill those as well.

Goals for Entrepreneurship: to foster an environment that recognizes innovation, creativity, and makes Garner an attractive place for startup businesses to locate. Accomplishments include developing a “How to Get in Business” in Garner; working with a local former business exec to create an ambassador/mentoring program; recruited a startup from Raleigh to downtown; leveraging connections with small business counselors from Wake Tech and NC State Small Business and Technology Development Center to form a small business strategy.

Goals for Residential: to promote Garner as the ideal place for residential development.

Accomplishments include expecting a rise in 2016 development; development standards changed to encourage residential development; Development Services newsletter disseminated to local realtor and builder groups; Growth Strategies Task Force reconvened for further input on growth in Garner

Business Retention and Expansion – staff visited with 15 companies since Sept '15 implementation of the BRE program. AvuTox, Capital Chrysler Jeep Dodge, Disaster Area Designs, Golden State Foods, GUI, Home Depot, James River Equipment, McDonalds, Morris & Associates, Pergo, Strategic Behavioral Health, Viztek, Wake Med, WingSwept, Zapi.

Beautification Initiative

Mr. Triezenberg advised Council that staff is working towards a possible location for the welcome sign on Highway 401 North. The property owner has agreed to donate the easement; the Town would be responsible for design, engineering, fabrication and installation costs. Funds have been budgeted for these costs.

Mayor Pro Tem Behringer stated 18-20 years ago the Planning Commission was merged with the Appearance Commission and the Town performed beautification projects up until recession hit. Funds have not been spent on beautification since 2007 until last year. Now we are overdue and need to move forward. She expressed her concern with Highway 70 and the recent plantings; is there a plan for how those trees were planted as they look random. She would like to see some uniformity in design, perhaps some shrubbery where possible. Firmly believe the median through the business corridor needs to look good; women decide where families live and it needs to look good to attract them. The business corridor needs to show them they want to look around more. Mr. Triezenberg explained this project would be an additional item and there may be grant opportunities through NC Forestry.

Telling Our Story - Rick Mercier

Mr. Mercier advised Council that Greenfield South is the first AT&T fiber ready site in the Triangle.

The last five years have seen growth and change to include the first formal PIO, a partnership with PEG Media, and a move into social media. Today the Town can reach tens of thousands of people each month with social media, e-newsletter, and other tools. A number of awards and recognition have been received including All America City recognition, Adam's GFD award-winning video, Scotty video for AAC, and other products.

We've learned a few things along the way:

- Strategic decisions are often difficult but are always essential
- You have to hone your message over and over to succeed
- Our biggest, community-defining successes have involved collaboration and going "all-in"

In the next five years there will be great opportunities and great challenges. We need to plan, collaborate, and go all in. We want to continue to do better with messaging in the next five years, including targeted marketing/messaging. Mr. Mercier introduced Brian Bowman, the Communications Director at the City of Knightdale who reviewed the recent re-branding process and the final product.

Brian Bowman – Knightdale Communications Director

Mr. Bowman explained the City of Knightdale is a bit different from Garner because they are “newer” and didn’t initially have a story to tell.

Branding “is the strategic orchestration of all that you do to affect what your community members, consumers, and competition are saying about you.” Strategic is important as it normally does not happen by accident, and you don’t want it to. “Your brand is what people say about you when you aren’t in the room”.

The process is just as important as the final product, particularly true for communities. It is important to involve your community to make them a part of the process and to have them buy in to it. A community brand done well is also heavy on research. A brand is not a logo – a logo illustrates the brand, but is not the brand.

Knightdale’s branding process took a year. They created two distinct projects that came in sequence – the first was for research, the second was the deliverables.

The research phase included a committee with internal (staff and council) and external stakeholders (15 members). A rubric was then put together for what they were looking for in a vendor. An RFP was then issued and finalists were selected. Samples of current publications were provided to the vendor and they began performing remote research, census data and other proprietary data to learn about Knightdale and the region. After the research was performed, the vendor created an initial “understandings and insights” document which highlighted strengths and weaknesses. At that point, a selection committee was assembled to select a logo and present to Council.

Mr. Mercier stated the consensus among staff is that we probably would not change our logo or tag line, but might do a “branding tune-up” instead and look at an updated narrative and deliverables.

After discussing, Council consensus is to bring this issue to a Work Session for further discussion.

