

MINUTES OF THE  
SPECIAL MEETING – CITY COUNCIL  
JANUARY 29, 2008

The special meeting of the City Council of the City of Benicia was called to order by Mayor Elizabeth Patterson at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 29, 2008, in the Commission Room, Benicia City Hall, 250 East L Street, complete proceedings of which are recorded on tape.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Council Members Campbell, Hughes, Ioakimedes, Schwartzman, and Mayor Patterson

Absent: None

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Patterson led the pledge to the flag.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS:

A plaque stating the Fundamental Rights of each member of the public is posted at the entrance to the Commission Room per Section 4.04.030 of City of Benicia Ordinance No. 05-6 (Open Government Ordinance).

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

2007-09 Priorities, Board & Commissions and Council Agenda Review:

Mayor Patterson introduced the topics and schedule for the meeting. She noted that Council could not get into too much detail on budgets, etc

Jim Erickson, City Manager, noted that today's discussion would include boards and commissions, as well as agenda format.

Mr. Erickson provided a summary of the strategic planning process and provided a background on the Top Ten Priorities.

Council and Staff emphasized there was an attempt to have the process be strategic and thoughtful and include the public. The General Plan was major element/criteria in the process, and there were a number of other criteria along with the General Plan Goals.

Staff went through the first list on the left – Strategic Goals/Issues. The thirteen priorities came from this process. Staff noted the completed priorities: Downtown Master Plan and X-Park construction. Staff briefly discussed the projects and gave timelines. Staff noted additional projects as possible priorities that were not necessarily new, but had been recently discussed and provided a brief summary of those items.

Council and Staff discussed looking for feedback, level of importance, and the priority of those additional projects.

- Downtown Skate Park:  
Staff noted that if Council directs Staff to do so, it could come back in six months with status update.
- Policy Issues:  
Staff explained the policy issues, the need for them to be updated, Council voted on policy issues in 2006 – to be studied, Staff commended on some of the new issues which the Council may want to integrate in to the calendar - to be scheduled.

Staff will bring this list to a follow-up meeting to prioritize and then calendar based on rankings.

Council and Staff discussed understanding the Strategic Plan, how it could assess that it is getting to where we want to go, performance measures, and having an assessment of how Council is doing.

Council and Staff discussed the Fire Rescue Boat, how long this issue item has been being discussed, if it should really be a priority, the need for further definition of a Fire Rescue Boat, the need for a written proposal on how it would really work, a cost/budget analysis or business case, as well as what the public safety issues were, and whether there was really a need for such a boat.

Council and Staff discussed moving other projects up to take the place of those completed, adding the State Park as a priority, long-term strategy for the State Park, and the costs associated with the State Park.

Council also discussed the relationship between prioritizing and the budget, specifically the difficulty of making decisions regarding priorities without current budget information.

Mayor Patterson suggested using the fourth Tuesday in February for a review of the budget. Staff provided a brief update on the City's financial status. The City Manager noted that any significant expenditure would likely drop the City below the 20% reserve, so this will impact how we move forward with priorities.

Public Comment:

1. Ms. Moore – Ms. Moore asked what the next topic of discussion would be.
2. Norm Hattich, Benicia Industrial Park Association – Mr. Hattich discussed improvements to the Industrial Park.

Council discussed BIPA, where the Business License Tax (BLT) funds were supposed to go, and the need for further discussion on the BLT and the Industrial Park.

Public Comment:

1. Marilyn Bardet – Ms. Bardet commented on the lack of DSL in the Industrial Park. This should be a priority.
2. George Delacruz – Mr. Delacruz discussed the Amports agreement and roadway improvements.

Council and Staff discussed using a phased approach, the need for a more in-depth discussion on the actual priorities, specifically the Fire Boat and the Ferry, discussing the priorities list as a whole, quarterly reviews of priorities, police building, green building, wind energy (not currently on the policy list), possible incentives for businesses and residences.

Council and Staff discussed the purpose of the meeting, and then proceeded to go through the priority list one-by-one to determine if each should remain on the list.

Priorities:

- Historic Arsenal Plan – Yes
- Prepare and Improve Tourism – Yes
- Mills Community Center – Yes - although Council does not know full cost, Council discussed phased approach, options, future skate park downtown, and the possibility of putting the skate park at Mills. Staff will come back to Council with that as part of the plan for the Mills Community Center plan.

