

Alma, Michigan
January 22, 2018
Budget Goal Setting Session

Matthew Schooley, Interim City Manager called the Budget Goal Setting session of the Alma City Commission to order at 5:30 p.m. at the Alma Public Library.

Present: Allman, Ayers, Harrington, Mapes & Nyman.

Absent: Mott & Piccolo.

Also Present: Staff members: Aeric Ripley, Alan Leute, Mark Williams, Kendra Overla, Jake Gulick, Karl Hagen, Bryan Dinwoody, Kathy Roslund, Dave Ringle, Cynthia Michels, Rod Sutton, Bill Pilmore, Daren Johnson, Mike Gridley, Doug Sierakowski and Sara Youngs.

Public: Rosemary Horvath and Ali Barnes.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the Goals for the upcoming FY 2019 Budget year.

All members of the City Commission having been duly notified of the meeting and the business to be transacted thereat, at least 12 hours before the time of the meeting, in accordance with Section 2.13(b) of the Charter of the City of Alma. Public Notice was also given in compliance with Act 267, of the Public Acts of Michigan, 1976.

Matthew Schooley, Interim City Manager presented tonight's Agenda:

Purpose of Goal Setting

Overview of the Process

Core Values - Employee Value Statement

Themes - Discussion

Organizational Effectiveness/Employee Development

Community Engagement

Development & Infrastructure

Finances/Funding

Set Goals for the future of the City of Alma

Purpose of Goal Setting:

Setting goals for any organization is a difficult task – for government agencies, it is even harder.

We are living in a time of unprecedented doubt about government's ability to perform, and now, more than ever before, it is imperative that we openly set goals and demonstrate a path toward achievement and success.

Citizens are relying on our ability to deliver what is needed to sustain and move Alma forward.

We need goals that create incentive for our workforce, but also must resonate with our citizens.

How do we get there?

Take advantage of our own subject matter experts. We have many employees with the City of Alma with loads of great experience. Take advantage of their knowledge and make sure they are part of the process.

Listen to our Citizens. They have a voice. We need to be responsive, if we cannot give them what they

request, we need to explain why. We need to create goals they will understand, especially if the goals will directly impact their lives.

We need to stay connected with the frontline. Spend time talking and listening to the employees in the trenches because they are the ones delivering the services on a day to day basis.

Create goals that are measurable. Validate our efforts and be flexible. We need to work together to do what is right for the Organization.

Overview of the Process:

The Goal setting packets returned developed a feel for how the Commission, Department Heads, and Supervisors felt about the issues and opportunities facing the City of Alma. The Employee Development Team has been talking about the same issues for two months – creating core values and an Employee Value Statement. Certain themes have emerged. We need open discussion about the themes, have the courage to speak, be respectful of others opinions, understand that we are here for the best interests of the City and create an agreed upon list of goals for the City's future.

The City of Alma employees are committed to serving our community by providing a transparent team centered approach. Our work is guided by our core values: L-TRIP

Learning: We continuously seek ways to improve the resources we provide the community.

Teamwork: We work together, communicating clearly and openly, to support each other in a commitment to our common goals.

Respect: We treat citizens and co-workers with courtesy and professionalism.

Integrity: We strive to be honest, transparent, ethical, and consistent in interactions between staff members and with the community.

Pride: We are passionate about our work, proud of the services we provide, and proud of our city.

This Employee Value Statement will be placed and visible in each Department of the City.

Theme #1 Organizational effectiveness/employee development

Either by design or by default, how the City operates internally will be how the City operates externally. We are all part of the same organization including the Commission we have to be a full circle.

We must model the behaviors we want. Employee and Commission development is a high priority. Create a culture where all City personnel are able to freely speak to others about our plans and goals. We need a clear, agreed upon vision for the future from staff and Commission. We must support the plans and speak in one voice especially in the public. Improved and consistent communication will make for improved relations between City Departments. Superintendents and Supervisors input should be an important part of any project that may involve their department. Consistent formal and informal meetings within individual departments and across the board at the administrative level to ensure we are moving forward toward goals and dealing with issues along the way. Creation of a consistent and accessible Policy Manual. It will be a resource that sets the guidelines on how the City operates.

Software systems need to be updated to something that works best for the organization in terms of function and efficiency. Reward "out of the box" thinking by employees. Have a suggestion box. Continue the Employee Development Team – expand to an Employee Engagement Program. Management needs Employee Empowerment Training. Customer service type training for all employees. Implement meaningful employee reviews that actually mean something to both the organization and the employee. Organize informal get togethers for employees so that there is an opportunity to get to know one another. Team building activities. Develop an employee appreciation program. Employees need to feel the pressure to build each other up – this is who we are – not to look for opportunity to tear things down or be negative. Have fun at work!

Don Ayres stated that everyone needs to share their thoughts with one another. Mayor Mapes wants the employees to develop a sense of trust amongst one another. Training should be available for all employees to develop. Roger Allman relayed that the team needs to be a team. Roxann Harrington feels that the employees need to have goals to know and work for; to have a defined vision.

