



Decatur City Commission Retreat 2013
Leadership Center at Columbia Seminary

May 31, 2013

The retreat focused on creating a road map for the City of Decatur for the remainder of 2013. The group also welcomed one new Commissioner and two new staff.

Major Issues for Discussion

The School GO Bond
Communication Channels to the Public
Annexation
Development Balance
Diversity--Affordable Housing
Neighborhood Development
Board Appointments

Other issues mentioned but not discussed:

Public Safety
Status of Zoning Updates
Strategic Planning for retiring staff
Roles and responsibilities of City Commission vs. Staff

Goals and next steps per issue:

- The School GO Bond

Conduct a Work Session in early July with the School Board (BoE) to discuss the potential bond issue:

- 1) Walk the City Commission through the numbers, e.g., enrollment projections;
- 2) Show how the BoE determined the bond issue amounts;
- 3) What is the financial impact on the taxpayers for both the debt service and the future operating cost associated with the classroom additions; where will revenue come from?
- 4) What is the additional cost of opening Westchester?

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- 5) What are the contingency plans if the referendum does not happen or does not pass?

Outside of the bond issuance – what does the BoE want to know from the City? Impact of different types of growth on school enrollment?

Explore the possibility of a joint BoE/City Commission retreat sometime after January 2014.

- Communication Channels to the Public

The staff will explore better ways to track, follow-up and report to the City Commission on requests from the public.

- Annexation

With the new activity associated with the possibility of a City of Briarcliff and other new cities near or adjacent to the City of Decatur, discussions about the potential impact on Decatur were held.

Actions to be taken include:

- 1) The City Manager will present potential maps to the City Commission that address potential city limits based on proposed city limits for new cities;
- 2) The Mayor will meet with the key leaders in the state delegation to discuss Decatur's interest;
- 3) Discuss annexation issues with the BoE, possibly during the proposed work session.

- Development balance

The group discussed the changes to the Zoning ordinances that were made in December and had been applied in March, 2013 and whether changes needed to be considered.

Suggestions for “tweaks” to the ordinance included:

Consider clarifying development standards. For example,

- 1) Define “effective” screening.
- 2) What existing uses are grandfathered?
- 3) The level of site development requirements (e.g., streetscape requirements) that are applicable to the whole site once some significant percentage of the site is disturbed for new or re-development.

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- 4) Consider standards for subdivision of commercial properties.
 - 5) Provide example of effects of height limiting plane/35-foot building height.
 - 6) Allow for expanded input at required public meeting. Consider follow-up meetings at the discretion of the Planning Director.

- Diversity--Affordable Housing

The group recognized that diversity means more than racial diversity. Diversity also includes age as well as a mix of alternative family units. Looking ahead at the development of affordable housing beyond apartments, the group suggested the following:

- 1) Look at cluster-housing as a possibility;
- 2) Put together a task force to look at ordinances to see where affordable housing could be included;
- 3) Continue to support the Housing Authority
- 4) Be pro-active with sites that come on the market.

- Neighborhood Development

With an eye toward managing the number of single-family home demolitions, the group suggested the following:

- 1) Look for ways to incentivize positive development
- 2) Examine ordinances for ways to better reflect the possible desired scale of home development
- 3) Explore options for creating demolition restrictions, including lengthening time requirements, increasing fees, etc.

- Board Appointments

- 1) The City Manager will provide a list of all Board Members and their current terms to the City Commission;
- 2) The process for appointing and re-appointing board members will be reviewed.