



ROANOKE

Strategic Plan Update – Focus Groups

July/August 2020

In July and August of 2020, the Mayor and City Council conducted a series of focus group meetings composed of City residents, business owners and senior City staff to discuss each of the Council's seven Strategic Priorities in preparation for their annual retreat and update to the Strategic Plan. Nearly 100 participated in these conversations – the combined notes from these meetings are enclosed in the following.

Focus Group – Education Notes

- Welcome and Introductions

Meeting convened at 11:30. Council Member Price welcomed the group and asked each to introduce themselves. Participants included:

- Council Member Anita Price
- City Manager Bob Cowell
- Tiffany Bradbury, Roanoke Community Engagement
- Clint Hill
- Deidre Trigg
- Keith Farmer
- Kathy Duncan
- Dorothy Carter
- Angela Wimberly
- Michelle Johnson
- Keith Thomas
- Sheila Umberger
- Michelle Smith
- Danielle Burks

Introduction of what the Strategic Plan is and how we use it

City Manager Cowell explained what the Strategic Plan is and how the City uses it to guide policy-making, budget development and conduct of operations. The City Manager explained how the Vision, Mission and Values of the community represent the “why” with the strategy representing the “how” and the tactics/actions the “what”. This is complemented by performance measures and indicators (which include the community survey they each received) which tell us “how we are doing at what we are doing”.

Overview of specific strategic priority

City Manager Cowell provided an overview of the current strategic plan focusing on:

- What it is
- What the objectives are
- What broad strategies are used
- Examples of specific tactics/actions
- Examples of outcomes

Relationship to the budget

City Manager Cowell provide an overview of the relationship between the Strategic Plan and the annual budget.

Questions

Council Member Price then initiated the discussion by asking the following questions

- Hearing what the objectives of this priority are and the broad strategies used to advance on them, what resonates with you as of being of great importance?
 - All the strategies identified in the Plan are significant to advance successfully education.
 - Need to grow and expand work-based education emphasis (IT, Trades, STEM, Health Care, etc.)
 - Apprenticeships and work-based learning is key – trade certifications and licenses while in school becoming even more critical
 - College and Career Readiness as part of accreditation now increases the relevancy and need of career-oriented education (college or career-ready experiences)
 - Move beyond the classroom for learning
 - Transportation to connect students to work-based learning locations – public transportation not always a viable solution
 - Lack of a community-viewpoint of lifelong learning
 - Spark the imagination of the youth – turn them into life-long learner
 - Equitable experience in the arts as way to spark creativity and develop a learning mindset
 - Strengthen families and their ability to support their children in learning
 - Increase focus on the diversity of our population – how to use as a strength and recognize the challenges that they uniquely face
 - Support National Board Certification for teachers
 - Enhance on-line learning opportunities
 - Support beyond formula funding may be needed and important
 - Important to help ensure stable home life and neighborhoods – remove those obstacles and barriers to learning
 - Linking children and classrooms to outside enrichment and support groups more intentionally to strengthen the assets each student possesses
- Likewise, are there any that appear to be of less importance to you or may even conflict with the objectives?
 - Too much emphasis on test scores and meeting certain testing criteria versus creating an attitude of learning and discovery
 - Teacher retention is a challenge due to the challenges that exist within the school system – could use more training and support/mentoring
 - Recognize that students in our community face many challenges others may not
- Can you identify any ways that the described objectives or strategies could leave someone out or even negatively impact them? If so, how?
 - Emphasis on testing, challenges with trauma and lack of support for teachers can result in leaving many behind and limiting opportunities in addition to contributing to teacher burnout.
 - Difficult to provide the tailored response each child needs due to constraints and trauma

- Do you agree with the objectives? Are we trying to accomplish the right things in your opinion? What, if any parts of the objectives need to be changed – strengthened or diminished?
 - Focusing on the right things – if anything need to advance further and perhaps update the specifics to reflect current economy and current challenges – recognize this rests with the School Division in how they allocate their funds
 - Greater focus on supporting teachers
 - Community-life experience has such an enormous impact on learning – needs even more emphasis
 - Increase recognition and use of our wide community network to support schools, teachers and students
 - Career-orientation needs to be strengthened

- What's Next? How will the information from these focus groups be presented and used?

