

BROOKVILLE CITY COUNCIL
Strategic Visioning Work Session
October 28, 2015

The Strategic Visioning Work Session of the Brookville City Council was called to order by Mayor Seagraves at 6:30 p.m. on October 28, 2015 in the Brookville Council Chambers. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. City Manager Burkholder and Assistant Manager/Finance Director Keaton present. Members Apgar, Cantrell, Garber, Kirklin, Letner and Law Director Stephan were present. Member Duncan was absent.

Motion by Apgar, second by Cantrell to accept the Agenda as presented. All yeas, motion carried.

Mayor Seagraves welcomed everyone and announced there will be a total of four work sessions.

City Manager Burkholder announced the public and staff are welcome to attend but this work session is for the Mayor and Council Members to generate and discuss their thoughts and goals for the future of Brookville.

Manager Burkholder stated the meeting is being recorded as a public meeting.

Member Apgar stated Brookville has many assets. He believes our city's atmospheres as well as location are our two biggest assets.

Member Apgar described our biggest challenges is maintaining the small town, close community atmosphere yet also trying to grow with a variety of new businesses.

Member Garber stated he thinks our location is both an asset and a challenge. It is an asset due to the city's small town atmosphere but is a challenge due to being northwest of Dayton and not necessarily close to a lot of big retail centers and restaurants, for example, areas similar to Austin Landing. He would like to see continued growth over the next 10 years.

Member Garber stated that our city employees do a great job. However, we do not have enough City employees. For example, we have a need in our waste water treatment plant for obtaining a license since retirement of former Service Superintendent, Ron Brandt.

Member Garber stated our businesses are diversified. Brookville has Cargill and Green Tokai, but he feels if one of those businesses were to close or re-locate our city would be in trouble.

Member Garber described our schools and parks as being a huge asset. For the size of our community our schools and parks are excellent. Our brand new waste water treatment facility would also be a great asset in his opinion.

Mayor Seagraves stated he believes our service to our citizens is a great asset. He is very proud of our fire department with their quick response times. We have the man power and equipment to do much good but would like to consider options for how we can enhance? For instance, updates to the current fire house? He would like safety to be a key factor.

Member Cantrell thinks Brookville has a strong diversified group of existing businesses from which we can target allied businesses to possibly bring to Brookville. She would like to consider options on how we can approach businesses that would contribute to what we already have or would consider possibly relocating to Brookville.

Member Cantrell also believes our downtown area has too many empty center city buildings. The City needs to focus on filling these locations with small businesses.

Member Cantrell described our parks, bike paths and community theatre as major assets to our community. She feels other communities are envious. She also stated that Dayton is thriving with residential development because people want to live near recreational amenities. We have that basis but need to find new ways to tie into the future.

Manager Burkholder learned at the economic development meeting he attended that research shows community assets such as theatres, parks etc. are what attract people to a community. He informed that research shows that millennials seek lifestyles first then seek employment. This is why the City needs to plan for the future and focus on involving the younger generations.

Member Letner commented his son travels from Brookville to neighboring communities to grocery shop. The younger generation prefers larger areas to shop, eat, and do multiple errands at once. Member Letner feels that areas similar to Austin Landing are very high traffic and as a result more car accidents occur.

Member Cantrell informed she was recently at McMakens on a Saturday morning and was surprised that she recognized maybe only twenty percent of the customers in the store were from Brookville. A lot of customers were actually from neighboring communities or camping at the KOA campgrounds.

Member Letner agreed with Member Garber's earlier statement that our city employees are fantastic. He also believes the City's location to I-70 is a positive asset. Member Letner described a big challenge of the City is the BP station. Options for the BP station need to be looked into as it is a large thorn in his side.

Member Letner described our downtown area as deteriorating. He has noticed that a lot of other cities throughout Ohio have a state route that runs through their downtown area. However, we do not have that luxury.

Member Apgar commented that in the 1970s some cities would buy any available stores that were available. The stores would then have some sort of theme for instance, the 1800s. The whole stretch would then be focused around the theme. The city would not ever sell the buildings only lease. By doing this, it would then decrease the possibility of raising taxes.

Member Letner informed Council that he has had two previous businesses downtown. He shared that people would complain about our downtown area's parallel parking. A lot of people do not know how to parallel park and also do not want to learn. The parking situation through downtown also makes snow removal on the roads and sidewalks difficult and hard to get around. Member Letner suggested making changes to traffic flow. He indicated trying one-way streets. Traffic moving east would go one way and then moving west one way and a one-way street for the Post Office.

