

GOAL SETTING

A Preparation Packet



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"Any fool can lay out a five-year plan, but it takes a person of rare ability to hop from crisis to crisis."

Anonymous

Notes to Readers

INTRODUCTION

This packet has been developed to help you prepare for the upcoming goal-setting session your council has scheduled. In the firm belief that the more time you spend "ahead of time, the less you will spend at the time," this packet encourages you to complete several quick exercises in the way of "homework." Much of the material in the packet is to stimulate your best thinking about the condition of the city and its future. Read through each of the pages and complete the suggested exercises. Return them to the city manager or designated collection point as soon as they are finished and well ahead of the scheduled session. The facilitator will use the information to prepare him or herself for the session and to prepare various posters and displays to be used during the session.

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT IN A GOAL-SETTING SESSION?

The technique and processes used in this goal-setting approach are simple, straightforward, and to the point. Provided the homework packets are completed and returned to the collection point on time, when you enter the goal-setting session, you will find already posted and ready for processing, the summarized results of the collective homework packets of each of the council members. There are several steps involved in the goal-setting process.

STEP 1: DISCUSS LONG-RANGE ISSUES

Participants will review and discuss the long-range issues the city will be facing (see page 5).

STEP 2: DISCUSS POSSIBLE GOALS

Participation will consist of a review of the posted goals to insure that each participant understands clearly what is meant by the statement.

STEP 3 GROUP GOALS BY TOPIC

The group begins the process of clustering various goal statements into logical groupings under appropriate headings (e.g., Economic Development, Downtown Redevelopment, Tourism, etc.). This step is the most lengthy portion of the goal-setting process, because as the clustering process is taking place, the individual goals are edited, analyzed, and often rewritten to meet the needs of the group.

STEP 4: PRIORITIZE GOALS

During this step, resource points are distributed among the various goals and objectives to represent the collective sense of priority of the council as a whole. Without this step, the goal-setting process is useless to those who are responsible for carrying out the policies of the council.

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT OF THE FACILITATOR?

The facilitator of a goal-setting session has two primary responsibilities. First, the facilitator must keep the discussion on track and directed toward the process of setting goals. Second, the facilitator must keep the communication process open, accurate, and positive. To do so, he or she may ask you to clarify certain statements, or show how your comments are related to the goals and activities at hand. The most frequent question you will hear asked by the facilitator during the session will most likely be, "How will you know when you have accomplished that goal?" or, "What will it look like when you have accomplished the objective?" By doing this, the facilitator assures that the goals you end up with are goals that are practical and can actually be attained. Remember, the facilitator is not an expert on your city. You must supply the relevant information. The facilitator is an expert on helping councils pull the various views and needs of the individual members into a workable set of goals that represent the direction for the city for the next year(s).

HOW CAN YOU HELP MAKE THE GOAL-SETTING SESSION MOST EFFECTIVE?

There are several things you can do to help make the session a productive one. First, complete the homework packet and turn it in well ahead of time. Second, come to the session prepared to listen, discuss, and make commitments and decisions for the city. And third, come to the session with the understanding that probably not all of your goals will be the same or of the same priority as those of others on the council, and that to be effective, the final goals must represent the needs of the city and of the whole council. Therefore, be prepared to negotiate, compromise, and work for solutions and goals that are the best for all parties involved. Finally, be prepared for some hard work, some fun, and, when it is all over, the satisfaction of knowing you've done something productive and really important for your city.

Looking Back

1. Review the goals you set last year. Using a scale from 1 - 10, assign a rating of how successful you believe you as a council were in accomplishing each of the goals.

1 ----- 10
Totally Unsuccessful Totally Successful

2. When you have finished rating each of last year's goals, analyze the reason for the varying degrees of success and failure that your ratings represent.

For those goals receiving a high rating, try to determine what events, circumstances and conditions helped in the achievement of these good results.

For those with low ratings, identify the events, circumstances and conditions that prevented the council and city from successfully accomplishing the goal.

Are any patterns apparent in your analysis?

Were your goals too unrealistic?

Did you set goals that were high enough?