City Manager Cowell provided an overview of how the information gained from the focus groups will be used and what the next steps in the process are.

- Key Stakeholder Interviews will be conducted
- Email thoughts and comments will be possible through a dedicated email account
- Report to Council on combined reports
- Council Retreat then follow up working groups

The meeting adjourned at 12:45

Community Safety Focus Group Notes

- Welcome and Introductions

Meeting convened at 12:03. Mayor welcomed the group and asked each to introduce themselves.

Participants included:

- Mayor Sherman Lea
- City Manager Bob Cowell
- Assistant City Manager Sherman Stovall
- Chief David Hoback
- Chief Sam Roman
- Lisa Denny
- Joey Pugh
- Tina Workman
- N.L. Bishop
- Aziza Longi
- Darryl Burks
- Sandra Kuehn

Introduction of what the Strategic Plan is and how we use it (Bob)

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Questions (Mayor/Council Member)

Mayor Lea then initiated the discussion by asking the following questions

- Hearing what the objectives of this priority are and the broad strategies used to advance on them, what resonates with you as of being of great importance?
 - Community is changing – dynamics are changing. Safety differs for various people. Substance use is a concern. Questions arising about what exactly do we mean by community safety. Trauma is real and this affects their perception of safety and how they engage with others. This influences how people perceive their community.
 - National conversation reinforces these perceptions. How can relationships with law enforcement be strengthened to help address these concerns? Creating relationships is critical.
 - Relationship-building in policing in our community is more than just attending events – it must be a part of our “DNA”.
 - National actions have local ramifications. Need to be certain to place that within the local context/situation. We can always do better – always room for growth. Work has been going on last decade to make community feel they are part of the police and the police feel they are part of the community.
 - How to better tell our local efforts and narrative? How can that be used to highlight where more effort and better work is needed?
 - Difficult to get people engaged in shaping law enforcement until something tragic happens (most often someplace else)
 - Happy with current leadership but concerns over just how strong that relationship building is – feels more listening is going on now with current leadership
 - Collaboration with community partners is key along with the overall community
- Likewise, are there any that appear to be of less importance to you or may even conflict with the objectives?
 - N/A
- Can you identify any ways that the described objectives or strategies could leave someone out or even negatively impact them? If so, how?
 - If real relationship building does not take place then people of color can easily be negatively impacted.
 - Relationships between RPD and Human Services have been strained – need to ensure continuing education around areas of trauma, domestic violence, etc.
 - Bring service providers and RPD together more often to address together challenges the community faces.
 - Continuing education and training brings proficiency.
 - Collaboration in both training and actual execution of the job – police cannot be expected to be the expert in every situation.
 - Arrests should be the last resort not the first.
 - Many in the community would like to be at that table in a collaborative fashion
 - Level of community engagement and type of engagement within Fire-EMS is also important – are there other ways to deliver their services? Important to know and collaborate with the community.

- Need new ways of doing business – levels of expectations are changing and we need to change and adapt with that.
- Do you agree with the objectives? Are we trying to accomplish the right things in your opinion? What, if any parts of the objectives need to be changed – strengthened or diminished?
 - Objectives are sound – need to be more explicit in where and why funds are being expended – show the community the value.
 - Transparency needs to be a focus help keep people informed – they need to know what the real challenges and real solutions are – rhetoric cannot be the answer.
 - Social media to share information is key and this has been well done by the City. Also a good way to promote engagement by citizens.

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The meeting adjourned at 1:00

Focus Group – Human Services Notes

- Welcome and Introductions

Meeting convened at 11:05. Council Member Osborne welcomed the group and asked each to introduce themselves. Participants included:

- Council Member Djuna Osborne
- City Manager Bob Cowell
- Assistant City Manager Brent Robertson
- Tiffany Bradbury, Roanoke Community Engagement
- Lee Clark
- Kris Tilley-Lubbs
- Ellen Valentine
- Anne-Marie Green
- Steve Martin
- Angela Penn
- Elvir Berbic
- Dr. Deneen Evans
- Dina Hackley-Hunt
- Aaron Washington