Member Letner commented that the current firehouse situation is a primary challenge. The current firehouse is too small. The new location is ideal for response time. Our firehouse should not be considered a luxury, but a necessity.

Member Kirklin stated she thinks the bricks and sticks retail shopping will eventually become a thing of the past due to the increased popularity of online shopping.

Member Kirklin described a city with walkability is important. She would like to see the linking of places together, like with the library. Also, maybe walking paths added to Johnsville Brookville Road. Walking paths would link restaurants, park, and theatres together. She believes Brookville has the potential for a very walkable city. Since our town has the Community Theatre, it would also be beneficial to invest in the arts as much as possible.

Member Kirklin feels that our Police and Fire departments are great. She feels our town is a very good steward of the assets we have.

Mayor Seagraves commented that our city is at a disadvantage when it comes to adding new restaurants to our city. Since most restaurant chains basically count roof tops in a town when deciding to open new restaurants.

Member Apgar stated in the 1970s McDonalds looked at seven different communities including Brookville when looking to open a new McDonalds. They were very reluctant based upon the city population, but took a chance anyway.

Member Cantrell thinks our focus should be on smaller, family owned restaurants and make our community business friendly. People need to want to invest in our community.

Member Kirklin stated that big retail chains can be found anywhere and that we should focus on different ideas that will make us more unique. Support local talents, most successful places have been started by people who started here and to try focusing on that. Partner with Chamber or County.

Member Kirklin does agree that the BP station is a large eyesore. However, we do not have any control over it or have the resources to control it.

Member Cantrell asked if it would be possible to contact the owners of the BP station to obtain permission for the use of their land. A food truck or farmers market could be great use of that land.

Mayor Seagraves responded that those types of ideas would probably cause too much of a liability for the owners.

Mayor Seagraves would like to consider the look of the interchanges in Englewood and Huber Heights and the enhancements that have been done to those exits. How can we make similar changes? He recently spoke with representatives from ODOT and ODOT believes Brookville to be the gateway to Montgomery County even the State of Ohio. ODOT also reported that Preble County has no interest in participating in any new development, which is why we need to strategically plan our design of the Brookville overpass.

Member Letner commented on the lighting situation of the overpass as well as the landscaping. He suggested that however we choose to design the new overpass, it just needs to be maintainable.

Member Letner would like to see the focus not just on the count of rooftops but the traffic flow.

Member Cantrell stated we have a lot of people in our community that may be able to use their personal connections to reach out to other resources.

Member Letner stated he sees a big challenge to putting together a realistic, achievable long range plan to aggressively cure infrastructure and maintenance that has been neglected in some pockets of our city. Water lines which are too small for a building are also a big challenge as well as the cost that would be involved and the resources needed for improvement.

Member Garber stated Richmond, Indiana had once tried to close off streets in their downtown area and it was very unsuccessful. Their town was not in favor of walking everywhere. They eventually changed the streets back to two-way streets and are still suffering.

Member Garber is concerned with the structural soundness of the downtown buildings. The buildings that need re-stored should be a priority and we need to look into the structural integrity of each of the buildings in downtown. Chief Fletcher stated he is currently in the process of investigating the current structures of the downtown buildings.

Member Garber stated he feels Brookville is a sanctuary. He is happy to drive home and to experience low levels of traffic within the City. He feels higher traffic and crime rates occur in larger cities and a lot of people feel safe and secure in our City.

Manager Burkholder described all of the things that have been brought up so far were all things discussed at his last economic development conference. He learned many other cities are in similar circumstances and have turned similar issues into success stories.

Manager Burkholder announced a short fifteen minute break.

Member Kirklin stated she is in agreement with earlier comments pertaining to the infrastructure of buildings, maintenance, and water lines being too small as a major challenge to our city. She is also concerned about possible issues with a fire in some downtown buildings.

Manager Burkholder commented the city applied to OPWC for funding this year to improve our water lines. Analysis was done on Brookville roads. Credit goes to Chief Ron Fletcher and former Service Superintendent, Ron Brandt who went through and evaluated the water lines.

Member Kirklin commented on the current state of the Terrace Park plat. Issues to be addressed should include curbs, sidewalks and waterlines. She would like to see improvement on the homes that have been neglected. She would also like focus drawn to homes that are delinquent in city taxes.

