



Decatur City Commission Retreat 2012

Smithgall Woods
February 17-18, 2012

The retreat focused on major discussion points for policy as well as goal setting for 2012.

Looking first at the roles and responsibilities of a City Commissioner from the standpoint of those performing that role, the group created an outline for a “job description” as a starting place for refining and developing a future document that could be used as part of new commissioner orientation and to assist those considering running for election to understand what it takes to be a City Commissioner. The outline is attached.

Projected Capital Expenditures and Revenues over the next 10 Years

The City Manager presented a detailed spread sheet showing the projected capital improvement needs over the next ten years with an analysis of costs as well as potential revenue sources.

From this information it was clear that the city is in good financial shape but that there are more potential capital needs than projected revenues. The redevelopment of the Beacon Complex will be a substantial expense that must be covered, even if it is through the use of multiple financial resources.

Following this discussion, the group examined ways to proceed if the Beacon project goes forward. They asked for the following:

- An analysis of funding scenarios with budget and tax implications for each. Scenarios could include the use of CID, TAD, COPs, and other financing mechanisms.
- Projections of what millage rate assessment will be in the future, given past history.

Employee Pension Plan

A recent analysis of the Decatur pension plan shows that the plan is in good financial shape.

The group discussed the value of a Defined Benefit Plan versus a Defined Contribution Plan and asked to see the pros and cons of each.

Fund Balance

With an average fund balance of 40 percent over the last ten years, the City proves that it maintains a conservative budget which allows a more measured response to a financial crisis (like the recession of 2008-2010).

The group requested the following:

- Make recommendations for alternatives that target a fund balance of no more than 35 percent of expenditures.
- When the fund balance exceeds 35 percent, identify one-time projects for funding or examine the possibility of a tax rebate.

Annexation and Municipalization

With the possibility that more cities will be incorporated in DeKalb County, the group spent some time discussing the ramifications of this trend on the City of Decatur, including the possibility of examining density issues (vertical growth) versus becoming larger geographically (horizontal growth).

They proposed the following:

- Begin the preliminary work to consider annexing along North Decatur Rd. between Clairemont Avenue to Church Street, including Suburban Plaza.
- Determine the level of support and incorporate feedback from stakeholders as well as with the legislative delegation.
- Depending on the nature of an annexation request, it may be most appropriate to refer requests to the Board of Education for initial consideration.

Affordable Housing

The group will initiate a joint work session in late spring with the Decatur Housing Authority to introduce themselves to the new Executive Director and to discuss areas of joint cooperation.

Community Arts

- Look for ways to fund (seed money) for a consistent public arts program in Decatur.
- Create a virtual gallery of the City's art collection on the website

No Smoking Policy

- Launch an awareness campaign with restaurant managers in regard to upcoming requirements restricting smoking at exterior tables. . Hold off on a public awareness campaign until later in the year, closer to the implementation date.
- Explore a partnership with MARTA to create a no smoking zone from Church Street to Swanton Way, incorporating the MARTA plaza.
- Identify possible places where people visiting Decatur can smoke, in other words, smoking zones as well a non smoking zones.

Composting

- Explore composting options with the new garden.
- Look for ways to divert waste to composting sites.

Public Awareness and Public Access of Facilities

- Launch a public awareness program to show people what has been done with the bond money. Particularly show the new public features of the Decatur Recreation Center.
- Determine when, and for what programs, it is appropriate to restrict access for non-residents to Decatur facilities and programs. ,

Roles and Responsibilities
City Commissioner
City of Decatur

Qualities needed to function effectively as a City Commissioner:

- Smart--ability to digest large amounts of material quickly
- Great listener
- Discerning--Knows when to get out of the way
- Willing to learn
- Exercise sound judgment
- Educator
- Committed to the greater good of the City
- Steward
- Consensus builder
- Decision maker
- High integrity
- Self-motivator
- Willing to do homework
- Civic minded
- Visionary
- Team player
- Nonpartisan

Duties of a City Commissioner:

- Performs lots of outside reading--Must do homework
- Appoints boards and commissions
- Attends all Commission meetings as well as many meetings of boards, sub groups and community groups.
- Works with the City Manager to make sure all agenda items are timely
- Acts as the "face" of the community. Represents the community to outside entities
- Acts as a guide or connector between City Hall and the community
- Makes important decisions that affect the community
- Works within the processes that are inherent with the City-Manager form of government
- Commits lots of time to the job
- Recognizes strengths of others

Duties of the Mayor

- Team Leader
- Conducts Commission Meetings
- Attends meetings, events outside of the city to represent the City of Decatur
- Maintains both an internal and external focus

Duties of the Mayor Pro-Tem

- Maintains internal focus along with the other commissioners
- Serves in the role of Mayor when the Mayor is away