

**Council for the Village of Yellow Springs
Special Meeting: Draft 2022 Goals Session**

Virtual @ 4:00 P.M.

Monday, October 25, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

President of Council Brian Housh called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

ROLL CALL

Present were President Housh, and Council members Kevin Stokes, Marianne MacQueen and Laura Curliss. Also present were Village Manager Josue Salmeron, Public Works Director Johnnie Burns, Finance Director Matt Dillon, Planning and Zoning Administrator Denise Swinger, Chief Carlson and Solicitor Breanne Parcels. Lisa Kreeger joined the meeting at 4:30.

2022 GOALS SESSION

Housh began the session by framing the discussion, stating the priority that there should not be any separation between Administrative and Council goals, stressing that these are “Village Goals,” not “Council Goals”. Housh then asked each Council member to make a statement pertinent to their perspective for a maximum of 10 minutes per person.

MacQueen broke her comments into four areas; Housing; Economy; Sustainability and Resilience and Staff/Council relationships.

MacQueen expressed frustration at the “lack of progress on housing”. She complained that there was only one local developer, that being Home, Inc. She asked for a task force for “how we can do more through zoning to address housing needs.” She stated that Village government “does not have to tools” to “move the needle” and stated that the YSDC would be critical to this effort.

MacQueen commented that “we have to be ready for climate change.” She stated that for whatever reason, staff does not support this.

MacQueen stated that economic growth such as local entrepreneurship should be supported in any way possible, including zoning.

Regarding Council/Staff relationship, MacQueen commented that “I don’t think it works to expect that the Village Manager can take the things from Council and take it out to the Staff, and from Staff bring it back up to Council. I think we have a breakdown. To the degree we have staff thinking one thing or wanting one thing and acting one way. . . I think it’s dysfunctional.”

MacQueen commented further that “maybe Council members need to go to staff meetings. . . I think there is a disconnect and I don’t think it serves us.”

Stokes commented on the issue of housing, stating that the issue should be addressed as an overall issue, since the Village needs all types of housing, as well as affordable housing. He suggested construction of an apartment complex, perhaps on the Oberer donated land or on the Glass Farm. He stated that the Village needs to have a relationship with builders.

Stokes commented that the Village does not yet have a partnership with Home, Inc. and this should be addressed. He commented on building relationships with other builders as well.

Stokes noted the need to continue to improve infrastructure, and included broadband as an aspect of infrastructure. He commented further that social services can be considered an aspect of infrastructure, and that this should be followed up upon when looking at PD funding.

Finally, Stokes stressed his interest in sustainable growth, and his position that Council should take care not to be considered “anti-growth” as past Councils have been.

Curliss presented a re-visioned goals document, with her own categories.

Curliss commented that “it is probably time” for a Charter review. She stated her belief that a strong Mayor form of government should be considered, an idea which would be visited during a Charter review.

Curliss reiterated her support for a more conservative budget, one that holds a six-month reserve.

Curliss stressed the need for a Finance Committee, and stressed her support for a Council committee system. She opined that a Council committee structure would bring greater citizen participation.

Curliss commented on affordability, stating that Council can affect three areas: utilities; fees and taxes. She spoke against tax levies, and stated that she would like to find a way to achieve community goals without affecting the tax burden.

With regard to residential development, Curliss stated that she did not understand the Council push to be involved in residential development. She commented that density means cutting down trees and putting more houses in a smaller space, which negatively impacts storm water runoff. “when you build to urban density you need urban infrastructure,” she stated.

With regard to infill, Curliss stated that there are buildings sitting empty, and these should be considered as infill potential.

Curliss asked for continued investment in infrastructure improvements and lauded the current administration for their efforts in this regard.

Curliss suggested incentive programs for property owners to assist in addressing I&I and water loss.

Regarding the CASP Coordinator, Curliss stated that if there is a coalition of community groups who wish to support the effort moving forward, perhaps the Village could contribute some portion of the cost. She suggested that the funds could derive from savings to the water utility.

Curliss stated her support for a large solar project, ideally on industrial legacy land.

Curliss commented on her passion for dark skies.

Kreeger stated her desire that the YSDC can assist in possible partnership to repurpose empty buildings at Antioch.

Kreeger reiterated her strong support for infrastructure improvements, noting that it was “neglected for a long time.”

Kreeger encouraged creativity in approaching the budget, since maintaining the status quo would be a mistake.

Kreeger noted her support for a Citizen Review Board, stating that this effort should continue to be moved forward, and suggested reintroduction of the Justice System Collaboration Committee as a possible means of impetus for this effort as well as for movement on Body Worn Cameras.

Regarding environmental resiliency, Kreeger stated the importance of Planning Commission in this effort, pointing out storm water issues, infill, building requirements, etc. She commented that acting locally is what is within Council's scope.

Housh commented upon the importance of positivity and potential for youth leadership.

In response to a query from Housh, Curliss stated that her push for a Council committee structure failed because of her strong belief that citizens and staff should not have a vote. She stated that others on the committee had disagreed with this belief, and the initiative had therefore failed.

Kreeger noted that she had been a part of the committee group, and that there were two issues on which the group could not reach consensus. Those were the voting issue and the issue of whether or not to have a streets committee. "We were, with one dissenting vote, in favor of moving forward with a recommendation to Council." Kreeger stated that on the basis of her disagreement with the majority, Curliss had refused to permit the recommendation to proceed to Council. "It was a shame." Kreeger said, stating that she would be willing to become involved in this initiative again if there were a strong commitment among participants that there would be give and take.

Housh asked Curliss whether shared services should be codified in some fashion.

Curliss stated that it should be a goal of government.

Housh allowed Staff 15 minutes to respond to Council's comments.