Introduction of what the Strategic Plan is and how we use it

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Questions

Council Member Osborne then initiated the discussion by asking the following questions

- Hearing what the objectives of this priority are and the broad strategies used to advance on them, what resonates with you as of being of great importance?
 - Engaging with people directly is critical – sense of belonging and authenticity
 - Not something for the City to address along – collaboration is key
 - Area agencies, providers, etc. key in filling in gaps that the City government cannot address
 - Caring Communities is the priority that resonates the most – because it means human services transcends “government programs” as others in our community addresses the needs government can’t meet
 - Making certain people know what is available to them – accessibility to services is key
 - People need to feel like we as a community really care – otherwise they may not seek out partnerships or citizens may not seek out services
 - Holistic approach to intervention is key – HMIS, Pathways HUB, etc.
 - Creating healthy and safe neighborhoods is key – for example recreation facilities (bike lanes, tennis courts, etc.) that aren’t culturally appropriate are present when amenities that would be used aren’t and basic infrastructure is of poor quality
 - Need a holistic view of what human services are – safety net, recreation, infrastructure, access to healthy food, etc.
- Likewise, are there any that appear to be of less importance to you or may even conflict with the objectives?
 - Services offered in some instances actually may make those disabled even more vulnerable or place them at greater risk. We are not generally taking care of these citizens
- Can you identify any ways that the described objectives or strategies could leave someone out or even negatively impact them? If so, how?
 - Community surveys and indicators may skew toward the “haves” and/or older and may leave out segments of the population, especially those participating in surveys
 - Immigrants and refugees likely have a very different opinion of services – such as transportation
 - Diversity is a strength in our community – need to be certain our evaluation of services captures that diversity of experiences
 - Gaps in funding of programs – federal funds play such a large role and they often leave segments out – sometimes intentionally
 - The ability to clearly communicate all that is available is generally a challenge an even more so for those that might not be English-speaking
 - Lack of communication and confidence could undermine collaboration and service referrals
 - Aftercare and resiliency is not sufficiently stressed and therefore leaves many vulnerable

- If we don't directly engage with vulnerable members of the community in designing services and establishing policies then can we genuinely say our approach is equitable
 - If equity is not front and center then it can be forgotten
 - Resource allocation needs to be considered when evaluating expenditures on infrastructure, etc. to address equity – work directly with community members on this
 - Need to remember residents that have disabilities – they are very vulnerable and often at higher risk
 - Public transportation needs to be enhanced
 - Ensure youth are emphasized more – give them more of a voice in what happens in the community
 - In many ways Roanoke can be viewed as two cities
- Do you agree with the objectives? Are we trying to accomplish the right things in your opinion? What, if any parts of the objectives need to be changed – strengthened or diminished?
 - Concern with duplication of services – Continuum of Care is a really good example of how this is avoided for homeless services – more of this is needed across other services (such as feeding services) – this would also promote greater efficiency
 - Follow-up and aftercare remains a weakness in the community – need to keep them from returning to a crisis situation
 - Raised awareness of just how vulnerable people are – even though we have a well-built safety net. When real crisis hits more people are impacted than system and resources can handle – how do we make people more resilient?
 - Greater emphasis on health and access to healthy food is needed
 - Combine nutrition education with community garden efforts
 - Tangible examples of equitable decisions – conversations, empowerment, actual construction, etc.
 - Housing vulnerability
 - Post-COVID impacts may need to be mentioned as they are likely to remain an impact for a couple of years
 - We are pursuing the correct objectives – may need to improve upon being certain those being served have a stronger voice
 - Increase the sense of welcome and belonging
 - Add a strategy specifically to focus on welcoming, belonging, etc. and “develop” people or “cultivate” individuals

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The meeting adjourned at 12:35

Focus Group – Infrastructure Notes

- Welcome and Introductions

Meeting convened at 1:03. Vice Mayor Cobb welcomed the group and asked each to introduce themselves. Participants included:

- Vice Mayor Joe Cobb
- City Manager Bob Cowell
- Assistant City Manager Sherman Stovall
- Tiffany Bradbury, Roanoke Community Engagement
- Frank Smith
- John Garland
- Sam Lionberger
- Andrea Garland
- Tim Pohland-Thomas
- Celeste Delgado-Libero
- Rhonda Pierson

Introduction of what the Strategic Plan is and how we use it

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Questions

Vice Mayor Cobb then initiated the discussion by asking the following questions

- Hearing what the objectives of this priority are and the broad strategies used to advance on them, what resonates with you as of being of great importance?

