

STATE OF TEXAS §

COUNTY OF TARRANT §

CITY OF BEDFORD §

The City Council of the City of Bedford, Texas, met in Work Session at 8:30 a.m. at the Bedford Public Library, 2424 Forest Ridge Drive on the 25th day of June 2011 with the following members present:

Jim Story	Mayor
Chris Brown	Council Members
Ray Champney	
Roger Fisher	
Jim Griffin	
Roy Savage	
Roy W. Turner	

constituting a quorum.

Staff present included:

Beverly Griffith	City Manager
David Miller	Deputy City Manager
Michael Wells	City Secretary
John Kubala	Public Works Director
Mirenda McQuagge-Walden	Managing Director of Community Services

### **CALL TO ORDER/GENERAL COMMENTS**

Mayor Story called the Work Session to order at 8:30 a.m.

### **WORK SESSION**

#### **1) Council strategic planning session to include discussion regarding the Council's visions, goals and related topics.**

Mayor Story opened the Work Session and turned it over to facilitator Joe Gonzales. Mr. Gonzales asked that each Councilmember tell the rest the one thing they wanted to accomplish by the end of this meeting.

Councilman Griffin stated that as a group, he wanted them to start thinking more courageously and dynamically about how to reinvent the City through economic development. He wanted them to think more broadly and outside the box, such as tearing down shopping centers.

Councilman Fisher stated that as far as economic development, everything needed to be on the table. It has always been Council's number one goal, but it seems that it is in name only. He wanted to think of all possible incentives and ways to focus not only on business, but also revitalization of homes and neighborhoods. He also wanted some type of marketing plan for highway businesses to attract those who are waiting in traffic during the highway construction.

Councilman Brown stated that he wanted a serious discussion on economic development. In past meetings, they have had good ideas generated but the discussion was very broad. He wanted to discuss specific goals, ways to get there and then to follow through on them. He wanted concrete ways to accomplish those objectives.

Councilman Turner agreed that economic development is important. However, they need to focus on budgetary controls and the tax rate as well. What they want to accomplish needs to be tempered with budgetary controls. It is not the time to spend a lot of money that cannot be justified. He also wanted to address what needs to be done with the old library, as well as the master plan for the Boys Ranch.

Councilman Champney stated he would like to see three specific new initiatives. Economic development is the number one priority, but it seems they only pay lip service to it. He wants to see specific, targeted programs, such as setting up an alternative energy zone to encourage shopping center owners to go after those types of businesses. He wants to bring symbiotic groups into certain areas, like the cultural district. He would like to see specific ideas and timelines and for staff and Council to take ownership of them.

Councilman Savage agreed that economic development is the number one goal, but that it is only given lip service. He would like that every idea that can be put forth, be put forth. If Council comes up with an idea, it needs to be communicated to the Economic Development Department. He stated that the old library and the Boys Ranch need attention.

Mayor Story presented information on the ICSC conference. Overall, there has been much more activity than the last couple of years and attendance was up. People had a feeling of anticipation and confidence that things were picking up but they are still cautious and wanting to do their due diligence. Businesses do not want to take money from existing locations. For example, In-and-Out Burger did not want to locate a business in Bedford since it would be too close their location in Hurst. Other businesses, such as Dairy Queen and Steak and Shake, need franchisees because they did not want to put in the stores themselves. A lot of restaurants are franchising in Texas, but not other parts of the country. Developers love this area and love Texas. One company he spoke to asked how long it would take to open a business in the Bedford area; if it was zoned correctly, it would take six weeks. In California, it would take a year. Everybody they spoke to were impressed by the new sign ordinance. At the end of the day, economic development is his number one priority. He does not want sales taxes to drop during the highway construction, which would keep the City from doing things they want to do. There is a need to keep infrastructure up, keep the City clean, and focus on code enforcement.

Mr. Gonzales stated that the best way to accomplish things is to do problem solving in small teams. Council and staff broke into the following teams:

The first team consisted of Councilmen Griffin and Turner, Mayor Story and Deputy City Manager David Miller. Their focus was on what the City currently has in regards to public infrastructure and how that supports economic development.

The second team consisted of Councilmen Fisher and Savage and City Manager Beverly Griffith. Their focus was to look at the private sector, like shopping centers.

The third team consisted of Councilmen Brown and Champney, Managing Director of Community Services Mirenda McQuagge-Walden and Public Works Director John Kubala. Their focus was on economic development from the standpoint of CIP projects that the City is working on.

Councilman Griffin presented for his group and stated that his group's objective was dealing with public infrastructure. Their focus is on strategic economic development and segmenting different areas of the city one at a time as a Council. Their objective is creating a cultural district to include both the old and new libraries, the Old Bedford School and City Hall. They want to package those locations into a redevelopment area with the theme of a cultural district and to generate revenue to focus on other areas.

Councilman Fisher presented for his group and stated that their original goal was economic development and existing businesses. Some of the ideas they are focusing on are industries that could be enticed to Bedford, incentives, uses for existing business and vacant shopping centers, partnering

with property owners to demolish vacant centers, old apartment complexes, incentives to lure young families to the City and to direct traffic off of S.H. 183 to the City.

Councilman Brown presented for his group and stated that their original task was to think out of the box to support economic development and how it ties into capital improvement projects. They split their focus into shopping centers and areas that could transition to different uses.

Mr. Gonzales stated that the next step is for each team to come up with one goal, the benefits of that goal and the action steps that staff needs from Council to accomplish that goal. The groups then will come back together as a whole and present the goals, benefits, and action steps. The formal goal statement needs to be very specific and written in a way that is measurable. The statement should define a result and should be very clear. The benefits are very important because if you cannot explain them to people and staff, they will not be able to connect to them. The goal statement is policy and is Council driven. The benefits are a discussion that needs to be done between Council and staff. The action steps are what staff will need to do to implement the goal.

