Mayor – Sandy Sanders

City Administrator – Ray Gosack

City Clerk – Sherri Gard

Board of Directors

Ward 1 – Keith D. Lau
Ward 2 – Andre' Good
Ward 3 – Mike Lorenz
Ward 4 – George Catsavis
At Large Position 5 – Tracy Pennartz
At Large Position 6 – Kevin Settle
At Large Position 7 – Don Hutchings

AGENDA~ Summary

Fort Smith Board of Directors

Brainstorming Meeting

May 18, 2015 ~ 6:00 p.m.

Fire Station No. 1

200 North 5th

~ Dinner served at 5:30 p.m. ~

CALL TO ORDER

- All present
- Mayor Sandy Sanders presiding

1. Brainstorm
   See attached summary.

ADJOURN

Memo

To: Ray Gosack, City Administrator

From: Jeff Dingman, Deputy City Administrator

Date: 5/28/2015

Re: Notes from May 18, 2015 Board Brainstorming Meeting

The following topics were discussed at the Board of Directors' Brainstorming Session on May 18, 2015, held in the training room at Fire Station No. 1. Items listed with an "FFS" designation relate to sections in the Future Fort Smith updated comprehensive plan, adopted by the Board in December, 2014.

1. Homeless Campus & Budget Priorities. As we move into our projections for the FY2016 city budget, there was discussion about lining up Outside Agency Funding and other funding allocations with the Board's stated budget objectives. For several years, the Board has identified support of the Old Fort Homeless Coalition and the effort to create a campus of services for the homeless and disadvantaged in Fort Smith. Agencies that serve the homeless population, but state that they will not join or offer services at the campus being supported and promoted as a Board priority, may not be considered for Outside Agency Funding via the city's operating budget. (FFS: HN-2.4.1)

    a. It is a services issue. The Board has determined that the best way to offer services is to locate as many services as possible in one location. The leveraging of public funds available for such services to operate is a way to encourage service providers to participate in the project.

    b. There is a need to communicate such intent with the funding committees and the Outside Agencies at the front end of the funding allocation process for the FY2016 budget.

2. Whirlpool Property. Is it appropriate for the city to determine a vision for this property, and work to promote zoning and/or regulatory provisions to encourage a certain type of redevelopment? Specifically mentioned was interest in promoting the area as a technology-based commercial area, rather than a more traditional manufacturing-based industrial park. Perhaps initiate economic development incentives or public investment initiatives in technology infrastructure to encourage high tech commerce. Although we may be limited to traditional types of tools such as IRB's or public infrastructure support, we may be able to craft an incentive policy based on a particular pay-range for jobs created, rather than try to target a specific type of industry. (We must also recognize that this property is privately owned, and we must be careful about creating regulatory restrictions that impact what the private owner is able to do with the property.) (FFS: ED-3.1)

3. Infill redevelopment of vacant land. With a large percentage (as much as 25%) of property within the city limits considered as "vacant" land, what can be done to encourage infill development (or redevelopment) of such properties? Analysis of this issues depends somewhat on clarification of how much "vacant" land is determined to be unavailable for development based on regulatory (floodplain/floodway) considerations or based on ownership (large tracts held by private ownership, KCS RR for example). Certainly there are many now vacant lots throughout the downtown and older neighborhoods where infill development would be more cost effective than sprawling development. One way the city can control that is by annexation policies and policies regarding the expansion of

utilities, particularly sewer services. (FFS: HN-3.3) A redevelopment overlay district has been proposed for the area north of downtown, between the historic district and the riverfront, but no funding has been allocated to the creation of such a tool.

4. Communication of City Services. Perhaps the city doesn't do a very good job at communicating information and services to the citizenry (the recent initiative on the street sales tax/trails allocation issue was used as an example, saying the city didn't do a good job in explaining the issues, resulting in a "vote of no confidence"). Raises the question to some Board members of whether we are communicating the right things, and whether our selected means of communication is effective.

    a. Suggested that the Board and staff look at city communication from top to bottom. Is our website effective in providing information on city services (commercial building permit example). There isn't a comprehensive online process for the items we include on the website, such a building permits. Also mentioned that it can be complicated to find specific items…the budget document was noted as one example. Constant correspondence between public relations interests and the IT staff for constant tweaking to update and improve the website, including what is current and relevant on the front page.

    b. Lots of people confused the drainage element of the street sales tax question with the wet weather sanitary sewer issues. Not the same thing, but the Board's feeling is that much of the citizenry doesn't distinguish the difference, and that reflects on how we communicate those issues.

    c. Social media. The city got "kicked around" on social media during this recent election. Should there be a concerted effort to respond to issues, misinformation and questions on social media? (Must be careful, especially on election items, due to the state statutes on using public resources on election issues).

    d. Public Relations. Should we evaluate hiring a public relations firm to manage our general public relations output and specifically handle our social media traffic and output? We need repetition in our output, and social media isn't the only method. Perhaps we need a more aggressive stance in defending the city's positions or policies, because how we communicate problems seems to be hurting us.

    e. How would we get specific criteria for fueling the outsourced public relations discussion? What outcomes do we expect, and why would an outsourced provider be able to do that better than the city's staff? Perhaps an evaluation of what peer cities do to promote themselves and relate policies, programs, and initiatives to their citizens would be helpful in this determination.