- Increase awareness of Broadband and its significance
- Keep thinking outside of the box – view infrastructure as a community asset not just a expense
- Recognize the importance of investing in infrastructure to support village centers – maybe focus on more of the small things (sidewalks, alleys, etc.)
- Walking infrastructure is a big need
- Emphasize the small/high impact infrastructure items
- Multi-modal aspect is key
- Emphasize collaboration – especially public/private – great opportunities within the village centers
- Prioritize the next steps – further investment – define our future and pursue it
- Maintain strong link between infrastructure and livability
- Maintain a full well-rounded perspective regarding infrastructure
- Increase awareness of the need to maintain our current investments
- Energy conservation in city buildings is a good program and effort
- Likewise, are there any that appear to be of less importance to you or may even conflict with the objectives?
 - Keeping environmental protection as only a category weakens the overall positive impact infrastructure can have
- Can you identify any ways that the described objectives or strategies could leave someone out or even negatively impact them? If so, how?
 - Ensure equitable distribution of infrastructure across our various areas in the City
 - The quality of our existing infrastructure impacts the quality of the built environment in proximity. If poorly maintained, infrastructure taints the character and quality of surrounding properties.
 - We have underestimated the role and importance of infrastructure during this pandemic period – internet access is great example
 - Be certain every neighborhood has equitable access to all aspects of needed infrastructure
 - Remember all transportation decisions impact different segments of the population in different ways
 - Transit system expansion/enhancement is needed as well as the ability to get to and from transit
 - Focus on a specific area and invest heavily in that area to transform - an infrastructure version target area effort
 - Be sure to engage residents
- Do you agree with the objectives? Are we trying to accomplish the right things in your opinion? What, if any parts of the objectives need to be changed – strengthened or diminished?
 - Not just service providers but also provider of assets
 - Need to increase awareness of the community regarding infrastructure and its significance and importance
 - Reinforce the economic importance of infrastructure

- Recognize the relationship and importance of historic districts and infrastructure
 - Need to balance repairs with new infrastructure
 - Strengthen relationship between infrastructure and economy and livability
 - Help focus on building the “next” infrastructure – electric vehicles, livability, multi-modal, waste-management, etc.
 - The “green” aspect of infrastructure needs to be strengthened
 - A culture shift needs to occur – sustainability needs to be placed first – not just a category
 - Air Quality and relationship with signal timing and turn movement limitations
 - Need an increased emphasis on street tree plantings
 - Easy to forget what is underground
 - Opportunities to coordinate infrastructure investment to maximize benefits
 - Establish “Dig-Once” policy and invest
 - Waste management (recycling, composting, reducing amount of waste generated) - communication and education is key
 - Dedicated budget for alternative transportation – both for new development and maintenance
- What’s Next? How will the information from these focus groups be presented and used?

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The meeting adjourned at 2:09

Focus Group – Good Government Notes

- Welcome and Introductions

Meeting convened at 12:01. Council Member Bestpitch welcomed the group and asked each to introduce themselves. Participants included:

- Council Member Bill Bestpitch
- City Manager Bob Cowell
- Assistant City Manager Sherman Stovall
- Tiffany Bradbury, Roanoke Community Engagement
- Amelia Merchant
- William Sellari
- Katherine Fralin-Walker
- Charles Nave
- Courtney Penn
- Beth Deel
- Ivonne Wallace Fuentes
- Barbara Andes
- Andre Peery
- Gwen Mason

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Questions

Council Member Bestpitch then initiated the discussion by asking the following questions

