

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE COUNCIL WORK SESSION HELD ON MONDAY, JANUARY 27, 2020, AT 6:00 P.M., AT THE FLORENCE TOWN HALL, LOCATED AT 775 N. MAIN STREET, FLORENCE, AZ 85132.

CALL TO ORDER

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

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.

Council discussed the following question from the Citizen's Survey.

12. Please rate the following categories of Florence Government performance

- Overall direction the Town is taking
- Overall performance of general administration and management
- Decisions made by the Town Council
- Direction the Town is taking with respect to recreation facilities – this question was removed because it was skipped when placed on the online version
- Direction the Town is taking with respect to cultural programming/classes (e.g., library classes, Florence Youth Council)
- 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 responsive 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 (such as roads, bridges, public buildings, etc.)
- Providing access to elected officials
- Being open and transparent to the public

Vice-Mayor Anderson stated that the Town received very poor ratings. He inquired what actions will be taken to raise the score and who is responsible to respond to the community regarding the ratings. He stated as a councilmember, he is unsure what he can do to raise the scores.

Mr. Ben Bitter, Assistant to the Town Manager, stated that the scores are similar to those of the last survey that was done in 2014. He stated that the scores provide an opportunity to build upon what the Town does now.

Ms. Lisa Garcia, Deputy Town Manager/Town Clerk, stated that the Town had some communication issues and that the Town needs to do a better job in communicating with the

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public. She referenced Question # 14, which asked: How often, if ever, do you get information about the Town of Florence from each of the following sources:

- Arizona Republic
- Florence Reminder Blade-Tribune (Pinal Central)
- Town utility bill flyers
- Town website (www.FlorenceAZ.gov)
- Florence Channel 11 (on Cox Cable or YouTube)
- Nextdoor.com
- Town of Florence on Facebook
- Town of Florence on Twitter
- Town of Florence on Instagram
- Town of Florence on YouTube
- Event banners (or roadside signs)
- Attending government meetings (Town Council, commission meetings, etc.)
- Neighborhood organizations (e.g., HOAs)
- Word of mouth
- Other television channels/news/radio

Ms. Garcia stated that many people do not use the social media sites that the Town utilizes and that word of mouth is a better form of communicating with our public. By doing this, the scores for communication may raise along with other categories within the Strategic Plan.

Mr. Brent Billingsley, Town Manager, addressed Question #12, sub-category: Planning for the Future, and stated that the Town has been vigorous in planning. The Town has approved five different plans and are updating the General Plan. Much of the public is not aware of all of the planning that the Town is doing. The Town has had several discussions through traditional means; however, the information is not reaching the public. He stated the management of growth is difficult; according to the survey results, there are certain areas that the public does not want growth and other areas in which they do. He stated that growth and future planning is difficult to understand what the public wants based on their response to the question. They may have been confused when they answered the question because they may have had something specific in mind and it may differ from the way the Town sees growth and development in the community.

Vice-Mayor Anderson stated that the Town has failed, and the responses provided are equivalent to a C or D on a report card.

Councilmember Larsen stated that she attributed the question to annexations.

Ms. Garcia stated that staff can better define the questions in future surveys.

Mayor Walter stated that the Committee will be instrumental in getting the word out as they are a diverse group and well connected with the community. They played a critical role in bringing the Strategic Plan on board and will continue with the partnership to continue to move forward.

Mr. Peter Koulouris, Citizens Advisory Council Member, stated that the Citizen Survey should not be looked at as a report card with failing grades, but rather on what needs improvement. The Town may have several opportunities for public involvement; however, the public needs to be made aware of the meetings, etc. in order to participate. It may be necessary to simplify the questions so that the public understands.

Mr. Mike Shoppell, Citizens Advisory Council Member, stated that it is important to have a plan and how to accomplish the plan. He stated music and entertainment is a great way to draw people to Town.

Councilmember Hawkins stated that the Council has continually tried to get the public involved and a variety of ways to communicate with the public. The Town has several events for the public to participate in.

Mr. Bitter stated that a random sampling of approximately 1200 voters received the survey. He stated that between 200 and 300 people responded to the survey, based on the various questions answered.

Councilmember Larsen stated that it would be a great opportunity to discuss Town projects, issues, great things happening in Town, etc. at the various events.