5. Water as an economic development incentive. Our investment in a sustainable water supply should be used more aggressively as an economic development tool, specifically targeting water-dependent industries that are currently located in areas of the country where water availability is becoming more and more questionable. (FFS: ED-4, ED-8)

    a. Can a specific policy be crafted and advanced to the Chamber of Commerce and the AEDC to use on our behalf? These entities already know of our favorable water situation, and do use it in promoting Fort Smith, but it is currently done more as a reaction to ED inquiries. Is there something we should be doing that is more proactive?

    b. Evaluate development of a (10-minute?) video touting Fort Smith's potential based on land availability, water availability, low cost of living, geographical location as it relates to

transportation, and whatever other relevant factors that should be used in order to attract industry.

c. "Ease of entry" for industry and development. Back to enhancing the availability of robust information regarding permits & processes on the website. Find whatever is considered to be "barriers to entry" and eliminate them.

6. Use of Extra-territorial Jurisdiction. Is the city using this to its advantage in order to encourage desired development? Currently, the city only uses ETJ regulation to effect land-use regulation only, and not to specify infrastructure design standards, although that is allowed by state law if the city so chooses. As the water provider for most surrounding areas, we do have a measure of control over water infrastructure design. We do not regulate street or road design standards in the ETJ, which could prove problematic in the future if/when those areas are annexed. Initiating specific design standards in the ETJ areas could have the desirable impact of encouraging infill development in areas where public infrastructure is already available. (FFS: FLU 1.3)

7. Reuse or Redevelopment of the northern portion of the city, particularly. Many areas on the north side of the city are ripe for redevelopment and re-use. (FFS: HN-1, CCD-1)

   a. The Midland Blvd corridor, specifically, has a lot of areas that need to be redeveloped. Are there incentives or development initiatives that could be implemented in order to encourage such activity? Other major corridors such as Towson Avenue and Wheeler Avenue were also mentioned.

   b. Challenges included buy-in from property owners. Tools such as Business Improvement Districts are available, but require interest from the property owners. There are certainly new pockets of neighborhood pride and minor improvement by property owners, but it is perhaps not yet widespread enough for a more comprehensive effort to be successful.

   c. Business License enforcement and compliance could be used as a tool for encouraging improvement and re-investment in properties.

8. Truck Route Enforcement. Be more active in enforcement of truck routes, to ensure that trucks aren't travelling through town for convenience. The state routes they travel are in bad shape, and although the city doesn't have responsibility to maintain them, we can use enforcement to keep truck traffic of them as much as possible. The city also should/could do more to hold the responsible parties accountable for fixing the roads. Also briefly discussed railroad crossings and whether the city could do more to have railroads address poor crossings. State law puts the responsibility of dealing with railroads on the state, not the local jurisdiction. (FFS: TI-1, TI-2)

9. Streets & CIP Commission. Mentioned briefly and acknowledged that there will be a study session discussion in June on this matter. (FFS: TI-1, TI-2)

10. Legal Billing Analysis. Stemming from last summer's discussion on the topic, there was discussion of either an outside analysis or tasking the Internal Auditor with doing a historical analysis of the city's legal bills from its outside contractor, and comparing the cost of hiring internal counsel versus continuing to contract for legal services. When informed that administration reviewed the legal bills for irregularities on a monthly basis, the Board seemed satisfied with that process, but still may have some interest in the outside evaluation of our legal services. It was suggested that if that is done, it should be done by someone with a background in legal billing and the provision of legal services. There is some thought among Directors that in-house counsel would be more costly than the current method.

11. Succession Planning. Various long-time department heads are presumably nearing retirement eligibility. Utilities Department, in particular, where the Director and Assistant Director have been in place many years and the department is facing significant changes in the face of the consent decree. The new organization structure includes assistant department director positions and upper management staff persons that should be able to carry forward with CD regulations when need be.

12. Evening Study Sessions. There was a suggestion to conduct study sessions in the evening followed by general discussion, but there was no consensus to change the noon study sessions to the evening.