

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING/WORK SESSION
HELD ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2019, AT 6:00 P.M., AT THE FLORENCE SENIOR
CENTER, LOCATED AT 330 N PINAL STREET, FLORENCE, AZ 85132.**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Walter called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Tara Walter, John Anderson, Bill Hawkins, Karen Wall, Kristen Larsen, Michelle Cordes, Judy Hughes

WORK SESSION ON THE TOWN OF FLORENCE STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE.

Ms. Lisa Garcia, Deputy Town Manager/Town Clerk provided an update. She stated in discussions, it was determined that changes need to be made to the 2017 Strategic Plan, which include:

- Adding time commitments
- Missing elements
- Make it a work product

Ms. Garcia stated that plans were provided from sister cities. There are various components that can be included in the Town's plan such as:

- Are you on target with the planning?
- Has the task been completed?
- Does the plan have actionable items?

Ms. Garcia stated the changes will help:

- Identify what the Town is working on
- What has been completed
- Allows for everyone to be on the same project
- Provides feedback to the community
- Provides information on what is coming up so Council can relay to the public

Ms. Garcia inquired if the Council would prefer to have an outside facilitator or internal staff complete the update.

It is the consensus of the Council to have internal staff complete the update.

Discussions included:

- Citizen Survey
- Strategic Plan
 - What is missing
 - Area(s) to discuss first
 - Hold discussion
 - Will be sent to Management for creation of actionable items

- Council to approve each element

Mayor Walter explained that there will be several strategic planning sessions and each session will be for two hours.

Mr. Ben Bitter, Assistant to the Town Manager, discussed the following regarding the Citizen Survey:

- Sent surveys to 1,300 of the 6,243 registered voters in Florence
 - Did a random draw
 - More accurate than pulling from the trash accounts
 - Apartments and Caliente do not have individual trash accounts
- Responses received
 - 302 responses received
 - 18% from the downtown area
 - 59% from the Anthem area
 - 23% Florence Gardens
- Responses were anonymous
- Had to use formulary to reduce bias/margin of error
- Demographics
 - 58% were female
 - 42% were male
 - 17% work outside of the home
 - 5% work from home
 - 65% do not work (retired or students)
 - Youngest responder is 21 years of age
 - Oldest responder is 103 years of age
 - Where they work
 - 78% work in Florence

The Council posed the following questions/comments:

Section 1 – Please rate the following as they apply to living in Florence

- Substance or wording of the questions themselves
- Questions are based on interpretation

Section 2 – Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to the Florence community as a whole

- Questions regarding appearance and reputation of Town correlate with one another but responses contradicted one another
- Education rated as fair
 - Need to combat opinion that education is poor
- Shopping opportunity and retail growth rate correlate with one another but responses contradict one another

Mr. Bitter discussed the issues with how people choose to interpret the questions and their responses. He explained that the percentages may be off because some individuals chose not

to respond to the question. He did not include the "I don't know" responses on the individual questions. It is not clear if they do not know or if they do not have an opinion.

Councilmember Wall stated that she did not analyze the answers received but would like the comments put in context. She asked for a total number of responders for each of the individual questions. She does not want the margin of error changed.

Councilmember Hughes stated that those who responded that they did not know need to be included because they took the time to respond.

Councilmember Cordes stated that it is important for the Council to know what the responses were and how they can help them understand if they truly do not know.

Vice-Mayor Anderson stated that the responses are subjective because the responses are based on how the respondent interpreted the questions. He does not want to challenge the responses, but it is more important to identify trends.

Councilmember Larsen stated that she appreciates the positive responses submitted. She looked for trends rather than individual numbers.

Mayor Walter stated that the responses received were minimal in comparison of the population.

Mr. Bitter explained how the responses were calculated and provided a presentation which showed the raw data and how it was computed. He explained the percentages with the "I do not know" responses and those without, along with the margin of errors for each.

Section 3 – Which single characteristic do you like most about living in Florence

Mayor Walter stated that in Section 3 "Other, please specify, had 7.1% responses, and inquired if any comments were included.

Mr. Bitter responded that many of the comments were received from Anthem responders and what they liked most about Florence is Anthem. He stated that the responses were overall more favorable in this survey than the previous survey but noted that it is not an "apples to apples" comparison.

Section 4 – Please indicate your impression of the rate of growth in the following categories in Florence over the past two years (population growth, retail growth, job growth, housing)

Mayor Walter stated that in Section 4 she found it surprising that the perception that the population growth is much too slow and somewhat too slow, especially because Florence has had the most single-family home permits since the recession. DR Horton and Wade Journey Homes have also come to Florence due to growth.