- Hearing what the objectives of this priority are and the broad strategies used to advance on them, what resonates with you as of being of great importance?
 - Focusing on most recognized accreditation systems is key to ensure there is a demonstrated ROI to the citizens and tax payers.
 - Multi-channel engagement is key to be sure we reach as many audiences as practical
 - Virtual participation and observation of Council meetings is very helpful way to help residents directly engage with their government
 - Genuine engagement is critical – great to see engaged citizenry is an explicit goal of the City.
 - Many ways to engage with the government and keep informed
 - Collaboration is key – being very intentional about partners and collaboration to maximize benefit and also may afford some flexibility local government can't offer
 - Perhaps simplify further to say what Good Government means to our citizens and what it means to our employees (two steps) – what can each of these expect to get from their government?
 - Need to remember limited resources may lie ahead so sound financial management is key
 - Emphasize what government is and what it does – easily and concisely – people want easy simple access to information and engagement
 - Best practices and accreditation standards are likely to continue to evolve – need to be prepared to evolve with them.
- Likewise, are there any that appear to be of less importance to you or may even conflict with the objectives?
 - Many of the priorities and strategies are of less importance if we can't at this moment succeed in addressing the health issues and economic issues associated with COVID-19
 - Can we rely on partners to do things we have more often expected the City to do?
 - Don't risk getting trapped in the past – be progressive and forward thinking. If we determine what we want to do and accomplish versus just reacting then we have more control over our future – green, carbon neutral, etc.
- Can you identify any ways that the described objectives or strategies could leave someone out or even negatively impact them? If so, how?
 - Ensure multi-channels – create “on-ramps” for everyday people to be more engaged in their government.
 - Systemic poverty and segregation has an impact of keeping segments of our population from actively engaging in their government – need to be intentional about engaging this segment
 - Remember there are voices in our community some may disagree with that also need “on-ramps” for engagement/participation
 - Those home-schooling children may not as often have access to resources

- Interface with government is a bit clumsy – could limit people’s access and engagement – focus more on the User Experience and User Interface
- Do you agree with the objectives? Are we trying to accomplish the right things in your opinion? What, if any parts of the objectives need to be changed – strengthened or diminished?
 - Need to reinforce objective of achieving accreditation more directly or specifically – best in class, industry standards, etc.
 - Respondents of surveys should be as diverse as practical.
 - When people feel not heard or alienated from their government or even community – can lead to unrest
 - City should boldly re-state it wants its people engaged in their government
 - How to ensure the average citizen has access to government information and engages?
 - Strategies that could be in place that allow City government to be more nimble or work faster – engage in real-time. The world moves at a faster pace it seems than government is able to adapt to
 - Be certain to clarify why we are responding or not responding is sometimes more important than responding
 - City Council needs to take an active role in evaluating education – a lot of money is spent on schools and their conduct and success should not be left up to the School Board alone to determine
 - Since so much has changed may need to reassess/re-survey community to see how things are going
 - How to build more resiliency (workforce, services, etc.) into the strategies – our current pandemic will not be the last crisis we face
 - Be more specific about who our collaborative partners are (name them) in addition to pursuing various collaborative partners
 - Look ahead at opportunities – be visionary and then define a path to drive our future – the development of the City we seek to be – what is a mid-size city of 2030? And how do we get there?
 - Pursue progressive solutions – look to the future. For example carbon neutral – don’t just solve today’s challenges (reactionary)
 - Should limited resources be geared more toward high need/low satisfaction items?
 - Budget efficiency likely to become even more important in future
 - Actively plan for the workforce of the future – build the team on what a city that is preparing itself for the future needs
 - Engagement and communication is challenging because local government policy making is complicated
 - The City is doing a lot and doing it well for the right of reasons – we just need to be improving more on telling that story.
 - Get area youth more directly involved in local government – perhaps internships to help with youth outreach

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The meeting adjourned at 1:30

Focus Group – Livability Notes

- Welcome and Introductions

Meeting convened at 11:04. Council Member White-Boyd welcomed the group and asked each to introduce themselves. Participants included:

- Council Member Trish White-Boyd
- City Manager Bob Cowell
- Assistant City Manager Sherman Stovall
- Tiffany Bradbury, Roanoke Community Engagement
- Michael Clark
- Amanda Marko
- Pete Eshelman
- Jo Nelson
- Cyrus Pace
- Chris Chittum

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Council Member White-Boyd then initiated the discussion by asking the following questions

- Hearing what the objectives of this priority are and the broad strategies used to advance on them, what resonates with you as of being of great importance?

