

CITY OF MELBOURNE, FLORIDA
MINUTES – SPECIAL MEETING BEFORE CITY COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 5, 2008



A special meeting of the City Council was held in the City Council Chamber, 900 East Strawbridge Avenue, and was called to order at 6:30 p.m. p.m. by Mayor Harry C. Goode, Jr.

1. Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Roll Call.

Present:	Harry C. Goode, Jr.	Mayor
	John Thomas	Council Member, District 4
	Cheryl Palmer	Council Member, District 5
	Joanne Corby	Council Member, District 6
	Jack M. Schluckebier, Ph.D.	City Manager
	Paul R. Gougelman, III	City Attorney
	Cathleen A. Wysor	City Clerk
	Amy W. Elliott	Deputy City Manager

Absent:	Kathy Meehan	Vice-Mayor, District 3 (ill)
	Richard Contreras	Council Member, District 1 (schedule conflict)
	Mark LaRusso	Council Member, District 2 (out of town)

3. COUNCIL DISCUSSION: Employee Satisfaction Survey – Focus Group Report

Deputy City Manager Amy Elliott introduced the item, and Acting Personnel Director Carol Burns provided a summary of events following employee satisfaction survey. The following is an excerpt from the agenda report:

The Employee Satisfaction Survey Focus Group Report was distributed to Council in September. Memoranda summarizing the focus group history, process, and report, along with the Department Directors' comments are included in the agenda material.

The focus group process was an element of the approved action plan, which was in response to "areas for improvement" identified by the Employee Satisfaction Survey. The survey was reviewed and the proposed action plan approved by Council on January 8, 2008.

Focus Group Participation

Of the 29 functional work groups surveyed, 15 were selected for the focus group process because they met the threshold for inclusion by having ratings of 6.50 or less and/or 6.00 or less in at least one of six survey categories or an individual question. Of the 15 functional work groups identified for focus group participation, three (Police Operations, Police Support, and Water Production) had issues in all six categories; two (Fire Operations A and Fire Operations C) had issues in three to four categories; nine (Information Technology, Utility Billing and Collection, Fire Operations B, Parks Maintenance, Engineering, Streets Management, Water Reclamation, Water Distribution, and Airport Terminal Building) had issues in one to two categories; and one (Fleet Management) didn't have any categories that tripped the threshold but had some individual question ratings that were below 6.0.

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Brevard Community College was retained to facilitate the focus group process. BCC randomly selected the focus group participants from lists of employees in the work groups and conducted sessions to identify employee concerns, provide recommendations to address these concerns, and to provide feedback on what is going well.

The focus group process was valuable because it provided another avenue for some employees to express their feelings outside the work environment and typical supervisory reporting structure. This gives us the opportunity to review these comments to learn how to improve our operations and processes and/or better communicate and educate about existing practices to clear up confusion or misunderstanding.

Focus Group Recommendations

Although some focus group recommendations were department specific, the following were included in all the focus groups:

- *More diversity training*
- *Leadership and manager training*
- *Better communication in the performance evaluation system*
- *Concerns about sufficient budget for resources and staffing*

Action Plan

While the focus groups were being held over the spring and summer, Department Directors were implementing action plans. In some cases, actions in response to recommendations overlapped with the focus group process. Department Directors will continue to take action for department specific recommendations, and City management as a group will be taking action as identified in Ms. Elliott's memo to address the four recommendations listed above.

Further, to ensure that feedback on the actions taken as a result of the survey and focus groups are communicated to employees, Department Directors will provide reports to all their respective employees on actions taken to address issues and recommendations six and twelve months from now. It is also recommended that a future focus group process be held in 12 months to assess employees' perceptions.

Ms. Burns concluded her review and said that she hopes Council finds the action plan acceptable.

Mrs. Palmer noted that diversity training was recommended throughout all departments. She asked for an explanation of where that perception came from. Additionally, diversity training is included in the outlined solutions; however, it seems the need for training was identified for management and leadership rather than the regular employees.

Mrs. Elliott explained that the City had a diversity training program several years ago; our employees are familiar with the concept. The survey and the focus groups revealed that employees wanted more training. She confirmed for Mrs. Palmer that she's not saying

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managers don't need the training; however, it was a recommendation among all employees.

Mrs. Palmer stated that there was an across the board call for leadership training and more understanding by upper management; however, there are few solutions offered by the Department Directors.

Mrs. Elliott agreed and said it needs to be a citywide perspective. In response, Personnel is being charged with developing and implementing leadership and management training.

Mrs. Palmer commented that when performance measures are not in place and expectations are constantly changing, it's difficult for someone to do what's expected. She added that she believes that is one of the problems with performance evaluations – employees need to know what the performance is expected to be. New hires do not need to be thrown out there with little instruction. Mrs. Palmer concluded by saying that the City needs to lay out citywide procedures in addition to policies that are specific to departments.