Councilmember Cordes stated that the Council has heard several times that there is a disconnect and lack of communication. The Town needs to stop saying all the things that it is doing and listen to the comments and pay attention to the data. Council gives the impression that they are not listening when they justify what they are doing and not validating their comments. The public will be inclined not to participate because the impression given is that we do not listen.

Mr. Shoppell stated that there are two individuals who are interested in being members of the Citizens Advisory Council Member. One of which has worked in public relations in Chandler for 20 years. He stated that he reviewed the survey and offered suggestions. He noted the following:

- There are enough rooftops to bring in a box store
- Will be approximately 8000 homes in the Anthem area
- 600 homes for DR Horton subdivision
- Improve ability to get into Town - roadways
- Improvements need to be made on Hunt Highway.
- The road is dangerous.

Discussion occurred on the two individuals who are interested in becoming members. Mr. Shoppell stated that he has discussed the possibility of them joining.

Mayor Walter gave direction to staff to move forward with formalizing the ad hoc committee at the February 18, 2020 Town Council meeting. She asked that Ms. Garcia contact the two individuals interested in joining.

Mr. Bitter stated that staff has created a draft template for the 2017 – 2022 update. He worked with the Police and Fire Chiefs to create a public safety element. He provided a brief overview of what is included, such as an index page, message from the Town Council, community priorities, and icons for each of the strategic areas. There will be a champion for each of the strategic areas

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with a quote on how important that element is to the community and to the Strategic Plan. The champions will report to the Council on the progress of each of the elements. The goal is to use the icons in the budgets and for Request for Council Action forms so there is a direct tie that is simple.

Mr. Bitter stated that as the community sees and understands the icons they can be used on banners and within advertisements for events. Council was asked to provide feedback on the template and ensure they captured everything Council wanted to be included.

Councilmember Hughes inquired if it will still include benchmarks.

Ms. Garcia stated that the initial plan which contained a small paragraph that incorporated the objective and emphasis; however, there were no real objectives. Council instructed staff to proceed with the template that they presented. The Manager's document will contain elements from the Council's document and the Manager will have his objectives. Key elements will be created that will tie into the Town's plans as well as the budget and CIP.

Councilmember Hughes inquired about fiscal responsibility and having to develop a sustainable budget that can withstand a 5% revenue reduction. She inquired how does one come up with long term solutions for problems that are going to continually come up.

Ms. Garcia explained that collectively, Council and the committee will develop solutions, which are real, are important to the community and are measurable and meaningful.

Mr. Bitter stated that the Strategic Plan will be an implementation plan that will be more focused and can change. This amendment will be through 2022 and will include the public safety element which was not included in the initial Strategic Plan.

The Citizens Advisory Group was provided a copy of the Strategic Plan and provided ratings between 1 (Disappointing) and 5 (Exceptional), and comments for each of the categories and Ms. Garcia and Mr. Bitter outlined the following:

- Background
 - In 2016, at the time the current Plan was created, a Citizens Advisory Group provided input into their thoughts and ideas about the future of Florence.
 - Various business and community leaders participated in the Group. This included Harold Christ, Henry Padilla, Betty Wheeler, Mike Shoppell, Pete Koulouris, Guy Rankin, Jim Tchida, and Russell Clark.
 - Although some of these leaders have since left the community, the remaining leaders were asked to provide their feedback about how they feel the Town has performed since the process started in 2017. In the 2019 responses, Roger Biede was also asked to complete the survey on behalf of the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce. Harold, Henry, Betty, Mike, and Pete also completed responses in 2019.
- Addressing the 2017 Plan
 - How do you feel the Town has progressed with implementing the Strategic Priority Areas?
 - Response
 - I feel it is making good progress.
 - It needs help and clarity.