Councilmember Larsen expected the responses to indicate that the growth was too fast. She understands that people value the small town feel and the historical character of the Town.

Vice-Mayor Anderson stated that the response is surprising because Florence is growing.

Councilmember Hawkins discussed the contradictory responses regarding growth and how Council is to interpret the responses.

Mr. Bitter explained how the responses can be interpreted. They may think Florence is growing too slow because more retail is not coming to Florence.

Mr. Brent Billingsley, Town Manager, stated that they are saying that the growth is slow because of the population. You need to have population in order to bring businesses to Florence.

Section 5 – What is the single best thing (program, service or type of business) the Town of Florence could do or offer to improve your quality of life in Florence?

Mr. Bitter stated because the question was open-ended, a variety of responses were submitted. Staff did its best to categorize each of the responses and subcategorize specific things that were called out (i.e. retail shopping category; Fry's, Costco, Wal-Mart were subcategories).

Discussion occurred on people wanting new retail and shopping; however, there needs to be rooftops in order to bring in businesses.

Section 6 – In the last 12 months, about how many times, if ever, have you or other household members done the following things (attended a Council Meeting, Attended a public meeting about Town matters, contacted Town Council, volunteered your time to an organization or activity in Florence, participated in a Town of Florence recreation program, visited a Town of Florence recreation facility, attended a Town event, visited Downtown Florence, participated in a Town of Florence cultural/arts program, utilized free dumping privileges at the Ironwood Landfill on Highway 287)?

Councilmember Hawkins stated that 75% of the responders have never attended a Council meeting or a meeting about Town matters. He stated it is important that the public attend meetings to find out what the Council is doing.

Mayor Walter asked to see the data on the backside for the housing comments. She stated that there are housing opportunities happening in the downtown area. She stated that she has received comments that people are looking for patio homes in which the association provides for the upkeep of the outside of their home.

Councilmember Hawkins stated that it is disheartening to read the comments that they do not participate in any town programs, functions or events; however, they want more.

Mr. Bitter stated that most of the surveys were received in May and June 2019. The cutoff date to receive responses was in August 2019. He discussed how the comparison was made and how the responses were statistically calculated.

Discussion occurred on the following:

- Growth
- Need for rooftops and retail
- Higher education
- Trends throughout entire survey versus analyzing individual responses
- How responses were compiled
 - Determining how to categorize the responses
 - Though there were not many with the same response, it is important to list all of the responses such as reduce red tape at the top and lower fees that can be worked on
- Better communication/ways to relay information to public

Mr. Bitter stated that they can discuss the DIF Study and the Town having the lowest impact fees in the region with the public.

Item 7 – Please rate the quality of each of the following services provide by the Town of Florence (garbage collection and bulk pick up, street repair/maintenance, water taste, storm water drainage, water pressure, cost of water and sewer service, fitness center (overall, fitness center (hours), parks/trails maintenance, recreation programs/classes/events, recreation facilities, parks maintenance, amount of parks and recreation programming, building permits and inspections, public information, code enforcement, handling citizen complaints, Senior Center, Senior Center facility, maintenance of downtown Florence, attitude and behavior of firefighters, use of education to prevent fires, professionalism of Florence Fire Department, professionalism of Florence Fire Department, crime prevention, Municipal Court, operating hours of Town Hall, overall quality of services provided in the Town of Florence).

Councilmember Hughes stated that Council should try to find ways to resolve the issues with Johnson Utilities and the Town of Florence regarding the taste of water and cost of water and sewer.

Councilmember Hughes stated that 31% of the responses stated that Building permits and inspections was poor as well as handling citizen complaints was listed as fair. She stated that this needs to be addressed.

Mayor Walter stated that the Police and Fire categories were favorable, and she commended them for the positive responses received.

Section 8 – During the last 12 months, did you have any phone, email, or in-person contact with a Town of Florence employee (yes, no)?

Mayor Walter stated that 58% of the responders stated that they have had contact with the Town of Florence employee.

Section 9 – If yes, what was your impression of the employee(s) of the Town of Florence in your most recent contacts. Rate each characteristic (knowledge, responsiveness, courteous, professionalism, ability to address the reason for your contact, overall impression).

No discussion occurred.

Section 10 - Was your contact with the Police Department?

No discussion occurred.

