

CITY OF ST. JOHNS
CITY COMMISSION MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 25, 2024

The special meeting of the St. Johns City Commission was called to order by Mayor Dzurka at 4:03 p.m. at the Clinton County Courthouse, 100 East State Street, 2nd Floor, Suite #2200, St. Johns, Michigan.

CITY COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Eric Hufnagel, Brad Gurski, Scott Dzurka, Chris Hyzer, Chris DeLiso
CITY COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:	None
STAFF PRESENT:	Chad Gamble, City Manager; Mindy J. Seavey, City Clerk; Kristina Kinde, City Treasurer; Justin Smith, Director of Public Services; David Kirk, Police Chief

Oath of Office

Clerk Seavey gave the oath of office to Commissioners Hufnagel, Gurski & DeLiso.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Gurski to approve the agenda as presented.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

Presentation of Strategic Plan Process and Discussion of Commission Memo

City Manager Gamble said this is a kickoff of our city budgeting process. He discussed:

- **Strategic Planning Process**

The strategic planning process was discussed, focusing on updating the five-year plans for the city, parks and recreation, and downtown. The aim is to refine goals into specific objectives and activities for the fiscal year 2024-25.

- **Economic Development Goals**

The goal of pursuing economic development was highlighted, with a focus on creating specific objectives and activities to achieve this goal annually.

- **Departmental Goals and Metrics**

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The need to establish metrics for departmental goals was discussed, with plans to incorporate these into the budget process using ClearGov software.

Commissioners were invited to provide input on goals, with discussions on branding, business development, intergovernmental partnerships, and capital improvements:

- **Housing and Industrial Growth**

The need for affordable housing and managing industrial growth was discussed, emphasizing the importance of planning and communication with residents.

- **Capital Budget and Replacement Schedule**

The importance of having a capital budget and replacement schedule was raised, with questions about planning for infrastructure and equipment needs.

- **Cultural and Arts Planning**

The potential for cultural and arts planning was discussed, considering how to integrate arts and cultural activities with existing city plans.

- **Parks and Recreation Plan**

The Parks and Recreation Plan was discussed, with a focus on ensuring that priorities are aligned with available resources and grant opportunities.

City Planning and Development Strategies

- **City-wide Funding Policy**

Discussion on developing a city-wide funding policy, focusing on capital improvement projects (CIPs) for utilities and streets. The conversation included considerations for bonding versus cash funding and the financial positioning of the city.

- **Fixed Asset Replacement Strategy**

The discussion centered on the replacement schedule for fixed assets like fire trucks and utility projects. It included considerations for cash funding versus loans and the establishment of a vehicle replacement fund.

- **Housing Strategy**

The conversation focused on developing a housing strategy to attract specific types of housing developments. It included discussions on market demands, developer capital, and the use of housing TIFs as part of the economic development toolbox.

- **Goals and Objectives**

Discussion on aligning objectives with the overall goals of economic development, placemaking, and community bonds. The conversation included the need to

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differentiate between goals and objectives and how they fit into the broader strategic plan.

City Development and Strategic Planning

- **Strategic Planning and Goals**

The discussion focused on the importance of strategic planning, emphasizing that while goals remain broad and stable, objectives can change. There was a particular focus on housing and the effective use of tools like TIFs to incentivize desired outcomes.

- **Communication Improvements**

The meeting highlighted the need for improved communication, with examples like newsletters and the use of ClearGov budgeting software. Suggestions were made to identify specific communication objectives for future meetings.

- **Downtown Streetscape and Development**

There was a discussion about the need for a downtown streetscape plan due to structural and aesthetic issues. The idea of partnering with the DDA for a redevelopment plan was proposed, which could aid in grant development.

- **Capital Investment and Savings Plan**

The conversation included plans for a savings strategy for capital investments, particularly for the city park's Fantasy Forest 2.0. The importance of maintaining and replacing equipment was emphasized.

- **Property Development and Assembly**

The meeting discussed the city's role in property assembly for economic development, particularly regarding the silo property and potential industrial park expansion. The need for a strategic approach to property acquisition was highlighted.

- **Sidewalk and Non-Motorized Network Improvements**

The discussion covered the Safe Routes to School initiative and the need for a comprehensive plan for sidewalk improvements. The importance of partnerships and capital investment for design and construction was noted.

- **Parks and Recreation Planning**

The meeting touched on the need for a detailed capital improvement plan for the parks department, focusing on equipment replacement and maintenance. This aligns with the broader objective of enhancing recreational facilities.

City Planning and Management

- **Tree Management and Beautification**

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The discussion focused on city protocols for tree removal, the importance of selecting appropriate tree species for urban areas, and the city's efforts in beautification through plantings and displays. The need for a more formalized tree inspection process and increased investment in tree removals was highlighted.

- **Budget Planning and Strategic Goals**

The meeting addressed the need to align current projects with strategic goals for the upcoming budget cycle. Emphasis was placed on ensuring specific tasks are budgeted for and that past objectives remain relevant. The importance of operationalizing strategies was also discussed.

Public Comments

Mayor Dzurka asked if there were any public comments.

There were none.

Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission meeting be adjourned.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:18 p.m.