- Community Vitality
 - The Citizen's Advisory Group rated this category as:
 - 1 – 1 person
 - 2 – 5 people
 - How do you feel the Town has progressed with implementing this Strategic Priority Area? Its focus is to "Encourage resilience, adaptation and innovation in connecting the multidimensional nature of community life."
 - Comments received
 - Are there documents that indicate this?
 - P.O.W.W.O.W. will increase this. More people will come into the community.
 - What has the Town done:
 - Work with Bureau of Land Management on the Poston Butte Preserve
 - Started the Produce on Wheels Without Waste (P.O.W.W.O.W. Program)
 - Working with the community to produce a music festival in March 2020
 - Art programming in the downtown redevelopment area
 - Code Enforcement and Kokopelli cleanup
 - What has the community done:
 - Merchants started the 3rd Fridays on Main and are working with the Chamber of Commerce
 - Well attended and Town is now assisting with this event
 - River Bottom has live music which generates a lot of patrons
 - Windmill Winery has live music Thursdays through Saturday
 - Valentino's has live music on certain days
 - Economic Prosperity
 - The Citizen's Advisory Group rated this category as:
 - 1 – 2 people
 - 2 – 1 person
 - 2 – 3 people
 - How do you feel the Town has progressed with implementing the Strategic Priority Areas? Its focus is to "Build and diversify a local economy that is robust and resilient."
 - Comments received:
 - "Florence still has a lot to do here."
 - "It falls back on leadership to continue and implement the vision."
 - "Minimal things to bring people to town."
 - Businesses that have opened in Town
 - Blue Sky Boutique
 - Rail Three Ranch
 - Heart J Ranch
 - Horizon Health and Wellness
 - Florence Hospital: A Campus of Mountain Vista Medical Center
 - Casa de Baca Studios
 - New Circle Building
 - Tattoo Shop
 - New Housing
 - Leads to a more stable economy
 - Wade Journey Homes
 - DR Horton
 - Infill Housing

- Permits issued
 - 2017: 218 permits
 - 2018: 233 permits
 - 2019: 372 permits - most in any given year

Mr. Shoppell stated that he works part-time as an ambassador for Pulte and showcases the amenities offered to their residents to the prospective buyers as well as local events and businesses in the downtown area. He stated that there are very few things in Florence that he can brag about.

Mr. Koulouris stated that there are several services in our local area; however, many are overlooked because they are not needed on an ongoing basis such as visits to the hospital, etc. It is important to communicate those services just as it is important to communicate the retail shops and restaurants. He stated that different forms are needed because the majority of our residents do not use social media sites.

Vice-Mayor Anderson suggested that the Town publish its own newsletter and distribute it along with the sanitation bill.

Councilmember Larsen stated that she does not feel like another newsletter will be beneficial. She believes the Chamber is a great resource for communication and feels that those who use the social media sites will communicate with those who do not. She also believes in providing praise by the Town to the businesses is important and builds a connection.

Mayor Walter stated that there is an opportunity to provide recognition on a monthly basis for the following categories:

- Volunteer of the Month
- Employee of the Month
- Citizen of the Month
- Student of the Month (K-8 and 9-12)
- Business of the Month
- Non-Profit of the Month

Mayor Walter stated that this would bring people to the meetings.

Mr. Shoppell stated that flyers can be placed throughout the community. The volunteers can also help promote this opportunity.

Councilmember Cordes stated that recognitions normally happen at the beginning of the meeting and everyone leaves as soon as the recognitions are over.

Mr. Koulouris stated that another form of communication may be to tap into the smartphones to send notifications to everyone.

Mr. Roger Biede, Committee Member, stated that other communities have public relations team, and inquired why Florence does not have one. He stated that it is important to promote Florence and all that it has to offer. He stated that people do not care which is why they do not come to

the Council meetings or visit the social media sites. He stated that his website is getting a lot of hits because he showcases Florence and all that it offers. It is important to have pride in the Town. Some communities have a convention and visitor's bureau and their funding comes from hotel tax and communities that do not have that find other ways or use a public relations firm.

Mr. Brent Billingsley, Town Manager, stated that the River Bottom has large events and there are times that there is not enough parking.

Staff continued with the presentation, in which they outlined the following:

- Leadership and Governance (Rating score: 0 (disappointing) through 5 (exceptional))
- The Citizen's Advisory Group rated this category as:
 - 1 – 1 person
 - 2 – 1 person
 - 3 – 3 people
 - 4 – 1 person
- How do you feel the Town has progressed with implementing this Strategic Priority Area? Its focus is to "Provide effective leadership and oversight by engaging younger residents and transparent governance."
- Comments received
- "What is happening here?"
- "Not sure the public sees it that way."
- "The Youth Council is great, let's build on it."
- "I am happy with the Mayor and Council. We have dedicated forward-thinking staff."
- What has the Town done
 - The Teen Council was established.
 - Annual teen leadership summit
 - 2019 Citizen Survey
 - 2014 and 2017 survey were done previously
 - 100% increase in social media followers
 - Staff highly involved with various International, National, State and Local agencies
 - Drafted a bill on public safety pension, which was signed into law
 - Public Records portal available on Town website
- What has the community done?
 - Florence Leadership Academy reinstated
 - Will be Town ad hoc commission
 - Passed Permanent Base Adjustment
- Partnerships and Relationships
- The Citizen's Advisory Group rated this category as:
 - 1 – 1 person
 - 2 – 1 person
 - 3 – 3 people
 - Unknown – 1 person
- How do you feel the Town has progressed with implementing this Strategic Priority Area? Its focus is to "Lead the community in developing and nurturing partnerships in the region."
- Comments received
- "This would be good to build on."