Member Kirklin stated in her opinion "Folks are flying under the radar", with the collection of vehicles. Somewhere the City needs to draw the line. There should be harsher consequences for being non-compliant. There are also other pockets of the City besides Terrace Park that are in need of sidewalks.

Member Kirklin would like to see the City devise and execute a plan to help improve the looks of our City's neighborhoods. She would also like to see other projects similar to the work being done at the home on Foothill Drive.

Member Cantrell asked about the possibility of residents in Terrace Park considering a homeowners association? As part of a homeowners association, residents would pay to help maintain common areas.

Member Kirklin stated homeowners in the Terrace Park area have discussed this possibility within the last six months.

Member Letner indicated the need for removal of trees from the Terrace Park Boulevard main entrance. Also, the main sign needs updating, something other than block letters. Street signs and poles in that area also need to be better maintained.

Manager Burkholder presented a list from Member Duncan prepared for the meeting in his absence. Member Duncan would like to see updates made to our current firehouse, an expansion made to Golden Gate Park, and a water feature added similar to the City of Englewood. He also thinks an electronic message board placed somewhere on a main road in the City would be quite informative to our citizens. Acquiring land in an industrial park could also be beneficial so that we control it.

Member Letner referenced back to the concerns with Terrace Park. He stated the Boulevard is City owned so the mowing and tree removal should be maintained. An OPWC grant for the waterline on Maple Street will be a great start. It will hopefully be extra money for the next year. This should also enable us when applying for the grant next year and we will have better documentation to show that we do need the grant money which would greatly help Terrace Park Boulevard.

Member Letner suggested creating more than one way in and out of Terrace Park. He stated that the City cannot rely on homeowners in that plat to mow the front area if it is

City owned. He also commented that the Terrace Park sign is ugly and the block letters are outdated. The poles are also bent and show wear from the weather.

Mayor Seagraves described image is everything. He feels that the signs throughout Brookville definitely need improvement. Too many of the City's signs show wind damage.

Mayor Seagraves stated that there are a lot of cities competing for the OPWC grants, the process can be hard and very intense. He is very thankful to Finance Director Keaton and Law Director Rod Stephan for doing a great job on this year's grant application.

Mayor Seagraves suggested possibly looking into a long range loan to borrow money. Something we could repay over a twenty to twenty-five year loan.

Member Kirklin stated now is a good time for loans due to the current low interest rates and feels if borrowing money is the right solution it could fix multiple issues within the City at once.

Member Letner would like to pursue a deal for the City to purchase the BP station. Giant Oil owns the land. He knows a large amount is being asked to purchase the land but he feels the owner might be willing to work with the City. He also stated that the local airport has eighty acres of land available. If the City could purchase the land then the City could have control of the land.

Member Apgar mentioned how the City of Dayton bought the airport in Vandalia.

Member Garber stated he feels the most challenging aspects for the City to be the need of updates for our firehouse, the creation of a bridge over Wolfcreek to Golden Gate Park and also the updating and maintaining of the Terrace Park Boulevard area.

Member Garber recommended the existing firehouse could be a business incubator. A small business could move into the building and receive six month rent free in order to help get their business started. The fire house on Albert Road would be good for this idea since it is close to other businesses; for example, an office setting or small packaging place.

Member Garber suggested the idea of bike rentals similar to downtown Dayton. He also suggested considering a small amphitheater similar to John Glen Park in Richmond, Indiana. He does not want anything like Huber Heights amphitheater. Just something for small acts maybe even local acts to come in, guests could sit on blankets and programs could be free or only a small charge. Amphitheatre could be at Golden Gate Park or near the theatre and BMX area.

Member Apgar questioned if water, sewer and gas lines are on the computer?

Manager Burkholder stated water, sewer and gas line are not on the computer yet, but hydrants have been given to Choice One.

Member Apgar suggested the need to hire about three more people in the service department. Prioritizing what needs to be done and in what order should be very important. He also sees the need for the City to be doing more on computers.

Member Apgar recommended the City needs a program in order to get more businesses in the City to help replace Parker and what we have lost from the state.

Member Apgar would also like to see the Walker land across the street from the park be used for parking.

Member Cantrell agreed with previous comments on the investment in Terrace Park. By updating and keeping the City maintained we can attract people to want to live here, also the possibility of drawing in a younger crowd.

Member Cantrell detailed the need for the City to have an up-to-date website and social media accounts. She thinks a web page and social media page should be managed daily and could possibly link to the Chamber, Police and Fire departments. People communicate today with social media and she feels our City is behind in the times with online and social media.

