

Observer: Betty Hayford

Aldermen present: All

Media present: Evanston Now, Evanston Roundtable

Meeting began: 6:05 pm in Aldermanic Library

Meeting ended: 8:55 pm

Mayor Hagerty called the meeting to order in the Aldermanic Library, chosen for this meeting to facilitate discussion among the alderman. This is a Special Meeting for 80th City Council Planning and Goal Setting.

Public Comment. Four comments by individuals with some experience in planning and in Evanston. One asked for reduction in taxes and fees and increased transparency in Evanston government. One asked Council to be thoughtful in establishing priorities among the broad community challenges, and urged a city wide approach by alderman elected from wards. She urged looking back at outcome of previous projects and goals for Evanston in 10-15 years. One urged focus on Downtown Plan with attention to human scale, and need to resist priorities of developers. One urged smart development to preserve the character and human scale of Evanston.

Goal Setting Discussion. The discussion was led by Jean Bonander, a consultant from California who has facilitated past planning discussions here. She outlined two sections: 1) focus on communication and how council members want to communicate with each other and with citizens; 2) Goal setting to lay out strategies and priorities outside of the pressure of the day to day work. She had sent surveys and interviewed some/most of the aldermen.

Communication. Bonander outlined some general principles of good communication, including sharing information in positive ways, building trust, collaboration and respect, aiming for fairness and equity. Next five years would bring changes – concern with race relations, impact of technology, disconnect between local government and state and federal governments. Hagerty summarized the context that aldermen have good intentions and want to work together; Wilson added that bad board habits can develop and it is useful to work to establish good interaction modes.

Planning Next Steps. Bonander listed current (active) plans: 2006 Strategic Plan; 2009 Downtown Plan; 2016 Parks Scorecard; 2014 Livability Plan; 2008 Lakefront Master Plan; 2007 West End Master Plan; 2007 Central Street Corridor Plan; 2000 Comprehensive General Plan. She asked aldermen to consider whether they are using these plans. Council seemed a little dismayed at this array.

After some discussion, she identified key goals as 1) Affordable Housing- How to leverage city resources and define city role; and 2) Finance and Budget Planning.

Affordable Housing. Extended discussion reflected aldermen put high value on affordable housing, but do not have a clear sense of city's role. Previously work has relied on non-profit agencies.

Finance and Budget. The City Manager urged aldermen to work on short-term financial planning, for 18 months or so, to develop responses to possible cuts from state government that might require cuts to current programs and immediate projects. Then mid-term planning was needed to set priorities. But planning takes time, and council would need to find time. A new strategic plan might require 12 to 24 months, and \$50,000 to \$75,000 for consultants. Staff time would be needed to coordinate community meetings and other activities.

Alderman Rainey suggested that the next six months might be focused on the budget, and council could look at the Strategic Plan and the Downtown Plan early in 2018. Wynne agreed that budget contingencies had greater urgency. Braithwaite urged that council look at the current plans carefully before starting any new plan. Wynne asked Wally to prepare “doomsday” scenarios for council to consider and the community to understand as part of the budget process.

Wally explained that the July 10 meeting could begin the budget process with the second quarter report to begin to identify where cuts might be made and what criteria council will use to make cuts. The main budget process will begin in the fall.

Council agreed that beginning in the new year, council would review existing plans, and develop an understanding of the city role in affordable housing. Council could spend one evening talking about affordable housing, starting with a staff presentation followed by a community dialogue. The initial conversation would be in the aldermanic library to facilitate discussion.

Wally suggested a September session on goal setting, useful especially for new aldermen, but for whole group. This would be followed by budget discussion starting in October.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55pm.