

1. Work Session Agenda And Packet

Documents:

[OCTOBER 5, 2020 WORK SESSION AGENDA.PDF](#)
[OCTOBER 5 2020 WORK SESSION PACKET.PDF](#)

City of Excelsior
Notice of City Council Work Session
of the Excelsior City Council

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Excelsior will hold its Work Session on October 5, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via a telephonic and/or electronic meeting. The agenda for the meeting is attached hereto.

In accordance with the requirements of Minn. Stat. Section 13D.021, the Mayor, the city manager, and the city attorney have determined that an in-person meeting is not practical or prudent because of the "COVID-19 Health Pandemic" emergency declared under Chapter 12 of the Minnesota Statutes. Due to the measures necessary to contain and mitigate the impacts of the Pandemic Emergency, it has been determined that attendance at the regular meeting location by members of the public is not feasible and that the physical presence at the regular meeting location by at least one member of the body, chief legal counsel or chief administrative officer is not feasible. Therefore, all staff and City Council members will be participating by telephone or other electronic means.

Members of the public may attend the work session by joining via Zoom either online or by telephone at:

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Meeting ID: 848 6296 9003

City of Excelsior
City Council Work Session

Agenda

October 5, 2020

5:30 p.m.

(Please Note: Times Listed Are Approximate)

1. Call to Order/Roll Call
2. Agenda Approval
3. Staffing Study
4. Recommendations on Delegation Parameters and Making City Council Meetings More Efficient
5. Adjournment

Note: The purpose of a Work Session is for the Council to discuss matters informally and in greater detail than is allowed at formal Council meetings. All meetings of the Council including Work Sessions will be open to the public. While the privilege of participating in these discussions is generally limited to the Council, staff, and consultants, the Mayor may open a discussion from the floor.

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MEMORANDUM

Work Session Item 3

Re: Staffing Study

Date: October 5, 2020

To: City Council

From: Kristi Luger, City Manager

In July, the Council approved a proposal from the Waldron Company to complete a staffing study. Craig Waldron from the Waldron Company will be at the work session to present the staffing study and answer any questions.

Staffing Study

Introduction

The Waldron Company was hired to analyze Excelsior's staffing considerations with a particular emphasis on overall effectiveness, innovation, and preparation for the future. One of the themes that constantly surfaced related to the challenge of being a small city with BIG city expectations.

In order to gain a substantive understanding in terms of the dynamics of the situation, the consultant utilized a basic qualitative approach that entailed interviewing key individuals and primary participants within the City. The following were interviewed:

- The City Manager
- The Mayor
- The Four Council Members
- The City Attorney
- The City Engineer
- The Events Planner
- The Public Works Director
- The City Planner
- The City Clerk
- The Former Finance Director
- The Former City Planner

This report includes a discussion of the primary issues, which should be noted, are very much INTERRELATED and significantly impact each other. The final section of the report involves suggestions from the consultant with respect to future action.

Issue Discussion

1. Enhanced staff capacity:

There is a significant desire to have a more robust staff capacity to meet the future needs of the City. There is a desire to develop more innovative, can do, and futuristic thinking on the part of the staff. To move forward, it is critical that Council clearly define what this new robust and capacity scenario means to them and that everyone subsequently buys into this revised approach and will support it in the future.

Again, this main theme that surfaced essentially asked whether the staff was thinking creatively and are they in turn, leading in a creative and innovative fashion. The consultant heard several

times that the Council would like to dial up overall staff performance and capacity. This CAN be accomplished.

It appears to the consultant that the current lineup of staff is sound and can certainly meet the future needs and desires of the City Council WITH some rebalancing of the day-to-day work requirements, that now limits the capacity to focus on bigger and far more important priorities.