- Quality amenities – especially the quality of outdoor amenities – it contributes to tourism, health, quality of life and economic development/talent attraction
- Critical to continue to invest in our outdoor amenities and parks and recreation departments/operations – make them a priority for investment
- Roanoke is in many ways a big town versus a small city
- High number of parks and acreage is positive but staffing, facilities and funding is low.
- The role arts plays in livability is significant from both quality of life and economics
- Code enforcement and quality of neighborhoods is key – though limits on authority complicate this – we need to keep the aesthetics of spaces high
- Value of arts and culture to tourism and economic development
- The built environment (buildings, streets, etc.) is critical – may need to set higher expectations
- If we love our places (downtown, neighborhoods, etc.) and feel these offer our competitive edge – then why isn't that what we expect all new development/construction to deliver?
- Village Centers are key!
- Making certain our neighborhoods and community look and feel as safe as practical (panhandling, transient camping, etc. Need to address compassionately but need to recognize it impacts sense of safety
- Livability is often used as our "Calling card"
- We have a real urban center that brings more than one would think for the size of our community – this is a big asset
- Transportation – for local and regional and international movement is big asset – can get anywhere in short order and able to connect to the outside world via the airport
- Likewise, are there any that appear to be of less importance to you or may even conflict with the objectives?
 - Are outdoor amenities distributed equitably in our community?
- Can you identify any ways that the described objectives or strategies could leave someone out or even negatively impact them? If so, how?
 - A high number of youth in our more urban/vulnerable neighborhoods have little connection with nature/outdoors – need to have more explicit connections – often Apple Ridge is their only experience
 - Many in the community think of the greenways are for "other people" not recognized as a space for them – need to address this and ensure amenities are appropriate for what they are interested in.
 - Public transit does not provide easy access to many of these amenities
 - After-school programs with city are now focusing more on experiential learning to introduce youth to more outdoor access – starting small – you don't need an expensive bike or kayak.

- Promoting 10-minute walk campaign to have the entire population within a 10-minute walk of a park or greenway – part is addressing awareness of these facilities and that they are safe to get to and from
 - Linking youth and arts and culture is critical
 - Within pandemic period difficult to think strategically and long-term where current focus is on survivability of arts and cultural organizations and making things safe for patrons
 - Even if arts have no economic value they have great role to play in livability and equity
 - Quality of venue is critical as well
 - Recognize that the built environment can include or exclude people depending upon what it offers and how it is maintained
 - Don't leave people out of determining what is best for the community – too easy to leave people out. Need to be deliberate
 - Not likely any objectives intentionally leave anyone out – just difficult work to be certain none are.
- Do you agree with the objectives? Are we trying to accomplish the right things in your opinion? What, if any parts of the objectives need to be changed – strengthened or diminished?
 - Opportunity to capitalize on possible post-COVID trend at people relocating to smaller high-quality communities.
 - City does a great job at providing outdoor amenities but even more needs/could be done.
 - Maintenance is a struggle and age of facilities are problematic
 - Seek more authority for code enforcement
 - Need to remember that well-paid gainfully employed residents is key to supporting our arts and culture groups and our outdoor amenities
 - Stronger link needs to be recognized about the amenities and the link to livability and the attractiveness for investment, employment, talent, etc. Outdoors has done this better than arts and culture
 - Make a community where businesses and people want to be – tourism will follow
 - In many ways we will spend much of the future “cleaning up” the underperforming “unloved” places to make them safer, better and more able to contribute to livability and to our economic success.
 - Neighborhood resiliency needs greater attention
 - Acknowledge that racism still acts as a damper on all of what we are trying to accomplish and on what success in livability we will experience – if we can't bring real equity then we really can't have a truly livable community. – saying diversity is no longer sufficient.
 - Equity is essential but anti-racism is what is really meant.
- What's Next? How will the information from these focus groups be presented and used?