Transit Discussion/Update

Mr. Bass advised Council the commuter rail option in the Transit Plan will link Garner to RTP and Durham with possible expansion east to Johnston County. The Town would also see expanded bus service in the plan, including a local option if we choose to do so. Commuter rail stations are proposed in the downtown area and a park and ride at Greenfield. The downtown station would generally be in the Main Street area; Greenfield station would be on the fringe of the park. The Town’s existing bus service consists of: #7 serving 401 businesses and back to Raleigh (30 minute route, 15 minute peak), #40 serving Wake Tech (hourly, only M-F), and the 102 (hourly) on 40 to White Oak to Timber to Aversboro (no weekends).

There has been some discussion (conceptual only) of a circulator bus route that would serve TOG – to include North Garner, shopping, medical, parks, etc. It is a piece of the transit plan where the Town could participate and cost-share.

Next steps for transit plan:

- County staff is talking to municipalities about plan recommendations
- County staff working internally for necessary agreements and governance options
- Anticipate plan being presented to Wake Co Commissioners, CAMPO, and Go Triangle in May/June 2016 for approval
- The Town will need half-cent sales tax authorization on November 2016 ballot

- Wake Co may (or may not) seek support from municipalities (TBD). TOG will need to consider whether to lend formal support for approval of Transit Plan. Planning will keep Council up-to-date, to include funding issues.

Dr. Carlson advised Council that this matter will be further discussed during the lunch with Wake County Commissioner John Byrne.

Working Lunch - Commissioner John Byrne, Wake County Commissioner

Commissioner Byrne expressed his appreciation for Garner's support and understands that Garner wants and needs to remain independent while benefiting from the Transit Plan.

Commissioner Byrne stated there is no truth to the rumor that the Commissioners will push back some school projects in order to do the Transit Plan. There is no intention to change the priority for upcoming school construction and renovation projects. The discussion is based around how to best pay for it all within the County's debt capacity. Commissioner Byrne also stressed the work they do is aimed at economic development and the desire to continue to plan for growth and to provide the necessary jobs as we continue to grow. A good transit plan is also needed to include as a recruitment tool for municipalities and businesses as alternatives to the current road system. One of the things Wake County is moving forward with when refurbishing schools or building new schools is to do so with energy efficiency in mind. This allows for payment through the savings achieved as opposed to needing additional bond dollars.

Council Member Singleton expressed the importance of keeping the public informed of what is going on and why we are raising taxes for transit. Some parts of the county will have minimal impact, so it will be interesting to see how that goes. Commissioner Byrne responded that they have extended a special connector route to each community to keep them involved with an express bus at least, particularly during peak times. One recent success story is the bus running from Fuquay to Raleigh; it started with 3 riders and now has 80. They are trying to focus the system on regular availability of buses so there is less impact from missing your one chance to get the bus. Rail coming to Garner will also have a positive impact in the near future. Currently, there is only 16 miles of buses where buses run every 15 minutes; if the Transit Plan passes, it will go to 83 miles of 15 minute bus routes and make a huge difference in ridership because of less impact on missing the hourly bus run.

Council Member Singleton expressed the Council's desire to be part of the campaign when it moves forward in terms of informing citizens and providing them with information. Council Member Kennedy agreed and stated the Council needs to educate themselves and then let folks know why it is in their best interest to support the Transit Plan.

Bond Tracking Report – Michael Gammon

Since the last update, \$750K in spending has occurred; \$535 for construction (mostly for the Police Department); remainder for professional and contract services.

Highlights include:

- P&R Bond: Rec Center drawings are underway, restrooms and concessions completed, second dog park approved, alignment for South Garner Greenway set.
- Public Safety: Police Department open, Town Hall drawings complete, prequalification underway.
- Redevelopment: Recreation Center Storm Water Facility design complete, staff received encroachment ok for Highway 70 improvements, discussion started on relocation of utilities in downtown.

- Streets and Sidewalks: Benson/Main Street completed February 2016, Timber Drive underway, Thompson Rd encroachment agreement received from NCDOT, improvement designs for US Highway 70/Montague Street sent to NCDOT, Malibu Valley lighting complete.

Next Bond Project – Rodney Dickerson

Mr. Dickerson advised Council's guidance is required relating to Highway 70 improvements from Highway 50 to Morris; roadway improvements and lighting, particularly with discussion of widening of the Highway 50 bridge over US highway 70. Estimates for the Highway 70 improvements are approximately \$3.2M.

Mr. Hodges advised Council that there is a schedule for most of this work to be performed and asked if there was a need to deviate from the existing plan/schedule. In the past, we have had comments similar to ones made about Ackerman that there are possibilities to change things up as we go. Staff is seeking clarification on any specific need for reordering or repurposing the program/funds.