2. Turnover and staff retention:

Turnover and staff retention were mentioned as a very critical issue. A number of areas have been clearly identified as impacting turnover. They are:

- There are simply too many meetings that appear to go on too long, creating staff burn out (and maybe Council).
- The office working conditions are sub optimal.
- The upper level staff truly wants to work on significant, substantive projects. However, staff is constantly saddled with the day to day whirlwind that impacts one's ability to concentrate, to complete work tasks, and to allocate the time to interesting issues and projects, which in turn keeps staff happy and engaged. It was often referenced that staff does not get to necessarily use their education, their talents and basically do what they are trained to do. The staff often feels micromanaged and periodically second guessed by Council, thus the mutual trust and support between Council and staff needs to be enhanced. At times, the staff has stated that they believe they're facing a "gotcha" mode and they would really appreciate more public support.
- The four-day work week was mentioned as being extremely positive as it continues to draw individuals Excelsior. This is truly a competitive edge for the city.

In reviewing the salary survey, it also appears that that some modifications overtime would be in order for two critical positions. The City Manager salary and the Public Works Director salary are not particularly competitive. Planning and Finance are also below average however not as much, and probably still in a competitive range.

The number of staff members was also analyzed in the context of other communities and employees per 1,000 citizens. After adjusting for the regional police and fire arrangement, a total staff level of 13 to 14 employees is reasonable.

Consultant suggestions:

1. As previously pointed out, the need and desire to develop a more enhanced staff, is very much tied into the day-to-day whirlwind, and the longer City Council meetings. In order to enhance the staff capacity to meet the needs of the City Council, the current staff has to be allowed to concentrate on the more significant Council priorities, and it needs to be freed up from the day-to-day customer traffic and small administrative items.
2. As a first critical step it is recommended that the new part-time clerk position be extended full-time and an individual be hired who has the skills to be an effective customer service assistant who can handle and manage the walk-in, or customer needs, while still being able to assist other staff members on various projects.
3. It is also critical to immediately analyze the City Hall working conditions. It is suggested that a space analyst be brought in immediately to develop a remodeling/space improvement plan to improve the working conditions. To meet the higher-level needs of the Council, staff needs the ability to spread out, and have a certain level of privacy to concentrate and accomplish critical tasks. At some point a new City Hall should be considered, but for the short term, a space analysis with remodeling to enhance working conditions is important.
4. As previously mentioned, two of the department salaries are far below a competitive basis and should be brought up to a competitive average.
5. The Council meetings should be streamlined as much as possible as this an area of significant staff burn out and possibly the Council. Some of the areas that the consultant would suggest to expedite City Council meetings, which essentially agree with a previous analysis from the Manager are the following:
 - Maintain the integrity of the consent agenda as much as possible. If a Councilmember has major questions about a consent item, it is suggested the staff be contacted before the meeting to ascertain if the item can be handled at that level, as opposed to the item being pulled and being discussed extensively at the meeting.

- If there are additional materials that the Council would like to be included as part of future agenda items that facilitate enhanced decision making, they should be identified and always included in the packet if these are ongoing Council needs. In addition to ongoing Council information needs, other items needed as part of a special, unique, or difficult agenda issue should also be requested as part of the packet.
- Decisions should be made on issues and not continued if it all possible. Research on effective Council meetings points out the problems that continuations can cause. In one of the memos the City Manager has discussed the multiple touch rule, thus the Council may want to consider more extended work sessions that facilitate more detailed work and subsequently, save the Council meetings for more of a focus on action.
- It is the consultants understanding that a process (Dale and Lou Committee) has started with respect to what does or does not need to actually go to the Council. It is suggested the mission be expanded to include a comprehensive analysis of what is more administrative in nature and what could be handled by staff to simply be an administrative process to subsequently be ratified by the council.

For example, Roseville uses a minor variance process with respect to residential requests that is totally administrative. Oakdale has used a design standards process to expedite critical development projects. Both approaches extensively use staff administrative processes. This allows the Council meetings to be action oriented and focused on big ticket policy items. It is appropriate to make this a major effort on the part of this new committee, potentially using the City Attorney and the City Manager. They should complete an exhaustive analysis with Dale and Lou, of what items are more administrative in nature and do not need to go to Council and what items Council would be comfortable in delegating down to the staff.