- “Let’s leverage the many secondary businesses that are supporting the larger companies.”
- “This is not happening.”
- What has the Town done:
 - Partnered with Pinal County for Emergency Notification System (PENS/Florence Alerts)
 - Resulted due to business concern of information not being disseminated to the public in a timely manner
 - Hosted Supervisor Goodman at Town Council Meeting
 - Hosted ADOT State Transportation Board Meeting
 - Staff remains active with Maricopa Association of Governments and Central Arizona Governments.
 - Partner with Chamber on Arts/Programming/Special Events
 - 2020 Census Complete Count Committee brings together civic, educational, faith, and Chamber leaders.
 - Signed Intergovernmental Agreement for Graffiti Abatement Program with Pinal County
 - Peanut Butter & Jelly Drive
 - Make-A-Difference Day
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- The Citizen’s Advisory Group rated this category as:
 - 1 – 2 people
 - 2 – 1 person
 - 3 – 1 person
 - 4 – 2 people
- How do you feel the Town has progressed with implementing this Strategic Priority Area? Its focus is to “Build and maintain physical connectivity throughout the community to reinforce Community Vitality and Economic Prosperity.
- Comments received
- “I believe this actually is going well.”
- “North South Freeway is too far west. We need more signage to get people to Florence.”
- “Once more businesses downtown, there will need to be better transportation to there from north of the Gila River, and connection to the greater network. ”
- “Hunt Highway needs more attention. Hunt and Highway 79 need more lights and a traffic light.”
- What has the Town done
 - Opened Water Recharge Facility
 - Adopted various plans
 - Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan
 - Regional Transportation Plan
 - Active Transportation Plan
 - Participated in important matters of statewide concern:
 - Pinal Groundwater Users
 - Arizona Corporation Commission discussion into Johnson Utilities
 - Design and planning for statewide projects
 - Roundabout
 - Gila River Bridge
 - Various street improvements
 - Downtown (including paving Florence Heights Drive)

- Anthem
- Florence Gardens
- Traffic signal at Hunt Highway and Attaway Road
- North-South Corridor

Councilmember Cordes stated that she likes how other communities have billboards that provide status information on lengthy projects. She would like Florence to have something similar. She would like project status information to be available at Town Hall and at the Chamber facilities.

Ms. Jennifer Evens, Management Analyst, continued with the presentation, in which she outlined the following:

- Missed priorities
- "Economic development should be number one. I would also suggest better communications/community relations."
 - Staff is working on economic development.
- "Employ someone to work specifically on attracting economic employment opportunities to the town."

Mayor Walter inquired about the status regarding working with a consultant for economic development.

Mr. Billingsley stated that Council has allowed him to hire an economic development consultant, McClure Consulting, to provide a baseline economic development study to help find strengths, weakness, opportunities and focus on how the Town should move forward. This will be used in hiring the right kind of person for economic development.

Approximately two weeks ago, Mr. McClure provided the Town and Pinal County a white paper, which contained background research. Both the Town and Pinal County reviewed the paper, met with Mr. McClure and provided comments. Unfortunately, there is not much background information available. Mr. McClure will review the comments and will provide findings in the near future.

Staff continued with the presentation, in which she outlined the following:

- "The plan itself is good, but the implementation is weak."
- "We need more events to attract people to come to town."
- Do you feel Florence has improved since the adoption of the Strategic Plan?
 - Yes, we still have a lot more to do."
 - "The infrastructure is much improved. The visual look is about the same. The new Florence is great and gets better every day."
 - "I have seen meeting after meeting without anything really being done. I believe it is time to start moving forward, which we have not done. I think we need a citizen's strategic plan oversight committee."
 - "Yes, Town is doing well, perhaps not in overly public ways that create buzz, but in ways that will help in the future. As mentioned, more public goals and then accomplishment to get better public support."

