

Future Task Force Members in attendance were City Manager Byron Smith, Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan, Mayor Dave Drotzmann, Fred Maiocco, Kim Puzey, Margaret Saylor, Maria Duron, Tamara Mabbot, Dennis Burke, Philip Hamm, and Donald Daggett.

Community Livability Asset Oversight Committee in attendance were Angela Treadwell, Debbie Pedro, Joe Basile, Councilor Jackie Myers, Robert Green, Chuck Barnes, Jacob Zumwalt, and Jim Whalley. Also present were Lilly Alarcon-Strong, Clark Worth, and Liz Marvin.

Clark Worth from Barney & Worth, Inc called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm and thanked everyone for attending and participating. Mr. Worth stated he will be sharing the results from the second community survey. Mr. Worth reminded the group that they are working towards a vision of priorities for the next 5 to 10 years that will make Hermiston more livable for current and future community members. Mr. Worth stated the Committee has done a great job with community outreach, as they have received over 900 returned surveys this time around, with more being submitted daily.

Mr. Worth reminded the committee what some of the best Hermiston qualities are: a majority of the population is young, with an average age of 32.4 years vs 39.3 years state average, a high labor rate, and a prime crossroads location. The community has weaknesses in: retail and tourism sales, low educational attainment, and limited housing options with no housing over \$300,000.00.

Mr. Worth stated the 978 returned community surveys, are made up of: 50% Hermiston residents; with 51% business owners, 51% workers who live outside of Hermiston, and 600 students.

Phil Hamm asked Mr. Worth if there was a way to separate the returned community surveys by students and non-students.

Mr. Worth stated yes, and he would work on that for the next meeting.

Mr. Worth stated based on the second survey results received, the community feels prioritizing the items below would best help the livability of Hermiston; in order by top priority:

- With 516 votes, Year round aquatic center.
- With 455 votes, Revitalize downtown.
- With 443 votes, Parks, trails, and sports fields.
- With 377 votes, Youth Orientated Community Center- Boys and Girls Club/YMCA
- With 213 votes, Arts and Culture Center- performing arts center, expanding the library, and building a museum.

Mr. Worth also displayed the number of individuals who stated they would support the items above through volunteering or helping pay for the improvements, as well as those who felt the items were not a priority.

Mr. Worth stated recruiting professionals in rural areas has been a recognized problem since 1925. According to the 2015 Colorado Health Institute, factors that influence where rural physicians practice are:

- 70% Recreation/leisure activities
- 55% Good place to raise children

- 44% Opportunity for professional independence
- 40% Desire to retire in rural area
- 39% Work environment/hours per week

Mr. Worth stated although this is specific to physicians, this does apply to all professionals. Another big factor is perception matters. One of the major items that continues to be mentioned is the unkempt image of Highway 395 gateway. Mr. Worth stated major factors that commuting professional consider is Location, and the benefits of homeownership in rural areas, which are:

- Cheaper property than metro areas, with less competition
- Proximity to outdoor recreation
- Small town experience for children; perception of safety
- Lower taxes
- Less regulation: planning, zoning, building codes

Mr. Worth recommended strongly marketing Hermiston to permanently relocate professionals by:

- Leveraging Hermiston's benefits and branding the community accordingly
- Targeting the right candidates
- Establishing a formal process for familiarizing candidates with Hermiston

Kim Puzey asked Dennis Burke if there would be a way to recruit physicians to the area by investing in projects such as these.

Dennis Burke stated the hospital is a 501-C3, and therefore, is limited on what it can directly invest in, and what referrals business can give.

Jackie Myers stated the State of Oregon also gives large tax credits to rural physicians.

Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan stated he has done research regarding existing facilities and lack thereof. Currently there is:

- No full-service year-round aquatic facility
- Current uses at the Conference Center doesn't leave adequate space/time to meet needs for a youth & families community center
- Performing arts: there are school theaters, but with limited availability for community uses
- No museum, cultural center, visitor attraction
- 125 acres of parks, which is 73% of national standards
- Active Downtown Urban Renewal Program in place since 2013- with the biggest financial projects being: Developing a Festival Street on 2nd Street, from Main St to Gladys St., and façade grants for qualifying businesses to name a couple.