Council Member Singleton asked if Council wanted to take advantage of interest rates and add more money to bond sale #3 for specific projects in order to save in the long run. The next bond sale for \$4M is scheduled for January 17 with the last sale scheduled for mid-2018 for \$7M.

Mr. Hodges asked Council if they would like this matter placed on a future agenda after discussions with Davenport are complete and Council Member Kennedy stated Council may also want to engage Davenport about possibly tweaking Revenue Savings Program. Council Member Singleton reminded Council that there are some small things that should also be considered in the third sale to spread the money around, such as park enhancements, neighborhood improvement, and other things.

Mr. Hodges clarified that staff will need to work with Davenport as to what the Town's borrowing capacity is before deciding on a third bond sale.

Wake County Commissioner Matt Calabria

Commissioner Calabria reported on the following:

- The 540 selection of the orange route was a huge benefit; still in progress, so we will continue to monitor it.
- The Transit Plan is moving along; still in last phases of listening mode, although most proactive information gathering is done. CAMPO, Go Triangle, and Commissioners have to sign off, probably in the April – June timeframe. He will be advocating for the Transit Plan and the referendum that comes with it for funding.
- Wake County is working on the next school year budget. On construction, there is bond money to last into 2017. They are in the very early stages of deciding not whether to fund construction, but rather how to fund it. A plan will be developed over the next several months.
- Fire Service is a continuing discussion. Several things going on at once; standard of cover study, funding study, compensation study (presented to Fire Commission in March and then to new budget for FY17). Expect a renewed commitment to compensation and funding.
- This year Wake County will be looking more closely at how we do economic development. Commissioner Calabria stated his campaign included expanding incentives beyond the "bigger companies" and looking at the ROI as well as encouraging small businesses and small towns. Get away from only doing incentives for "offers we can't refuse."

Construction Management of Recreation Center and Town Hall projects

Mr. Dickerson asked for Council's guidance regarding how we might manage these projects differently from how Police Department was handled. Staff feels there is a need for professional construction management in some form, either a consultant or a staff person to provide assistance/support.

Mr. Hodges stated one of the options discussed was to hire someone who is familiar with construction and looking for a two-year contract engagement for 18-20 hours per week. Staff feels this cost can be included in the bond projects.

Vision and Strategic Plan – John Hodges

Mr. Hodges advised Council that staff would like to begin the process of developing a more attractive and user-friendly strategic plan. To aid in that process, sheets identifying the four elements from the Strategic Priorities (Fiscal Responsiveness, Efficient and Timely Service Delivery, Orderly Growth, and Quality of Life) were placed on the wall and Council was asked to create goal statements to describe the conditions they wanted to see and place on the appropriate priority/objectives sheet.

Mr. Hodges also advised Council of staff's goal to combine the Strategic Action Plan into the Strategic Priorities to be able to track items and allow conformity when reporting.

Fiscal Responsiveness Goals Added:

- Modify our current water/sewer fees to insure we are competitive with other municipalities in regards to economic development and overall commercial activity
- Keep our taxes low
- Achieve financial independence; determine (chart) our own future by achieving financial independence (appeared to be the same goal submitted by two council members)
- Keep business coming to Town
- Work with partnerships to get business to come to Town
- Fiscal Responsibility; stable tax rate (on same note)
- Be fiscally responsible; communicate with staff and the public that fiscal responsibility is always the plan of choice; get information from staff to stay informed about capital needs (CIP) and putting plans in place to maintain existing infrastructure as we also plan for new infrastructure and the best way to fund these improvements
- Work with the County and State to get all funds

Efficient and Timely Service Goals Added:

- Continue to support Town staff by:
 - Supporting recommendations of annual pay study
 - Supporting staff and consider any department re-alignment of staff
 - Give staff the tools to perform their jobs in the most efficient and effective way
 - Keep I.T. and other staffing tools and equipment up-to-date
- Maintain excellent staff
- Support Town staff by providing adequate compensation and training for their work and remember the adage that "people are our most important resource"
- Invite residents to work with staff to continue to get good service
- Envision, plan, implement and deliver programs and services, infrastructure

- Provide foundation for government that is fiscally sound, forward looking, and willing to adapt to changing trends in demographics, people resources, and sustainable practices that protect our natural environment and finite resources
- Provide quality services at a reasonable cost through efficient growth management

Orderly Growth Goals Added:

