

SPECIAL MEETING (STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION) OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAGINAW, MICHIGAN, HELD FRIDAY, JANUARY 4, 2008 AT 5:30 P.M. AT THE SAGINAW CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, 515 N. WASHINGTON AVENUE, SAGINAW, MICHIGAN.

INTRODUCTIONS/SESSION OVERVIEW

City Manager Darnell Earley welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. He reviewed the agenda for the two-day session, which included a presentation on Communication by Heidi Bolger, of The Rehmann Group on Friday and presentations on Saturday from Jeremy Newberg of Capital Access on the City's Revitalization Plan and a on the City's Audit from Jerry Deslover of The Rehmann Group.

(Dinner was served at 5:40 p.m.)

ROLL CALL

At 6:00 p.m., Mayor Joyce Seals called the meeting to order. The following Councilpersons were present: Larry Coulouris, Daniel Fitzpatrick, Amanda Kitterman-Miller, Amos O'Neal, Paul Virciglio, Andrew Wendt and Mayor Joyce Seals-7.

Absent: Councilpersons Gregory Branch and William Federspiel-2.

Also in attendance were the following staff members: Diane Humphrey-Snowden (Administrative Assistant to the City Manager), Tom Fancher (City Attorney), Diane Herman (City Clerk), Tom Darnell (Director of Public Services), Odail Thorns (Economic Development Director), Dale Berglund (Employee Services Director), Beth Church (Personnel Generalist), Ralph Carter (Labor Relations Administrator), Gerald Cliff (Police Chief), Ric Longoria (Fire Training/Safety Officer), representing Chief E. Holland and Jay Beelman (Information Services Director).

Absent: Dale Stanton, Finance Director.

PRESENTATION: TAKING COMMUNICATION FROM GOOD TO GREAT

Heidi Bolger, of The Rehmann Group, began her presentation by expressing the need for all to have well defined roles, i.e. who is responsible for what. This gives clear expectations and a better flow of communication.

Council Roles:

- Settling Policy and establishing goals for the City.
- Staying in-tune to constituents
- Trusting and working with your City Manager to accomplish goals
- Developing sound strategies to keep the City strong

Department Head Roles:

- Draw on their technical and management expertise to carry out City policies and goals as guided and overseen by the City Manager.

City Manager Roles:

- Acts as the CEO of the City leading the development and execution of strategy and policies as guided and overseen by the Council, serving as a supervisor and coach to department heads.

She said that Council lives in the political arena, the Department Heads do their best to live outside the political arena and the City Manager strives to be politically neutral.

*(The group broke up into teams and was given a scenario on a complaint of teens in an abandoned house. They were to decide what would happen with this information.)
(At 6:30 p.m., Councilman Branch arrived and took his seat.)*

The teams regrouped and shared their opinions, which slightly varied between groups in who should be contacted, i.e. City Manager, Inspections, 9-1-1, Police Department and City Clerk. There was considerable discussion on responding to the complainant. City Clerk Diane Herman noted that the majority of the complaints were anonymous for fear of retaliation. She also noted that many complaints, though addressed, are not recorded as such in the HTE Code Enforcement module due to lack of staff. She said if someone calls back to see the status of their complaint, her staff looks to see who was assigned the matter and gives the complainant that individual's phone number. If the complainant's contact information was provided, Councilman Coulouris believed the complainant should receive a response. He also said it was better to have the department personnel respond to the complainant rather than the Clerk because that person would have first-hand knowledge of how the matter was handled, and would be in a better position to answer any additional questions. City Clerk Diane Herman noted that her office receives thousands of complaints every year.

(The group broke into their teams again and discussed an ideal flow of communication to get the issue resolved.)

Upon regrouping, it was decided that if the complaint was made to a Councilperson, the City Manager should be in the loop. If the complaint is of a serious nature, then 9-1-1 should be called directly. It was agreed that all complaints should go through the City Clerk's Office so there is a record of them.

The process of policy change was also discussed and an example was used of raising the \$2,000 spending limit on purchases. In such a case, Council would refer the issue to the Charter Review Committee, who would review the issue and make a recommendation to Council, who in turn would approve a proposed Charter Amendment and then the matter is taken to the voters.

Heidi then stressed the need for good listening, a good communication skill. She noted that a person could listen four times faster than anyone can talk.

She also discussed communicating with the media and the importance of Council members and Department Heads contacting the City Manager prior to making public statements on behalf of the City. She noted that personal comments made publicly might appear to be the City's opinion. There was some discussion as to why the City is targeted by the news.

In conclusion she stated that good communication would benefit the City by creating greater efficiency, enhanced trust, strengthening confidence of constituents, increased effectiveness and provide a unified front.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:37 p.m., Councilman Coulouris moved to adjourn the meeting.
Adopted unanimously.

Diane M. Herman
City Clerk