Mr. Thomas said that the feedback he's received from personnel in the Fire and Police Departments is that they haven't seen much in regard to actions taken in response to the focus groups. Mr. Thomas asked how staff has been communicating its plans to the employees.

Mrs. Elliott replied that Department Directors should be communicating with their employees. She added that everyone has been reminded not to assume employees know certain actions taken are the result of focus group recommendations or the employee survey. Maybe action has occurred but it hasn't been directly stated that it's related. Mrs. Elliott stated that she is recommending Department Directors write a memo to every employee at six-month intervals about the steps that have been taken. Written communication needs to back up verbal contact.

Mr. Thomas said that in the Police Department there is great concern about the command staff not being held accountable, pulling their weight, and being held to the same standards as the rest of the department. He asked if there is an action plan in response to that.

Police Chief Don Carey stated that he holds all members of his staff accountable. He added that if any employee has a specific issue, he would be happy to address that. The Chief noted that there seems to be different factions within the department with different ideas. The department has been through extensive leadership training. He monitors command staff activity and hasn't noticed the lack of accountability.

Mr. Thomas said there is a perception that the command staff has special rules with regard to compensatory time. Another is that the command staff delegates most of its work to sergeants and lieutenants.

Chief Carey replied that's good information and he'll take a look at the delegation issue. With regard to compensatory time, he stressed that they are held to the same standard. Council Member Thomas added that it is his understanding the City Manager has addressed compensatory time.

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Mrs. Palmer said she is pleased to see that the Police Chief plans to spend more time on the night shift one on one with the officers. She commented that this may clear up some of the problems.

Mr. Schluckebier said that he doesn't think this is reflected in the report, but in the last 30 – 45 days the Police Chief has been engaging in succession planning in the organization. Regarding performance evaluations, throughout the organization some departments/divisions believe they are fine, some believe they are too explicit/not explicit enough, and some believe they should be tied to raises. However, the Police Chief, as a result of the focus group issues, has taken the initiative to collect performance evaluation tools engaged by other jurisdictions similar to Melbourne. We don't necessarily require each department to use the same personnel evaluation tool; it's not a one size fits all.

Mr. Thomas asked when the focus groups will reconvene and whether they will consist of the same employees. Mrs. Elliott said her recommendation is to reconvene the groups 12 months from now. The City needs time for the ideas to gel and to evaluate perceptions. She added that another recommendation would be to have focus groups across the entire City rather than limited to targeted groups.

Mrs. Corby stated that she is disappointed we don't have the full attendance of Council. It is a slap in the face to the Council Members and staff who are present. She added that she's not sure when staff knew these members would not be present; however, she would have appreciated knowing. Mrs. Corby added that she recommended this workshop meeting and it was her intent to allow the Council Members who are leaving to participate and provide input to the process.

Continuing, Mrs. Corby said that Council was supposed to receive cost information, including the cost of having the focus groups, overtime, staff's time, etc. The report was also supposed to include the number of times the focus groups met. She pointed out that she realizes the City spent \$500 each time a focus group met; however, she would still like to see that report so Council has some idea of the total cost.

Mrs. Corby announced that this is not the first version of the report. She's disappointed that when management was asked about the report, the response was that the report had not been submitted. Additionally, when the City received the report on June 30, she would like to know why staff asked for it to be reformatted. Mrs. Corby stated that she believes management was being dishonest with its boss. "Trust" is an issue that employees identified and if the management team is not willing to be truthful with its boss, then why would we expect the employees to think management is being truthful with them.

Mrs. Corby pointed out that we have 29 functional work groups and 15 – more than half – scored below the threshold. There were wonderful suggestions provided during the focus group meetings and she doesn't believe Council can solve them at this meeting. However, when the new Council Members get on board, hopefully they will be provided with a copy of the report. This meeting is just breaking the surface.

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Mayor Goode pointed out that Council Members-Elect Nowlin and Tasker are present in the audience.

Mr. Schluckebier stated that he strongly objects to Mrs. Corby's characterization that the report is dishonest.

Mrs. Corby asked Mr. Schluckebier if he had the report when the inquiry was made about the availability of the report. Mr. Schluckebier replied he did not. Mrs. Corby disagreed and stated that management had it; it was here at City Hall.

Mrs. Elliott said when she was asked about the report, she honestly answered. She informed Council that she did not receive the first draft until the second week of July; that was the initial draft. Staff met with representatives from BCC and discussed the draft. The only changes made involved reorganization to make the report more readable. Mrs. Elliott stressed that no substance was changed in the report.