Member Cantrell stated she does like the airpark idea and thinks it would be beneficial.

Member Letner believes the airpark would be great based on proximity and be a great fit for what we are looking for.

Member Cantrell suggested to Council that once a quarter they should invite individuals in to talk about what they do in the community. It could be a simple fifteen minute meeting. Council could invite groups like the Community Gardens Club, or the bicycle club in. This would help give insight to help us think outside of the box.

Member Cantrell would also like to see an electronic sign placed in our community or even at Golden Gate Park. The sign could announce events at the park or within the City. Member Duncan worried that an electronic sign could be hazardous to drivers, especially if located near a busy intersection.

Member Kirklin stated she likes Golden Gate Park where the fountain is located and feels it should be left alone because it is like an oasis. It is very relaxing and the sign should go somewhere else.

Mayor Seagraves stated that signage and appearance is crucial. The City's website is currently horrendous; it is an embarrassment to our community. Our firehouse is also in need of much improvement. We need to sell our citizens on proud and progressive. He would like updated computer software and remodeling of our front office. We need to enhance the pride of our citizens. Ongoing maintenance makes increased income tax easier to explain to citizens.

Mayor Seagraves asked if notes from this meeting will be available to review in the future.

Manager Burkholder stated notes from this meeting will be put into order and handed out for everyone to review. He would like to see these notes incorporated into strategic planning.

Public comments

Alan Thrush, of 30 Gaines, commented on no youth involvement in our community. How can we keep Brookville graduates in the city? He would also like the community to be more informed of City meetings. He stated the City needs to set perimeters. Meaning when people enter the City limits they immediately notice a positive appearance of our town. Look at the best parts of town and see if that can help with ideas of what could bring businesses in. Alan suggested updating the Chamber's website as well at the City webpage. He indicated looking into internships with vocational schools or Sinclair Community College. He feels the more young people we can drive into town the better, maybe they will stay long term.

Cecilia Ewers, of the Chamber of Commerce, stated businesses do not feel connected to the City. There is a need for better relationships between the City and businesses. We need to know what our citizens and business owners think. The City needs to show appreciation of businesses and build trust. Image does matter and is a key element.

Member Apgar would like to send invites out to businesses for meetings. He would like plan ahead, put notices in newspaper.

Mayor Seagraves suggested having separate meetings with business owners to enhance retention. He stated that he and Manager Burkholder recently met with Cargill. The owner was shocked to be visited by the Mayor and City Manager. There is no point of contact. Cargill has three to four people a week that come in from headquarters. He is having them stay at the Holiday Inn in Englewood due to the current situation of new ownership at the Holiday Inn Express in Brookville. Cargill is a small company that generates five hundred million dollars a year in sales.

Mayor Seagraves stated he promised Cargill will be visited again next month and then maybe every three months from then on. He would like a focus to be on business relationships.

Manager Burkholder said the meeting with Cargill was very enlightening. Initiative rests on the City to build relationships with businesses.

Member Kirklin agreed it would be a great opportunity for Council to meet with business owners and to even give personal invites would be encouraging to citizens and business owners.

Mayor Seagraves stated he also recently called Kenny Gollahon with Brookville Roadster. Mr. Gollahon was also surprised to hear from the Mayor and was worried something was wrong. This is another example of a business that does millions of dollars of work that has been ignored.

Mrs. Ewers informed the Chamber does have a program called Chamber buddies which is a list of businesses the Chamber reaches out to. The program helps to build relationships and is a unique selling position.

Mrs. Ewers stated she receives a lot of compliments on our City Police and Fire departments.

Chief Fletcher commented that he has recently started mentioning to business owners during fire inspections for them to not to be surprised to hear from our City Manager at some point in the near future. He has gotten some great feedback so far.

Member Kirklin suggested making it a point to invite millennials to future meetings.

Member Garber stated that DP&L obtains good engineers who start through internship programs.


Mayor Seagraves thanked everyone in attendance and stated he appreciates everyone's thoughts.

Member Cantrell questioned if Council meeting dates could be placed on water bills?

Manager Burkholder indicated he feels very excited over the creative ideas addressed and feels unification amongst Council and the Mayor.

Motion to adjourn by Cantrell and second by Kirklin. All yeas, motion carried.


Sonja M. Keaton, Clerk


David E. Seagraves, Mayor