Mr. Worth stated one of the top questions were, "can we combine a community center with programs and activities for all ages and an aquatic center, etc" the answer is yes. There are facilities that combine many of the needs and wants of Hermiston residents. The facilities below were funded by public and private contributions, and are being run by public and private entities:

- Salvation Army Ray & Joan Kroc Community Center in Salem, opened in 2009
- Southwest Community Center in Portland, opened in 1999
- Lincoln City Community Center which is closer to Hermiston's size

Mr. Worth asked that the committee discuss ideas on what assets could be attractive enough to change perceptions about relocating to Hermiston instead of commuting, and visiting the area as well.

Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan stated there are currently about 1,600 people per day, that travel from Benton and Franklin County to Umatilla County for work and about 8,800 jobs located within city limits. Based on those numbers, there is a substantial amount of individuals traveling to work in Hermiston in all types of employment fields, not just professionals.

There was some discussion regarding focusing on age groups of 18 to 24 year olds, as the community is made up of a younger population. Specific items that were discussed were higher educational facilities, with special programs in health care and IT to attract professionals to the Hospital and IT centers in the area, arts and cultural activities, and places to visit with family and friends and enjoy the surroundings, like outdoor cafés, bistros, breweries, ice cream and donut shops that would be located in downtown; more attractions, not just a facility. Other big pushes were beautifying Hermiston, and activities and functions that will attract single individuals, with more housing and shopping options like the tri-cities area.

Mr. Worth stated the top two community priorities, based on survey results were an indoor aquatic facility combined with a community center. The combined community center can offer any items, activities, and facilities that the community envisions for all age groups. The second was to revitalize the downtown area. Mr. Worth asked if these items were what the committee also envisioned as priorities.

There was a question regarding the use of the current Conference and Community Center; based on the conversations being had, is it not being considered as a usable facility for these ideas.

Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan stated the current Conference and Community Center is being used on a regular basis with activities and rentals, therefore, having a facility such as what is being discussed, would not be able to be scheduled around rentals and other uses that the facility already accommodates to.

(Jackie Myers exited the meeting)

Mayor Drotzmann stated he thinks the vision for this process is to first, help Hermiston be more livable for those already residing in Hermiston and second, to attract more people to visit and relocate to Hermiston. Focusing on the priorities that the community wants is important, but realizing Hermiston is never going to be a metropolitan area is equally as important. This is a good thing, an asset and selling point for Hermiston.

Jim Whalley suggested working with surrounding communities to bring in more tourism and visitor destinations would be an asset as well.

It was asked if the survey can be separated into respondents who do not live in Hermiston and see what their perspective is about Hermiston.

Mr. Worth stated yes, and it can be presented at the next meeting.

(Mayor Drotzmann exited the meeting)

Public Comment

Liz Marvin stated there are many students who are leaving for post-secondary education and cannot come back to work in Hermiston because Hermiston does not have the jobs that will reflect their degree. Mrs. Marvin stated Hermiston is a very livable community, and it has potential to be even more livable.

Tamara Mabbot stated the County has partnered with BMCC, and Eastern Oregon Business Solutions to do a skilled workforce survey. Businesses are being surveyed to see what their needs are to be able to expand. The survey results should be ready in February and will be shared with the City and School District. This information is also important for Hermiston's growing future.

Mr. Worth asked the committee if their two top priorities were in-line with what the community stated their two top priorities are; an indoor aquatic facility combined with a community center, and to revitalize the downtown area.

There was a consensus from the committee that these were the two items to focus on, but more conversation needs to be had on how to accomplish these items, specifically funding and long-term upkeep of a facility of this nature.

Mr. Worth stated there will be a Community Event the week of January 11th, with an estimated City Council presentation on January 25th, and asked if there are committee members who are willing to volunteer their time to present the results of the Community Livability surveys and do outreach to local community groups.

Jacob Zumwalt, Don Daggett, Chuck Barnes, Debbie Pedro, Jim Whalley, and Margaret Saylor all volunteered.

There were no other comments and the meeting was adjourned at 1:30 pm. The next meeting will be Monday, February 8th from 12:00 pm to 1:30 pm at Umatilla Electric Cooperative.