Mrs. Corby said that on July 8, Council Member Thomas questioned the completion of the report and Council was told the wrap up would be in 30 days. Council asked specifically if the report had been received. Mrs. Corby stated that the point she is trying to make is trust issues have been identified in the organization. Both the draft and the final copy contain lots of comments from concerned employees. For example, employees do not know and cannot properly state our vision statement. If the City has people doing a job and they don't know why they're doing the job, we're in trouble. It also concerns her when management uses the budget as an excuse to not make changes. That is a problem because it creates fear. Mrs. Corby said she could go on and on about this issue; however, her goal is for Melbourne to continue on the course of not only being successful, but being the leader in accountability, transparency and efficiency.

Mrs. Corby continued and said that before another focus group begins, the City needs to look at restructuring. Many of the suggestions are excellent and right on target. She said she doesn't think Council needs to stop with this. And, she doesn't think that going forward with everything that has been suggested is the solution. She envisions a bunch of people going off in different directions trying desperately to do a lot of busy work. It's making the City more inefficient and it's frustrating. Mrs. Corby concluded by saying that hopefully when the new Council Members come on board, Council can look at some of the departments and put into play some of the suggestions before we go any further. She noted that there are a lot of good suggestions that have been made.

The City Manager reported that the departments intend to make as many of those suggestions as they can and to report on them. As with any suggestion program, there are some suggestions that really aren't feasible and don't make any sense. There was an effort to sort through the suggestions and to make progress where problems have been identified; that's our plan.

Mrs. Corby replied that the department specific suggestions are fine; however, they don't necessarily link to the overall strategy of the organization. If we are not connected that way, we're wasting our time, energy and money.

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Mr. Thomas said that first, it's important that the employees know the process of doing the survey and the integrity of our staff are without failure. And, unless there is a dramatic, substantive difference between the two reports, he would like to make sure that the employees know they can trust in the process. Mr. Thomas stressed that staff worked very hard to maintain security and ensure that employees' identities would not be revealed. The information was protected and an independent organization conducted the focus groups. From his observations, Mr. Thomas said he has witnessed the City Manager and Mrs. Elliott conducting themselves in the highest regard.

Mr. Thomas concluded by saying he would like to see communication improved. There should be actual verbal communication between Department Directors and the employees about what we're doing, feedback, etc.

Mrs. Palmer said she would like for the City to go forward with good, concise job descriptions; good policies and procedures for departments; consistent standardized performance evaluations geared toward a specific job; and succession planning. Mrs. Palmer commended Leisure Services Director Mary Ann Bowman for her report, which laid out specific actions she intends to take that are absolutely in response to problems and complaints from the employees.

Mrs. Corby asked where Council intends to go from here. The Mayor said that the plan is outlined and Mrs. Elliott has indicated the focus groups will reconvene in a year. He added that he believes this is a living document.

Mrs. Corby briefly discussed the process of developing the survey questions and said that it's understandable leadership focuses on all the good things that are said; it reinforces pride. That's where most companies end up spinning their wheels and wasting time and money. We need to narrow in on the items that are negative or that did not score well. She repeated that more than half of the work groups did not score well. The City Council has the opportunity to direct certain policies and procedures. One example is to implement a uniform employee performance evaluation system tied to measurables.

Mrs. Corby reminded Council that she would be willing to share her area of expertise with the different Department Directors and with staff to help reach the goal. She stressed that she doesn't want the City to wait a year because it gives staff the impression the path we're on is in the right direction.

Council asked staff to summarize and state its intentions.

Mrs. Elliott agreed that the City should not simply focus on the good and brush the ugly stuff away. She noted that staff made a point to have a very high threshold to establish a focus group. The employee survey ratings were zero to 10. A score of five was okay; however, the City did not accept five as an acceptable standard. We said that if a category was below 6.5 or an individual question was below 6, then we needed to take a closer look and delve further into department issues.

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Mrs. Elliott continued and stated that the purpose of the focus groups was to help summarize the variety of comments on the survey and to focus on issues in a particular area. She added that she views this as a living process and she does not want to let it stop and die. Many of the departments put a lot of time and effort into this and it's been a very valuable process. It brought to light some of the things that the City needs to pay attention to. We clearly have to work on communication, leadership training, job performance, evaluations, succession planning, etc. The survey and the report provide a road map and Personnel has been assigned the task of monitoring and follow up.

Mrs. Corby asked if Council plans to place this on a future agenda. The Mayor replied not right now. Mrs. Corby said she would like to hear from the other members.

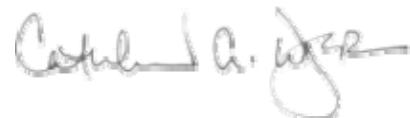
Mr. Thomas said it would be wise to let the new Council Members come on board and review the material. All it takes is an idea and four votes to return the item. Additionally, he said he's sure the City Manager will update Council. In the meantime, Council can contact staff with questions or concerns.

Mrs. Corby thanked Council Member Palmer for taking the high road and attending this meeting.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Thomas/Goode to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.



City Clerk – 11/19/2008

Approved by Council: _____