Section 11 - If yes, what was your impression of the Police Department in your most recent contact (Rate each characteristic: overall Police Department performance, overall competence of Police Department employees, attitudes and behavior of officers, community outreach and education, response time, service provided by dispatchers, service provided by police records staff).

No discussion occurred.

Section 12 – Please rate the following categories of Florence government performance (overall direction the Town is taking, overall performance of general administration and management, decision made by the Town Council, direction the Town is taking with respect to recreation facilities, direction the Town is taking with respect to cultural programming/classes , the job Florence does at running local government for the benefit of all the people, the value of services for the taxes paid to Florence, Florence Town government as an example of how to provide local government services, being responsible to residents, management of growth and development, effectively planning for the future, being ethical and honest, supporting the economic health of Florence, making decisions that support the quality of life in Florence, maintaining public infrastructure, providing access to elected officials, being open and transparent to the public).

Mayor Walter stated that the question regarding the direction the Town is taking with respect to recreation facilities was removed from the survey, and she inquired why.

Mr. Bitter stated that the question was inadvertently removed from the online survey, so staff opted to remove the question.

Mayor Walter stated that there has been positive direction with regards to cultural programming and classes. There has been great communication with the public of what programs and classes are being offered.

Councilmember Hughes stated that the responses were fair for the following categories: being responsive to citizens, management of growth and development and effectively planning for the future. She stated that Council needs to work on these issues.

Mr. Bitter stated that the responses may be subjective depending on how the responder interpreted the question.

Councilmember Hughes stated that the citizens do not believe that Council is doing a good job in being open and transparent to the public.

Councilmember Hughes stated that it is difficult to say that the Council is not open and transparent when approximately 75% do not participate in any town functions nor come to Council meetings. He stated that 81.3% of the responders have never spoken with a Councilmember. He stated that he believes that the Council along with staff have an open-door policy.

Councilmember Cordes stated that the responders have rated Council as doing fair and not well. She would like to focus on how to improve those statistics and increase their response to good. She believes that everyone's opinions matter.

Councilmember Larsen stated that some ways that they can be more accessible is to:

- Have one-on-one conversations with the citizens when they are out in the community
- Attend breakfast events at the community centers

Vice-Mayor Anderson stated that the League was told not to engage with the public before and after meetings because they did not want their vote to be influenced prior to a vote. This can be misconstrued as being inaccessible.

13. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements (the Town keeps me informed about community issues and initiatives, I am pleased with the overall direction of the Town, the Town government welcomes citizen involvement and offers ways for residents to get involved, the Town gathers feedback from residents on new policies or projects/conducts public processes, the Town listens to its citizens, I consider myself informed about Town of Florence issues and operations, the Historic Downton has improved in appearance over the last few years).

Mayor Walter stated that the public may not be aware of everything that is being planned which is why they may disagree that the Council keeps them informed about community issues and initiatives.

Councilmember Larsen stated that 58% responded favorably to the "I am pleased with the overall direction of the Town" statement.

14. How often, if ever, do you get information about the Town of Florence from each of the following resources (Arizona Republic, Florence Reminder and Blade Tribune, town utility bill flyers, Town website, Florence Channel 11, Nextdoor.com, Town of Florence on Facebook, Town of Florence on Twitter, Town of Florence on Instagram, Town of Florence on YouTube, event banners, attending government meetings, neighborhood organizations, word of mouth, other television channels).

Mayor Walter stated that the Florence Reminder and Blade Tribune was the second highest responder with 27.8%. She thanked Mark Cowling for attending all of the Council meetings and reporting to the public.

Councilmember Larsen stated that signage received high markings.

Councilmember Wall stated that many of the responders do not use social media.

Councilmember Hawkins stated that most of the people rely on word of mouth.

15. Do you support or oppose the following ideas and/or initiatives (future annexation efforts to expand the current Town limits, incorporation efforts of those in the San Tan Valley, creating geographical districts (or wards) for the seats on Town Council, creating term limits for the Mayor and Town Council, a private company currently provides ambulance service to residents in Florence, would you support the Florence Fire Department providing this service and collecting a user fee).

Mayor Walter stated that the Town must provide services for any areas that the Town annexes. Council needs to look at how it can continue to provide services, so they need to be cognizant to ensure that the Town is growing smart.

Mayor Walter stated that the majority of the responders support the Florence Fire Department providing ambulatory services. This could help offset some of the costs for the Fire Department. She would prefer to have a formal presentation provided at a future work session.

Councilmember Cordes stated that this same question was on the last survey five years ago, and it is something that the public has shown support in and nothing has been done.