Public Comment:

1. Marilyn Bardet – Ms. Bardet discussed her concerns regarding the process. The Mills area needs to be planned better, perhaps jointly with BUSD. She was concerned about the neighborhood's reaction to the skate park.
2. Mr. Moore – Mr. Moore discussed his interest in the property across from the Mills site. He would like to purchase it for (Scout site), which would be money for the City.
3. Dan Smith – Mr. Smith discussed the Mills Community Center and the surrounding neighborhood.

- Library – Yes
- Police Building -Improvements – Yes - Council and Staff discussed the need for clarification of the project.
- State Park Road Bridge – Yes – Council and Staff discussed the cost of the project, and meetings with the Solano Transportation Authority (STA).
- Fire Rescue Boat – Council agreed this item needed to be discussed further. At least two Council Members were okay with taking this off of the list of priorities.
- Ferry – Need to discuss further, get more control, and the need for the City to be more independent.
- Benicia Business Park – Yes – Scheduled for the February 19, 2008 Council meeting.
- Reduce Energy Consumption, etc. – Yes – however more clarification is needed.

Public Comment:

1. Marilyn Bardet – Ms. Bardet requested a report from the Economic Development Manager. Ms. Lorentz noted that a larger report would be going to Council in March.

- Commandants Residence – Yes – Council and Staff discussed sound structure vs. occupancy, seismic retrofitting, stabilization, bids coming in next month, the need to come back to Council on the use, extent of work to be done, and the importance of thinking about the connections between projects, and synergistic relationships between projects. Mayor Patterson noted that much of that is already done, however, Council and Staff need to access resources it has and discuss them further. Council and Staff also discussed historic sustainability, a reuse study, and how the project fits in the community.

Mayor Patterson noted that she thought that the Historic Sustainability Reuse Study should be part of the first phase- as the City did not have the expertise – Mayor Patterson would like to discuss this further.

Staff stated that rather than impact the progress of the project and viability of grant funding – it needed to go forward on with the work right now (seismic retrofit and stabilization).

Public Comment:

1. Jon Van Landschoot – Mr. Van Landschoot discussed the scope of the project.

Council and Staff discussed getting caught up in a vicious circle, connecting the dots between projects, current resources available.

2. Christina Strawbridge – Ms. Strawbridge discussed tourism, the need for improvements to the Downtown area, the need for the City to invest in the Downtown area.

Council and Staff discussed how this fits into the big picture, the need to see the big picture for this discussion, and the Downtown Master Plan.

- BHS Traffic Signal – Yes.

Public Comment:

1. Mary Frances Kelly Poh – Ms. Kelly Poh requested an update on the housing element.

2. Mr. Moore – Mr. Moore referenced a lawsuit related to this issue.

Council and Staff discussed the housing element, challenges associated with doing more housing.

Mayor Patterson requested an update on housing in the context of the East E Street lot and the Scout House.

Policy Issues:

- Green Building Program and Residential Wind Energy System – Yes, but as part of the bigger energy discussion.

Public Comment:

1. Citizen – The citizen discussed not having fee reductions associated with a green building program, but instead having a rebate program.
- Proposed Council Member web pages - Council and Staff discussed the issue of associated expense, convenience, if this is a good idea, if it would be okay for Council Members to have their own websites, priority level of this issue, the need for criteria and upkeep, ability to post messages from Mayor and Council, and the upgrading the City's website, Staff time and resources associated with this, having a link on the City's website to Council Member's personal websites, and what other cities were doing regarding this issue. Various Council Members noted that they would be willing to take a look at a list that Mayor Patterson had available, but were not necessarily interested in bringing it back for discussion.

Public Comment:

1. George Delacruz – Mr. Delacruz spoke in support of Council having their own web pages on the City's website. He did not feel a link to Council's personal websites would work.
  2. Bonnie Weidel – Ms. Weidel spoke in support of Council having their own web pages on the City's website.
- Council Compensation – Council asked for a survey of compensation practices utilized by other cities.

Public Comment:

1. Bob Craft – Mr. Craft discussed having a citizen's committee look at the Council compensation issue.

Boards and Commissions:

Council and Staff discussed getting more information out on openings and due dates, possibly reviewing the qualification issue, inconsistent terms and term limits, target date for sunset, institutionalizing recommendations, orientation packets for commissioners, training for commissioners, making it clear that the process is open to everyone, and professional references (if applicable).