Theme #2: Community Engagement

Change the public perception about the City of Alma government. Important that we remove the negative stigmas that exist and work towards gaining more public trust. Improve communication with the public through a better online presence. Create and implement an active, as opposed to passive, communication plan or strategy for informing the public about issues that we are dealing with as an organization. Understand that we are the decision makers in terms of City Policy, but more importantly we are stewards of this community for the citizens. Involve the community when we are able through “town meetings”. Start from a perspective of “How can we help” and listen. Explain that sometimes there are realities where we have to make decisions that may be perceived as negative due to policy, laws, or future plans. One voice as an organization is critical. Once our plans for the future are set, we need to communicate them to our employees and residents. Create a vision we can all support. As City Staff and Commission we need to have pride in our city – If we show pride, the community will follow.

Citizens in the community have recently demonstrated a desire to improve the City and a willingness to volunteer their time and efforts. Be open to allowing them some ownership in the community by helping. Look to create an internship or internship programs through Alma College that can assist in creating and administering a volunteer program. Talk with City Departments to create “volunteer opportunities” where they can use their time on specific projects. Taking pride on your own time shows the community you care. Use this type of opportunity for different Departments to work together on volunteer projects. Take a section of the city website to promote the rich heritage of the City of Alma. Many people would be surprised to see all of the things that have taken place here. Maybe it will inspire some for the future.

Mayor Mapes would like us to understand a person’s point of view to be empathetic. Matt Schooley agreed.

Mr. Schooley relayed to the Commission that on the City’s Facebook page the comment senction will be turned off. We need to use the page as an information only social media. A Social Medial Policy needs to be developed. Alan Leute felt we need partners in the Community to be supportivfe of the City. Alli Barnes believes that customee service training for employees would help them have the tools to communicate better with citizens and other employees.

Theme #3: Development & Infrastructure

Continue the progress that has been being made in the downtown area. The future of downtown Alma is much brighter than just a few short years ago. Expand the opportunities for downtown apartments. Need to develop a plan to change out the rest of the downtown street lights. Downtown trees are beginning to damage sidewalks and endangering the foundations of many of the historical buildings. Need to formulate a plan for tree replacement in the near future. Downtown parking lots and alleys are in disrepair. There needs to be a plan to address the issue as it is only getting worse.

City parks and bathrooms are in need of very expensive upgrades. We need to actively work with our neighbors to see what can be done with the County parks millage. It is essential that some of those dollars make their way back to our community for these upgrades.

Continue to look at ways to diversify our housing options in the City. Is it time to conduct a housing

study? Continue with the strong presence of our Code Enforcement and Rental Inspection programs. Setting standards for the community and making sure we follow up has proven to be a plus for the community.

The Gemstone Property needs to be more a part of the city. How do we best integrate – sidewalks, bike path.

Continue to work on being a “Redevelopment Ready Community”. To be vibrant and competitive we must be ready for development. Becoming certified will assist the City of Alma in attracting and retaining businesses in the future.

Work on a way to leverage the talent and resources of Alma College for both our organization and economic activity. Alma College is one of the most sought after undergraduate degrees in America. We need to continue to work together for the best interest of both the City and College.

Push the promotion of the Riverfront Property, as well as other city-owned properties.

Work on obtaining some sort of revenue from the large amount of tax-exempt entities in the City.

Street projects need to be completed in all phases (water, sewer, storm) whenever a road is open. We need to look at dropping sidewalks from every street reconstruction project. In some cases it does not make sense. Study condition of current infrastructure to have a realistic/encompassing list of needs for the future.

Safety and security of City Hall needs to be addressed. Times have changed – government buildings need to be more secure and less accessible to general public. City Hall configuration for employees needs to be analyzed and changed.

Don Ayres suggested that the Downtown Street Lights be done in stages 2 at a time till the project is finished.

Daren Johnson asked if the Code Enforcement Officer could include illegal storm and sanitary sewer connections in his inspections of rental property. David Ringle noted that without State funding to remove the illegal connection realistically it can not be done at this time.

Doug Sierakowski asked if the tax-exempt entities could expand their properties to develop tax paying entities.

Mayor Mapes would like to see Jerome Road and the Gemstone properties developed in a way to make them more apart of the City.

Theme #4: Funding

The current fund balance in the general fund is enough to pay current expenses for 269 days, is this acceptable?

We need to implement sustainable strategies to increase, or at least, stabilize revenue for the city.

Increase revenues (tax, special assessments, grants)

Manipulate resources (reassess how we do our jobs, cooperation, staffing)

Continue to improve our accounting and financial accuracy and reporting

Perform cost/performance analysis to evaluate our current business practices.

What is an appropriate fund balance for the City of Alma? How do we best measure (percentage, days of operation).

Policy with major input from the Commission to give staff guidance.

Budget amendments need to be as current as possible.

Health Care costs are enormous. How do we best navigate?

Lean resources (people) cannot be an excuse. We have to be creative and better plan and prioritize.

The community has said that the parks are a priority. How do we obtain the necessary funding?

Exploration of combing specific city services with partners.

Don Ayres asked if the Special Assessment for services should be used.

Mayor Mapes wants to investigate the cost of the County Millages and is it possible to get some of those funds back to the City.

Interim City Manager Matt Schooley asked those in attendance if they would come up with 5 goals that are measurable and realistic. We have to be ready to plan the plan to set us on the right path.

Alan Leute finalized the meeting with reading the prologue from the "Keeper of the Stream" by John Ortberg. He quoted a line from the prologue "One thing at a time will make us prosper, make us grow."

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Gregory S. Mapes, Mayor

Sheila Letourneau, City Clerk