- When a Councilmember has questions that are essentially unique to that particular person, and not necessarily his/her colleagues, it is recommended that staff be contacted before the meeting in order to address the issue and resolve any concerns beforehand. Also, when other unique issues may be occurring, staff should be aware of them by Council and have the opportunity to ascertain if these issues can be resolved before the council meeting.

The Pareto principle applies here where 80% of the issues should be able to be resolved before any meeting versus the other 20%.

- An effort should be made during a Council meeting not to micromanage issues and focus on the larger policy issues as opposed to the smaller items, which again should be delegated down to the staff.
6. As part of these solutions, if implemented, staff has to be absolutely prepared to step up, pivot, and meet the Council's expanded expectations as the Council makes the effort to remove critical staff from the day-to-day whirlwind. The City Council is fortunate to have an experienced Manager at the helm who is very well respected by other communities and other managers in the profession, and had one of the best mentors, Scott Neal, of Edina. She has the capacity to pivot and ensure staff accountability and results as part of this pivot.
 7. Again, the staff, once freed from the whirlwind, absolutely has to be accountable to address the Council's priorities and its vision. In that context, the Council and staff should take extensive time to clearly define and agree on the top 3 to 5 priorities as part of this pivot. Also, as previously mentioned, it is critical to define the Council expectations in terms of creativity and innovation. In turn, it's the Manager's responsibility in working with the Department Heads to develop a clear plan of action to ensure everybody is in sync.
 8. It is recommended the priorities in the workplan need to be clearly measurable, with timelines and the respective staff who is responsible to meet these concerns. The Manager is certainly able to take charge of this process. Again, it is critical to understand that what gets measured gets done, thus the priorities must have a clear capacity to measure progress. It is recommended that the Manager and Council discuss the progress towards these top priorities on a quarterly basis. The Manager could also make a discussion of the progress and the work effort to meet Council's priorities part of every staff meeting.

It cannot be emphasized enough that once staff is given more flexibility, that the next level of Council expectations are clearly enunciated, understood and supported by staff and Council and are in sync with respect to moving forward in an accountable fashion. Again, the Council's understanding, perspective, and definition of the staff effort to become more creative and innovative needs to be clearly understood, defined, and supported by all salient actors, and thus becomes integrated as part of the ongoing work plan.

9. Future staff enhancement:

- In the future, as more significant needs crop up in the City, there are methods to enhance staff capacity beyond simply “adding” more staff. One model entails the use of consultants where the Manager is provided a reasonable amount of consulting funds. The Manager then uses the consultants in the context of the various Council priorities. For example, if park and recreation is the significant area of concentration for two years, the Manager can hire specialists to work on those projects over the next two years. However, should the priorities change for example, to redevelopment, the Manager can deploy specialists that can concentrate on the newest priority, while cutting back on the park and recreation consultants. This allows the City to move quickly between priorities with qualified specialists without having to staff up in certain areas and not being burdened by existing staff that no longer represent City priorities. In this approach, city government is allowed to move much quicker and efficiently.
- Another option to enhance capacity involves the use of interns. In this context the City can secure masters levels students to work on various priority projects. Should the City gain a reputation as an excellent community to complete an internship, Excelsior will have the opportunity to bring in the best and brightest students to work on various projects. This also provides the Manager and staff the opportunity to view certain interns as a potential employee if a position surfaces at a later time. A number of cities have had significant success with respect to interns where they were actually hired after their internship as the city wanted to hold onto the outstanding talent. In the case of Oakdale, former interns actually came back to the City, one as the replacement for the CD Director and another one came back to replace the City Administrator.
- Over time, volunteers can also work on special projects or fill various capacities. The basic problem with volunteers is that it’s extremely hard to manage them or ensure absolute accountability as they are not filling an actual position and not receiving compensation. City staff has to rely on the good will and work ethic of volunteers, which sometimes does not meet expectations.