Public Comment:

1. Mary Frances Kelly Poh – Ms. Kelly Poh suggested that acknowledgement and interview of applicants would be a good idea.

2. Bonnie Silveria – Ms. Silveria noted the past Mayoral practice of interviewing all candidates.
3. George Delacruz – Mr. Delacruz discussed the applications currently on the City’s website. You can’t just fill it in rather than printing it out and completing it.

Staff will come back with changes and note those with options vs. those that are straight forward, and the next steps that need to be taken.

- Sky Valley Open Space Committee - Council decided to briefly touch on each body and discussed any necessary changes.
- Audit and Finance Committee - Council and Staff discussed the need for more participation and more committee members, enhanced responsibilities, current responsibilities, more frequent budget reviews and perhaps involving the public more, possibly renaming the committee ‘Audit, Finance, and Budget Committee,’ adding budget role, and having the City Treasurer more involved with the committee.

The Audit and Finance Committee will look at the enabling resolutions and the suggestions voiced and will report back to Council.

- Benicia Citizens Corps Council - Council and Staff discussed the committee’s meeting schedule, possible need for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the group.
- Building Board of Appeals - Council and Staff discussed inconsistent wording and the absence issue.
- Civil Service Commission - Council and Staff discussed the three-year term limit.
- Housing Authority Board - Council and Staff discussed requesting a memo on this so it could better understand the board, and perhaps update the resolution.
- Human Services and Arts Fund Board - Council discussed whether there is a need for term limits with the boards and commissions that don’t have terms.
- Park, Recreation and Cemetery Commission - Council discussed whether there is a need for term limits with the boards and commissions that don’t have terms.
- Traffic, Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Committee - Council and Staff discussed the need for more frequent meetings and the need for the Police Chief to have an alternate representative on the committee.
- Sky Valley Open Space Commission - Council discussed the need to better understand the purpose and scope of the committee.

- Youth Action Task Force - Council discussed the upcoming strategic planning process to be implemented with the Youth Action Task Force, as well as perhaps the Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Commission.
- Revised Cultural Commission - Council and Staff discussed overlap issues, what would be required of Staff, General Plan, tourism branding program and its nexus with culture, and the cultural committee needing a voice. The Mayor commented that there would not be overlap with the Human Services Arts Board, as the Cultural Commission would not focus on grant funding. She suggested reviewing and evaluating a recommendation regarding such a commission in 1984.

Public Comment:

1. Citizen – The citizen discussed how a cultural commission would fit in with the City’s General Plan.
2. Bonnie Weidel – Ms. Weidel discussed other cities that have cultural commissions.
3. Dan Clark – Mr. Clark discussed the need for a cultural commission, this aspect is not a good fit with the Human Services Board, and the need for the cultural commission to do the funding for the arts.
4. Susan Street – Ms. Street discussed tourism branding and how it could be dovetailed with the cultural commission.
5. Sandra Shannonhouse – Ms. Shannonhouse discussed the need for the City to have a cultural commission.
6. Citizen – The citizen discussed coordinating the cultural commission with tourism branding.
7. Marilyn Bardet – Ms. Bardet discussed the arts community looking for a place to exist.
8. John Van Landschoot – Mr. Van Landschoot discussed opportunities for the cultural commission.

Council discussed the need for more information on staff time needed, possible alternatives to a commission, and requested to see sample alternatives.

Agenda:

Council and Staff discussed moving the Appointments so they follow Public Comment, moving Council Member Comments up, reconsidering the two-step process, coming up with a better name for Council Member Comments, and the initial Public Comment period being for non-agendized items. Council agreed not to pursue revising the two-step process or moving Council Member Comments, but did agree to move Appointments behind Public Comments and to re-name Council Member Comments.

Public Comment:

1. Marilyn Bardet – Ms. Bardet discussed the possibility of a sustainability taskforce, the need for sustainable criteria, and discussions the EDB had on

forming a sustainable task force. She gave Staff and Council a book on this topic.

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Given lack of time this evening, Mr. Erickson will meet with the Mayor to discuss the issue of a sustainable task force.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Patterson adjourned the meeting at 10:10 p.m.

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Lisa Wolfe, City Clerk