- Participate in and adopt new long-range planning tools; be receptive to ideas about future economic development and work with staff and development community to reach goals of responsible and reasonable growth; continue to plan for infrastructure improvements and also for the expansion of the Town workforce as the needs of citizens will increase with growth
- Provide adequate water and sewer
- Engage the community to gain insight, input, critique, and ultimately their support in order to achieve planned, managed, and orderly growth
- Progress...emerge...arrive!
- Be engaged and support the Wake County Transit Plan
- We will embrace diversity in our community with “open” minds with the intent of both learning and teaching to broaden our understanding and involvement in the world we live in today
- More sidewalks; Keep our sidewalk program going
- Engage widespread community participation in the upcoming Comprehensive Planning Process
- Work to bring more businesses downtown

Quality of Life Goals Added:

- Expand our parks and recreational facilities to meet the needs of our senior citizens as well as providing for our growing youth population
- “Chicken in every pot”
- Work with regional partners
- We will facilitate Garner’s growth and quality of life by understanding that infrastructure needs include continually lobbying WCPSS to address performance handicaps in our schools, supporting the Transit Plan to meet increasing mobility needs, implementing beautification plan to improve Garner’s “curb appeal”, and supporting economic development needs such as business recruitment, incentives, and pursuing the possibilities that branding can offer.
- Live...enjoy...thrive
- First – continue with bond projects, most if not all of the bond projects meet one of these six objectives; second – consideration of funding items in the CIP, along with annual budget appropriations to meet these objectives; third – consideration of future funding initiatives, whether annually or through bond sales, to maintain our infrastructure, provide transportation improvements, and build the amenities citizens desire.
- We will listen to our community, our staff, and our colleagues with the intent to solve rather than to defend.

Next Steps – Dr. Carlson

Dr. Carlson asked staff to summarize the next steps as discussed during the Retreat and Mr. Dickerson provided the following:

- Revise Vision Statement based on Council feedback
- Revise Mission Statement based on Council feedback
- Take fees and history to PW Committee; develop history of process
- Look at US Highway 401 lighting from Old Stage to Mechanical Blvd.
- Letter to NCDOT to formalize request for widening of Highway 50 bridge over Highway 70
- Talk to Highway Patrol about White Oak / Hebron Church intersection; get cost estimates for design work to have something in place to address concerns if/when necessary
- Staff to move forward on ETJ expansion as proposed; bring to March Work Session
- Follow-up on Millennials discussion
- Present BRE program to Chamber Board
- Present beautification expansion and maintenance plan with budget process
- Bring a specific plan of action for “Telling Our Story” to Council, to include strategic plan, consultant, comp plan additional questions
- Update costs on future bond projects, to include Highway 70 road widening only from New Rand to Morris & Associates
- Present proposal and cost-benefit analysis on a construction management contracted employee
- Engage Davenport on largest possible amount for Bond Sale #3 based on debt capacity
- Put Storm Water infrastructure financing proposal in budget request

Mr. Hodges reported the following next steps relating to CIP needs:

- Get an estimate for storm water needs and put it in the budget
- Pearl Street Parking Lt – look at an interim solution and pricing and then how to program in the future
- Cloverdale Park – step one would be to identify property (further out)
- Development Services Software – get it in budget now to implement prior to new Town Hall

Council offered the following:

- Possibility of sidewalks along Aversboro from Walgreen’s to YMCA (where they would pick up) and then to Summer’s Walk existing sidewalk
- Possibility of broadband in Garner
- Requested additional information regarding how the Google plan will impact homeowners.

Mr. Dickerson thanked staff for their work in preparing for the Retreat.

Mayor Williams thanked Dr. Carlson for her facilitation of the Retreat.

Dr. Carlson asked for feedback regarding the Retreat.

Pros:

- Mayor Pro Tem Behringer: Materials were well-prepared; astounding. Let us get our work done. Council did a good job of following direction, worked through the agenda.
- Council Member Kennedy: Staff started early getting our input. And often. One thing that changed from last year to this year: staff presentations were open, from the heart, from your professional expertise. Sensed staff was speaking what you thought; that's what we need to hear. Nobody was holding back.
- Mayor Williams: Well organized
- Council Member Marshburn: We have a very talented staff; it's also good to bring in outside resources. Like using lunch to engage partners / Commissioners.
- Council Member Singleton: Staff listened to us.
- Mr. Hodges: Council is allowing staff to go back and make some edits and compilations to their work, which is important. Sends an important message to staff.

Improvements:

- Council Member Kennedy: We had two Wake County Commissioners come in to speak. Council needs to think strategically for next year in terms of who to bring in. Good to have a big group listening.

END OF DAY 2