10. Finally, turnover was a major issue that surfaced in the discussions. Here are a few suggestions from the consultant with respect to turnover:

- Bring the compensation up to the average level for the City Manager and Public Works Director.
- Bring in the full-time customer clerk to release top level staff from the day-to-day whirlwind and have them concentrate on the areas that interest them: higher order projects and the items that are critical to the Council.
- Continue the four-day work week in that it creates a very significant competitive edge for the City.
- Update the working conditions.
- Work to grow the trust between Council and Staff.
- Expedite the Council meetings.
- Avoid micromanagement at the Council level, while focusing on policy instead.
- Provide education and growth opportunities. Oakdale offered to pay the tuition on the relevant next level degree for upper level employees. This was a huge incentive and substantially increased staff capacity.
- Continue on-boarding processes as well as thoughtful exit interviews which can be used as a helpful learning tool.
- Recognize and reward sound performance when it occurs.
- Develop succession manuals. When a key staff member is considering leaving, have them prepare a manual that discusses what they really do versus the job description, what the most critical tasks are that they perform and how to do them, and who should they be sure and talk to and connect with as part of that as part of the position. This approach avoids the loss of significant institutional knowledge during a period of turnover and facilitates the on boarding process.
- There is one other approach utilized by a number of cities that Excelsior may want to consider within the context of turnover. A number of communities have decided to

become outstanding training centers for high quality staff. They fully realize they are not going to be retaining top level staff for the long haul. They seek high-performing entry level or mid-level employees and help train them to the fullest extent possible and develop their skills knowing full well that they will eventually leave the organization. This has been a very successful model for a community like Falcon Heights, or some of the cities around Minnesota that border Mankato - Minnesota State University where they are able to get a top level students right out of the Urban Studies program. They get great entry level talent and are able to utilize that talent for a number of years before the employee moves on to a larger community. Once a community gains a reputation of being an outstanding training ground, it is able to recruit top entry level and mid-level staff because of the outstanding opportunity that the community offers.

- Make sure new employees are a sound cultural fit for the community and the current staff.

Overall conclusion:

In the consultant's opinion it is very positive that Council and staff took this effort to review what can be done to meet the future needs of the City and move to a higher level of capacity. It is my opinion that this next pivot for the City is clearly obtainable through a number of reasonable/doable modifications and extensive accountability requirements. I truly believe the Council and City staff are of the right mindset and skill level to successfully accomplish this endeavor.



MEMORANDUM

Work Session Item 4 – Delegation

Re: Parameters and Making Meetings Efficient

Date: October 5, 2020

To: City Council

From: Kristi Luger, City Manager

Summary

Councilmembers Dierking and Kurschner volunteered to work with City Manager Luger on setting some delegation parameters and are recommending the following actions:

- Staff will make decisions on items that they believe are suitable for them to do so with an email to the Council summarizing those actions.
- The Park and Recreation Commission will handle any minor decisions regarding The Commons and Excelsior-Studer Park that do not have major budget implications.
- The Planning Commission will make final decisions on variance applications and the City Council will serve as the appeal board.
- Allow public comment to only occur during Open Forum or during a public hearing.
- Conduct the public hearing process and any items that will elicit strong community interest over the course of two meetings.

Full Description

At the June 29th work session, the Council discussed various protocols to make our City Council meetings more efficient; one of the suggestions was to delegate more work to staff.

Councilmembers Dierking and Kurschner volunteered to work with City Manager Luger (the Committee) on setting some delegation parameters.

Delegating More Items to Staff and the Commissions

Instead of coming up with specific items that should be delegated to staff and the Commissions, the Committee came up with general parameters:

- When staff believes it is suitable for them to make a decision without formal Commission and/or Council input, an email will be sent to the Council summarizing those actions.
- The Park and Recreation Commission will handle any minor decisions regarding The Commons and Excelsior-Studer Park that do not have major budget implications. For example, the request to post senior class pictures in The Commons would be reviewed and decided on by the Park and Recreation Commission. The Council will be notified of any meaningful actions.

- The Planning Commission will make final decisions on variance applications and the City Council will serve as the appeal board if an applicant wants to appeal a decision made by the Planning Commission.

These recommendations have not been presented to any of the Commissions. If the Council is interested in delegating more items to the Commissions, staff would run these recommendations by the Commissions for their input.