Are you able to accurately assess how well you really did with respect to goal accomplishment?

Did you have too many goals for the resources and time? Too Few?

3. Based upon this analysis and upon your experience with goal-setting, both as a specific activity and as a management tool for the city over the last year, what suggestions and recommendations do you have that will help make the goal-setting process more effective for this next year? Include your suggestions with those on page 9.

Gathering Information

Before going any further in preparing for the goal-setting session, gather some information. Talk to people. Talk to...

Business People	Homemakers	Students
Lawyers	Doctors	Plumbers
Teachers	Retirees	Kids
People on the Street	Waiters	Cooks
Mechanics	Laborers	City Employees
Department Heads	Truck Drivers	Special Interest Groups
Church Officials	Grocers	Newcomers
People Who Haven't Voted in Five Years		

Ask about their concerns, their ideas, their solutions and goals. Talk to people you don't normally talk to. Talk to people about their city and what they think you, as an individual councilor, and you as a city council together should be doing.

Review the events of last year, the goals established and the achievements actually attained. Develop a feel for the relative expenditures necessary for goal achievement. Consider:

The time involved.

The personnel resources required.

The money required.

The projects that didn't get done because of higher priority projects.

The time, resources, and money necessary to maintain the advances of last year.

The unforeseen events that transpired which caused you to be less effective than you would have liked.

Look to the future. What events or circumstances are likely to come along during this next goal cycle to upset the best of intentions? What must you be prepared for?

Down the Road

Using your knowledge of the city and your feelings for its long-range future, speculate as to the major issues the city will have to address during the next 5, 10, 20 years. Identify several of them. List them below, and tell how you think the city should begin preparing to deal with them.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

"ONE SHOULD NOT PLAN VAST PROJECTS WITH HALF-VAST IDEAS."

Anonymous

Criteria for Effective Goals

"THE BEST CRITERIA OF A GOAL IS THIS: IS IT USEFUL?"

- SPECIFICITY: General goals are less useful than specific ones because specific ones imply next steps.
- PERFORMANCE: Performance or action-oriented goals are more effective in guiding staff in what to do than are non-performance goals. Do not confuse statements of belief or council views and positions as goal-statements. Goal-statements lead to action, whereas statements of positions or beliefs may only describe a condition.
- INVOLVEMENT: Goal statements should identify who is to be involved in goal accomplishment and to what extent.
- REALISM: Each goal must be realistically attainable.
- OBSERVABILITY: Goal statements must be written so that an observer will be able to tell when and whether or not the goal is being accomplished. The more observable the goal, the easier it is to judge effectiveness.

The 10 Most Important Goals

I Think We Should Pursue This Next Year

Based upon your experiences last year, your beliefs and perceptions about the future of the city, and the ideas and concerns you have generated in working through this booklet, list the ten top goals you would like to see addressed this next year. You do not need to prioritize them. Write your goal statements with the "criteria for effective goals in mind."

The Effective City Council

- maintains a clear and cooperatively established set of goals;
- encourages open, two-way communication between one another;
- respects the knowledges, skills, and special interests of each other;
- handles dissent, conflict, and controversy in a positive, constructive, and professional manner;
- recognizes and acts upon the importance of presenting a solid unity after decisions have been made, even though individuals might have voted and lobbied for a different decision prior to a vote;
- understands that the council is only effective as a single unit;
- recognizes that councilors have different constituencies and beliefs, and that each represents a legitimate part of the community - no more and no less than any other councilor;
- recognizes the differences between arguing and problem-solving;
- does not personalize issues and decisions; and
- understands that one is seldom going to have all decisions go the way one wants, and accepts and works positively within that framework.

"OFTEN, WHEN DEMOCRACY IS WORKING AT ITS BEST,
EVERYONE IS JUST A LITTLE DISSATISFIED."

Working Together

What ideas do you have about becoming a more effective council? What are some goals you think the council as a group should set for itself in order to become a more effective body? Use your past experience, your perceptions of council functioning, and the information generated by working through this booklet to develop your ideas. List them on this sheet.