Councilman Brown's Group:

Goal Statement – Support development of shopping centers and transition existing shipping centers to other uses.

Benefits

- Increase sales tax revenue and property values
- Attracts future residents
- Enhance aesthetics

Action Steps

- Inventory Assets – not just focus on one area
- Prioritize
- Action Plan
- Invite economic development prospects to City events
- Public/Private partnerships – tax incentives
- Economic Development/Incentive Fund – funnel extra funds back into and economic development fund.
- Branding and Identity - Signage and banners with the Bedford logo and Shop Bedford First to entice visitors and actively support the community.

Councilman Fisher's Group:

Goal Statement – Develop a plan to improve vacant or underutilized commercial property.

Benefits

- Increase property value and sales tax revenues
- Improve aesthetics, image and identity
- Create opportunities for new residential development

Action Steps

- Commercial property assessment and prioritization
- Review and revise development ordinance
- Research options to expand 4B to allow intersection improvements – Currently, 4B funds are allowed to be used in make paving improvement but not install sidewalks. In the short-term, a proposition can be taken to the voters to do expand what 4B funds could be used for.
- Explore under-utilized incentives – property improvement districts, cash up-front, public private partnerships, infrastructure improvements.
- Identify tools to demolish vacant buildings – ordinances or incentives

- Inventory city owned properties to determine if relocation is a viable option to free up developable land
- Target tax generating industries.

Councilman Turner's Group:

Goal Statement – Strategically focused economic development to include: 1) Central Bedford Development area – Cultural District, and 2) other targeted development areas

#### Benefits

- Utilize existing City assets
- Increase revenue through increase sales and property tax
- Attract new people in residential and businesses
- Enhance identity
- Create a destination

#### Action Steps

- Create a Central Bedford Development Zone
- Identify properties to be included in the Zone
- Identify elements of development in the Zone
- Identify potential developers for the Zone

The entire Council then combined these three goal statements into a single goal statement with three strategic focus areas:

Goal Statement – Execute Strategically Focused Economic Development – long term and focused

#### Strategic Focuses

- Create a Central Bedford Development Zone (5-10 year project)
- Develop plans to improve vacant or underutilized commercial property (done concurrently)
- Develop plans to transition existing shopping centers to new uses (done concurrently)

Mr. Gonzales then asked each Council member what they were taking away from today's meeting.

Councilman Griffin was quite pleased with what has been accomplished by focusing on the City's future and how to develop that future. He liked that all the members were thinking along similar paths. He believes that Council has a real solid focus on where they want to move the City in the future in terms of economic development.

Councilman Fisher stated that it was remarkable that three different groups came up with similar ideas. They now have a focus and he does not want to see it dropped or lost in the everyday struggle. Council needs to be presented with any and all options. He wants to toss out the economic development handbook and write their own. If the economic development team needs anything, Council wants to know about it and wants to ensure that Council is providing them with the tools to execute this plan.

Councilman Brown felt that the meeting was stopping a little early and he would like to revisit these items to lay out exactly how they are going to accomplish these goals. If 4B needs to be expanded and an incentive fund needs to be developed, then that conversation has to happen in a timely manner. Council needs to act as soon as they leave today.

Councilman Turner likes that this Council is focused on the positive. Not one person refused to talk about these forward-looking projects because of money. He is taking away that the Council is focused in

a way that will result on staying on this schedule. Now there is some strategy and focus involved, which is incorporated into the main goal.

Councilman Champney agreed with everyone else and now they need to follow up on action these items. Beyond that, he sees a change in the way the Council looks at things in the city. The business environment is different from years past, and new things that have come in, such as the internet are impacting retail sales. He believes that segmenting economic development into districts is a very positive thing.

Councilman Savage stated that he was encouraged to see this many people with alike ideas. He appreciates the Council working together and it is very helpful for the community. They are on the right track, but they need some semblance of moving forward.

Mayor Story stated that in this economy, and with the highway, they have to make something happen as far as economic development. Retailers really love Bedford and they need to balance the larger retailers with the mom-and-pop shops. They need to keep helping those stores that are doing well and those that are not. He stated that the economic development department may need to realign or hire more people. As far as the money to accomplish these goals, Council needs information and recommendations on 4B and an economic development fund. He is also very proud of the Council.

City Manager Beverly Griffith stated that she has been given clear direction regarding this topic and she agrees that economic development is a top priority. However, these goals and action steps will have costs associated with them and that they need to be discussed after the budget work session. Due to several factors, the City is starting off with approximately \$500,000 less than last year. Council will have to decide their tolerance for adjusting service levels and income. Council was of the consensus to explore all options and to make tough decisions if necessary.

City Secretary Michael Wells presented information on SB 100 and what options Council had in regards to holding future municipal elections. These options included: 1) Changing the terms of office for Council members from three years to two or four years and only holding elections in odd-numbered years in May, allowing the City to still contract with Tarrant County; 2) Keeping the May uniform election date and having the City run its own elections; or, 3) Moving the election to the November ballot, allowing the City to still contract with Tarrant County. It was stated that the Texas Municipal League will be holding a webinar regarding SB 100 on June 29 and that Steve Raborn, the Tarrant County Elections Administrator, will be holding a meeting with all the entities on July 14. Council was of the consensus to discuss this topic in more detail at a future Work Session.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Story adjourned the meeting at 12:42 p.m.

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Jim Story, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Michael Wells, City Secretary