Making the City Council Meetings More Efficient

The Committee also spent some time discussing additional methods for making the City Council meetings more efficient and asked staff to brainstorm some ideas that they have seen work in other communities. The Committee found the following ideas intriguing:

- Allow the public to comment on any item during Open Forum and only allow comments during Open Forum. The public would not be allowed to comment on items throughout the remainder of the agenda unless the item is a public hearing. The City Council meetings are for conducting business, which can be difficult to accomplish if there is too much interaction with the public throughout the meeting.
- Conduct the public hearing process and any items that will elicit strong community interest over the course of two meetings. See 'Determining Levels of Community Engagement Table'.
 - Meeting #1 – Council takes public comment but is not expected to make a decision (unless there is no interest from the public).
 - Meeting #2 – Council does not take any additional public comment and is expected to make a decision.

This format allows Councilmembers to think about the comments made from the public and follow-up with any members of the public and/or staff before a decision is made. The City of Edina has recently moved to this format and has found it to help their public hearing process.

- Staff memos should focus on the decision at hand and not belabor past meetings. If there is relevant information in past packets, staff should indicate the dates of packets for reference information.

General Suggestions

The Committee also heard the following suggestions from staff, which may be beneficial for the full Council to hear:

- Adopt more of a trial-and-error mentality instead of spending months trying to make an ordinance or a policy perfect. The best way to know whether an ordinance or policy will work is to try it out. For example, the Council was incredibly nimble with items related to COVID-19.
- Provide staff with specific questions/suggestions/feedback on their recommendations instead of asking for more options to streamline future discussions and staff's time related to following up on an item.

Council Action

The Council should discuss the Committee's recommendation and provide any feedback.

Determining Levels of Community Engagement Table

Levels of Engagement	Indicators for Engagement Level	Project Examples
<p>Communicate</p> <p>Keep community informed on project updates, changes, and progress through the lifecycle of the project</p> <p>No Meetings Required</p>	<p>Project would not interrupt service and/or traffic for an extended period (typically < one month)</p> <p>Residents and/or businesses would not be disrupted for an extended period (typically < 6 months)</p> <p>Project is a direct replacement of infrastructure, materials or other in the same location</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street or parking lot paving • Utility line replacement • Facility maintenance impacting operations/programs
<p>Consult</p> <p>Keep community informed, listen to views, and provide feedback on how the input influenced the project and/or decisions</p> <p>Commission Meeting(s) (if needed)</p>	<p>Project addresses a public health and/or safety concern</p> <p>Project would not cause loss of or significant change to facility or service to the community</p> <p>Project changes may be triggered by legislative, regulatory, or policy requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New fire hydrant installation • Reconfiguration of roadways • Renovation of athletic courts • Replacement of athletic lights, playground, picnic shelter, or trails
<p>Involve</p> <p>Share how concerns/views were reflected in analyses and/or solutions; share how inputs influenced the final decision/project</p> <p>Minimum of Two Council Meetings*</p> <p>(One for public input and one for decision)</p> <p>* Decision made be made in one meeting if there is no community interest</p>	<p>Project would fundamentally change the size, capacity, and/or intensity of use of space, roadway, etc.</p> <p>Project would cause loss of or significant change to a facility or service</p> <p>Project could have significant impacts on nearby residents and/or businesses (health/safety, traffic, parking, loss of mature trees, adverse construction impacts)</p> <p>Strong community interest (support, concern, differing views, opposition) anticipated for project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major reconfiguration of roadways • Capital maintenance projects where amenities may potentially reorient or change location • New location for athletic field lights
<p>Collaborate</p> <p>Seek community input in partnership with stakeholders</p> <p>Multiple Commission and Council Meetings</p>	<p>Project not a capital maintenance or operations project</p> <p>Multiple commissions and/or advisory boards would typically provide input on this type of project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating master plans • New public facilities

Emergency and Repair Work (does not require an engagement plan): Utility line maintenance, routine signage (including replacement), routine restriping, routine park maintenance, streetlight maintenance, minor facility maintenance, pothole and patching, and fire hydrant repair/replacement.