16. What is your level of support or disapproval for each of the following projects or proposals (Florence Copper, a monthly farmer's market in historic downtown, a daily shuttle between Merrill Ranch and the historic downtown, public art, purchasing and taking over adjacent utility providers).

Mayor Walter stated that the Produce on Wheels without Waste (P.O.W.W.W.O.W.) will be coming to Florence. Their first date will be held on November 23, 2019 at Heritage Park. It will be 70 pounds of produce for either \$10 or \$12.

Mayor Walter stated that they are still trying to work on a shuttle from Merrill Ranch to the downtown area.

Councilmember Larsen stated that she is in support of transportation. She would like to see public art pursued. She has asked that the Town move forward on this for some time.

Councilmember Hawkins stated that approximately 61% stated that they have never participated in an arts program, and only 26% have attended once or twice. He inquired if this really something that the citizens want.

Councilmember Wall stated that people are visiting downtown Florence and public art may be a way to get people downtown.

Councilmember Cordes stated that if Florence had public art in the downtown area people may come to the downtown area. Public art has become more passive and is more like lingering art when a person can come down when they want to view the art.

17. Who provides your water and sewer services (Johnson Utility, Town of Florence, None, don't know).

No discussion occurred.

18. Of the Town's \$14.5 million general fund budget, how much should the Town spend on each year for the restoration of historic buildings in the historic downtown (\$0, \$1-\$99,999, \$100,000-\$249,999, \$250,000-\$499,999, over \$500,000 each year).

Mayor Walter stated that the public communicated that the Town should spend \$100,000-\$249,000 annually on restoration of historic buildings in the downtown area. She stated that \$250,000 was allocated this fiscal year for the downtown area.

Mr. Billingsley stated that a portion of the funding has been utilized this fiscal year.

Councilmember Cordes stated that the Town needs to invest in the historical component of Florence.

Ms. Garcia stated that she provided Council with strategic plans from other communities for review. She pointed out that the samples provided include action steps at the end of each of their respective plans. By adding action steps to Florence's Strategic Plan, it would show that Council understands the objectives and the measurables. Staff will have an action plan in place that will be brought before Council for each of the items and this will assist staff with the planning, budgeting and execution of their projects. She stated that some communities do not include deliverables into the plan.

Discussion occurred on the following:

- Project List was completed and has not been updated because of the update to the Strategic Plan
- Add public safety to Strategic Plan
- Work session for ambulance services

Ms. Garcia asked Council what they would like included in the Strategic Plan. She stated that Council can use the Citizen's Survey results to determine where the Town can improve and how it can be included in the Strategic Plan.

Council made the following suggestions:

- Action items with quarterly updates
- Creation of a vision with the wants for the Town
- Outline who is responsible, outlined goals to be accomplished and results
- Council wants to know in advance on the large goals that the departments are working on
- Strategic Plan should be a "Big Picture" and not include micro-management
- Does not see value in having a steps checklist to check off items as they are being completed
- Wants to ensure that the plan remains active and that some type of accountability to ensure that the projects are completed.

- Update the Project List

Ms. Garcia stated that it is important to make sure Council's priorities are budgeted for. She stated that as a team, they will need to determine how the checklist will be created and executed.

It is the consensus of the Council to have a priority list and categorize those to the objectives in the existing plan.

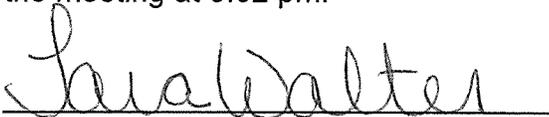
Ms. Garcia stated that benchmarks need to be put in place as well.

Staff would like to reach out to the Citizen Advisory Committee that assisted with the Strategic Plan and have them complete a survey regarding how the Town has done thus far. Council would like to include a member from the Chamber.

Ms. Garcia stated that strategic planning is planning with intention.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Councilmember Wall, seconded by Councilmember Larsen, and carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 pm.



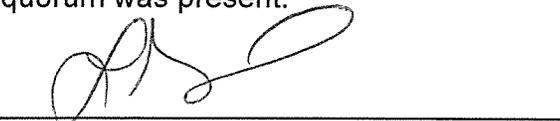
Tara Walter, Mayor

ATTEST:



Lisa Garcia, Town Clerk

I certify that the following is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Florence Town Council meeting held on October 28, 2019, and that the meeting was duly called to order and that a quorum was present.



Lisa Garcia, Town Clerk