- "There has been structural improvement to roads, water systems and internal improvements to planning office. There has been, however, more vacant lots in downtown. Opportunities for new business in downtown need to be pursued.
- Adding to the Town ownership of downtown does not result in a wider tax base. Private business ownership is needed. "
- "We have taken steps in the right direction, but we need help in economic development."
- General Comments
 - "This is a wonderful robust town filled with amazing people. The government needs more transparency and leadership in order to bring us more into the future.
 - Unity is also a must right now. Florence consists of three different parts that don't communicate with one another. Divided we fall."
 - "In my opinion there is too much of an adversarial relationship and they're not recognized for the great accomplishments."
 - "We need someone to focus only on economic development. We should have better participation in regional organizations."
 - "The pool was a huge expense and it is never open - there are 12 months in a year. Pool is not heated."
 - "A forward step would be hiring an economic development person or a contractor for marketing."
 - "People need to be involved in developing and marketing the Plan. Nobody knows what the Town is doing or what is part of the Plan."
 - "Create a booklet of assets for business development."
 - "Get people who want to see Florence grow and prosper involved."
 - "Hold more events (motorcycle or bike race, plant sale, car shows, bring entertainment such as plays or music). Events bring people (10k, 5K, Bingo, Trivia, etc.)."
 - "We need shovel ready areas for business or industry to locate. Turn the dump on 287 into a solar farm. Get the Florence exit sign back on Interstate 10 at 87."

Ms. Garcia inquired if the Council believes communication has improved between the three housing areas in Florence. She also inquired what else can be done to improve communication between everyone.

Mr. Biede stated that as a Chamber, trying to advertise and work with Pulte – Anthem Community personnel is impossible. They are not interested in what the Chamber is doing, nor do they care. They have no interest in supporting local events.

Mayor Walter suggested that the Chamber include their events in the quarterly brochure that is sent out by the Community Services Department.

Mr. Henry Padilla, Citizen's Advisory Group Member, stated that the communication is key.

Mayor Walter stated that based on the rate of houses being built between 2017 and 2019, it shows that people outside of Florence know about the Town and made a choice to move here.

Mr. Shoppell inquired if the Town can provide a listing of businesses and events for Pulte to distribute to new homeowners.

Mayor Walter directed Mr. Billingsley, at the next meeting with Pulte, to partner with Mr. Biede and Town staff to discuss a way to disseminate information to their residents.

Mr. Biede stated that he is working with local businesses to provide coupons so they can visit the different local businesses.

Mr. Shoppell stated that he will talk with the Pulte Sales Manager for approval.

Councilmember Cordes addressed Mr. Shoppell on the Town's struggles in advertising the Town events. She asked Mr. Shoppell to invite others to attend their next HOA meeting and let them know that the residents want to know what is happening in Florence and would like the avenue of communication opened. She noted that Anthem Parkside residents are unable to participate in Sun City Anthem events. It is important that all the communities are part of Florence. She stated that Pulte Management needs to approve the distribution of information in Anthem.

Mr. Billingsley stated that he meets with Pulte and DR Horton on a monthly basis. He will ensure that this topic is an agenda item for the next meeting.

Councilmember Larsen stated that it was requested that a teen meeting be held in Anthem to rally more members from that community. They also installed bulletin boards which has been helpful. With regards to communication, banner signs can be used along Hunt Highway and on arterial streets. She stated information regarding the Town can be handed out when the new residents sign up for trash service. She stated that they could partner with Pinal County to help disseminate information as well.

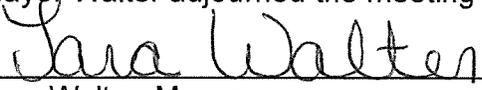
Staff continued with the presentation, in which she outlined the following:

- Next Steps for updating the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan
- Council feedback
- Development of new elements and design
- Implementation schedule 2020-2022
- Promotion of plan and completed objectives

Ms. Garcia asked that Council review the public safety piece and return their comments to staff. Staff will then present to Council for adoption. Staff requested Mayor to assign a member to each section to be the champion and be actively engaged in the Strategic Plan. The Plan is through 2022 and are included in the CIP Plan. It is important to have the projects in the budget and funded. Staff will work with the Citizen Advisory Group to ensure they are included. Staff and will present their presentations to the Citizen Advisory Group to ensure that nothing has been missed before it goes before Council.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Walter adjourned the meeting at 7:38 p.m.


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 January 27, 2020, and that the meeting was duly called to order and that a quorum was present.



Lisa Garcia, Town Clerk