

City Council Planning Retreat

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January 26, 2007

Good Afternoon,

Enclosed are the materials for our Council Planning Retreat scheduled for Wednesday, January 31 at 7 p.m. I hope we can use this time to better define our top priorities for 2007, and outline the strategies we will use to accomplish our goals for 2007.

As much as we would all like, we can't afford to do everything – so if we're going to be successful in 2007, we will have to focus on our critical priorities. We have many important issues facing us, so choosing the "vital few" will not be easy. To help that process, I've included a number of handouts for you to consider.

To start things off, I have provided a summary of the city's organizational and strategic framework. The purpose of this information is to remind everyone of the roles we play as Council and staff in achieving the community's goals. With that in mind, I have also enclosed a number of reference materials that previous Kent City Councils have used to define the roles of Council and staff. In addition, I've enclosed what I thought was a very good guide from the City of Sunnyvale California that includes a practical checklist that seemed like it might be useful for all of us.

Once we understand our roles, we can begin to focus on identifying the strategies we can use to achieve our goals in 2007. To help that discussion, I've listed the vision and mission statements, as well as the sustainability goals, adopted by previous councils. I thought these were important because whatever we decide is most important for us to focus on in 2007, we have check against these core statements of our purpose. In other words, as we consider items for 2007, we have to ask ourselves how well they fit within our existing policy directives.

On the second page, titled "Council Goals and Priorities," you will find the summary of each of your top priorities for 2007. I've shown the results both individually and in summary, ranked from the highest votes to the lowest. To give you a little perspective, I also added charts that showed the Council's priorities in 2002 and 2000. I thought it might be helpful to see how priorities have evolved as we try to understand where we're at in 2007.

Since this process is all about achieving the community's goals, I've also included a few excerpts from various citizen surveys that were done in 1999, 2003 and 2007. Again, this data is only offered as insight into how citizen perceptions and preferences have changed or remained the same.

You will also find a draft agenda, and suggested guidelines for your consideration as we head into our strategic planning session.

I'll see you Wednesday night.

Yours truly,



January 12, 2007

No ordinary council retreat

Dave Levinthal is managing to stay awake. He reports the following.

Today is the Dallas City Council's annual planning retreat, an all-day affair at the Dallas Arboretum. The bottom line: Staff members give elected officials updates on key city priorities -- crime, development, neighborhood quality of life issues, the Trinity River, among others -- and council members then discuss how to do better in the new year.

Ninety minutes into the proceedings:

* Council members and top city staff are sitting around tables in groups of five. No assigned seating, but Mayor Laura Miller and Mayor Pro Tem Don Hill -- not exactly best buds -- are sitting next to each other.

* There are about 50 officials here. At this moment eight can be seen checking their Blackberry wireless e-mail devices.

* Council member Maxine Thornton-Reese (who has been sick this week) appears to be the first council member to doze off.

* Council member Angela Hunt is snapping pictures with her digital camera. Seizing the opportunity, council member Mitchell Rasansky just gave City Manager Mary Suhm bunny ears.

* After the standard grammatical conjunctions, prepositions and articles, the most used word this morning? "Strategic."

Several council members quietly acknowledge that they don't look forward to these sessions.

But in recent years, they have been fruitful. In 2004, for example, council members used their retreat to establish the five citywide priorities -- economic development, public safety, staff accountability, neighborhood quality of life issues and the Trinity River -- that have guided their priorities and decisions ever since. In 2005, the council decided at its annual retreat to pare council committees from nine to five.