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The meeting adjourned at 12:20

Focus Group – Economy Notes

- Welcome and Introductions

Meeting convened at 1:03. Council Member Davis welcomed the group and asked each to introduce themselves. Participants included:

- Council Member Michelle Davis
- City Manager Bob Cowell
- Assistant City Manager Brent Robertson
- Tiffany Bradbury, Roanoke Community Engagement
- Rob Ledger
- Kat Pascal
- Lauren Ellerman
- Byron Hamlar
- Nate Sloan
- Lucas Thornton

Introduction of what the Strategic Plan is and how we use it

City Manager Cowell explained what the Strategic Plan is and how the City uses it to guide policy-making, budget development and conduct of operations. The City Manager explained how the Vision, Mission and Values of the community represent the “why” with the strategy representing the “how” and the tactics/actions the “what”. This is complemented by performance measures and indicators (which include the community survey they each received) which tell us “how we are doing at what we are doing”.

Overview of specific strategic priority

City Manager Cowell provided an overview of the current strategic plan focusing on:

- What it is
- What the objectives are
- What broad strategies are used
- Examples of specific tactics/actions
- Examples of outcomes

Relationship to the budget

City Manager Cowell provide an overview of the relationship between the Strategic Plan and the annual budget.

Questions

Council Member Davis then initiated the discussion by asking the following questions

- Hearing what the objectives of this priority are and the broad strategies used to advance on them, what resonates with you as of being of great importance?

- Small businesses contribute to the character and quality of life of the community
- Promotion of existing businesses need more attention
- Retaining and expanding existing businesses should be the top priority – current 80% of ED staff effort is toward existing businesses
- Manufacturing remains a strong component of our local economy
- Collaboration is key – make certain we are all pulling in the same direction
- Focus on quality of life and fertile conditions to support economic development – livability is a direct link to economic development
- Outdoor and cultural assets are key to economic development – talent and business recruitment relies upon this
- Economic inclusion is important and likely to need to receive additional attention
- Our workforce is our greatest asset – we need to care for them and improve their circumstances and opportunity – the longer we can keep them here the more likely they are to add to our local economy
- Likewise, are there any that appear to be of less importance to you or may even conflict with the objectives?
 - Can't rely upon the same approach to budgeting in light of revenue decreases
- Can you identify any ways that the described objectives or strategies could leave someone out or even negatively impact them? If so, how?
 - COVID impact has hit businesses and employees in varying and inequitable ways.
 - We must address urgently racial and social justice and determine how we can better support minority populations in business and workforce development.
- Do you agree with the objectives? Are we trying to accomplish the right things in your opinion? What, if any parts of the objectives need to be changed – strengthened or diminished?
 - Renewed focus on existing businesses – especially in response to COVID-19 – many restaurants (especially fine-dining) will go out of business.
 - Loss of meals tax revenue is of great concern
 - All businesses are being affected by COVID.
 - A normal budget is not going to work as the business environment changes post-COVID
 - Supporting the change in business models may be of help
 - Need to assist the bottom-line of existing small businesses
 - What can be done to improve resiliency in the local economy?
 - Opportunity exists to lure companies away from larger metro areas – still need to be pursuing these
 - ROI on investment – what do we get for what we invest?
 - Can we be even more strategic about the work our collaborative partners undertake?
 - Place-making is key – make this a great place to live and investment and growth will follow

- Invest more in arts and culture as an economic driver versus viewing them as amenities
 - Define realistically what the City's role is – can't pick winners and losers but should be laying the conditions for success
 - Need to be certain the other priorities (infrastructure, livability, etc.) support what we are trying to do
 - For next two years City needs to anticipate and address deep budget shortfalls associated with post-COVID impact
 - More resources may need to be dedicated to economic development
 - Basic business knowledge support is needed to help sustain new businesses or even help existing businesses to thrive
 - Raising awareness of available resources and assistance
 - Subsidize certain overhead/business costs or promote access to these resources, so businesses can focus on improving the quality of their employee's lives.
- What's Next? How will the information from these focus groups be presented and used?

City Manager Cowell provided an overview of how the information gained from the focus groups will be used and what the next steps in the process are.

- Key Stakeholder Interviews will be conducted
- Email thoughts and comments will be possible through a dedicated email account
- Report to Council on combined reports
- Council Retreat then follow up working groups

The meeting adjourned at 2:26