Salmeron responded that I&I and water loss have been significantly addressed. He commented on ongoing efforts to address economic sustainability, and noted recent projects as bringing in over 60 million in local investment.

Salmeron noted that patience and alignment are required to bring these major projects to fruition.

Salmeron argued that the broadband initiative could translate to greater affordability.

Salmeron pointed out that significant income loss due to COVID have presented challenges to the provision of services at the level previously offered.

In response to MacQueen's earlier comments, Salmeron stated that he is "not sure where this is coming from." He commented that there are sometimes differences of opinion between Staff and Council as to what is the most effective expenditure of time and money to achieve certain goals. He commented his concern that the Council Committee structure may be an attempt to undermine the Council/Manager form of government.

Curliss responded that this was in no way her intention in promoting the Council Committee structure.

Housh stated that "clarity around the process of communications" would be good.

Salmeron commented that there is a high level of interest in addressing housing needs, and commented his commitment to working with developers and to looking at repurposing of properties.

Regarding infrastructure for housing, Salmeron stated that there are policies in place to mitigate the effects of infill, and that further challenges to the storm water infrastructure would need to be addressed as they arise. Salmeron noted the efforts to reline sewers as key in this effort.

MacQueen stated that “going to staff meetings is not a matter of Council directing staff, but of Council hearing directly from staff.”

Swinger noted that the zoning Code was revamped in 2013, and allows for a great deal of infill, including the creation of PNDs. She noted changes to the subdivision regulations directed at managing storm water. Regarding the “anti-business attitude”, Swinger opined that creation of a building department will help greatly with that perception.

Swinger commented that Charter change is an involved process, and cautioned that “this is a “sacred cow””.

Swinger stated that perhaps the Village could do better at educating the public as to why water costs are as high as they are.

Swinger expressed her regret at losing Andrew Klein as a local builder. She noted that there are local builders still here. She commented that she has worked for over a year with Oberer, and worked to help them to agree to annexation so that the services the Village is mandated to provide to the area could yield a better return, and so that a more diverse housing product could be offered.

Finally, Swinger said, she had understood that the Environmental Commission was going to provide education about the managed natural landscapes and the weeds ordinance, but this has not occurred. She encouraged that this be followed up upon.

There was some discussion regarding the cost associated with a new water plant as opposed to a rebuild.

Brian Carlson commented on the importance of hiring local. He noted that the economy is growing, and as it does, Public Safety needs to keep up, and this should be kept in mind with regard to staffing.

Carlson stated that he is in favor of a Citizen Review Board, but commented that the budget associated with this initiative is more than the cost of the Community Outreach Specialist.

Burns expressed frustration with the way the meeting began, stating that his interpretation of the comments made by Council members is that Staff are not accomplishing Council’s goals, and that Council wants to review Staff recommendations before taking any action, even when the recommendation is a professional one.

Burns agreed with the sentiment of loss regarding Andrew Klein, but noted that it was not entirely about land affordability but about demands that were placed on him as a developer to build a specific percentage of affordable homes that made the project untenable, ultimately resulting in his departure from the area.

Regarding Miller Valentine as a possible developer, Burns noted that this builder had refused to pay a \$24,000 electric bill following construction of Antioch McGregor and had left this bill to be written off by the Village, ultimately.

Burns commented against excessive infill, stating that repurposing structures makes more sense.

Regarding shared services, Burns stated that the Village did not do this prior to his tenure and now does this as a matter of course.

Burns responded to the earlier conversation regarding shared services with regard to water, stating that once City of Springfield learned the amount of water required daily by the Village they were no longer interested in providing water.

MacQueen stated that she was not sure what Burns was referring to, and stated that she had not meant to imply that Staff was not working hard, and in fact, she said, this is why I believe it is important that there be direct communication between senior Staff and Council, particularly regarding projects. She commented on the difficulty of communicating clearly on zoom.

The Clerk opined that it appeared that MacQueen was stating that the Village Manager was not capable of communicating between Staff and Council or vice versa and that that impression needed to be clarified.

MacQueen denied this interpretation and stated that it is unrealistic to expect the Village Manager to be able to communicate all the information between staff and Council and vice versa. It's too much of a demand, she said. Staff can watch Council meetings, she said, but Council don't see what happens among staff, she said. She instructed the Clerk to inform her if she has inadvertently offended a Staff person.

Housh commented that refining communication processes is a general goal.

Parcels reminded Council that section 83 of the Charter specifically requires that all communication from Council to Staff flow through the Village Manager. She indicated that Council as a body does have the ability to enact changes to the Charter.

The Clerk noted that communication from Boards and Commission is set up to flow through the Council liaison, and that this is another potential sticking point that might be looked at.

Matt Dillon commented that shared services are capitalizing on economies of scale, and he is open to exploring this further.

With regard to the oft mentioned Finance Committee, Dillon asked what Council is not now getting from him that a committee would provide, and suggested that this be considered. He pointed out that administration is in place to provide rational, professional decision-making.

Dillon responded to the idea of participatory budgeting, stating that this can range from minimal involvement to a greater involvement, and asked that this be more clearly defined. He expressed his willingness to be involved in the effort.

Housh emphasized the importance of making clear to citizens how the budget is put together and how goals fit into that process.

Housh commented that a one-page explanation for each goal makes a lot of sense as Council decides which goals are possible.

Housh noted that the goals document is presented as a draft in order to incorporate the possibility of a new Council person/s. That said, he noted, not everyone's ideas about everything make it into the goals document.

Stokes responded to a comment from Dillon, asking Council to be careful about what problem they are seeking to solve. If we adopt an approach of continuous improvement, he said, we can progress without making major shifts. Stokes noted that many good things are occurring, and that more of these can be shared. He spoke against Charter change as a major initiative and not a "flight of fancy" but a real effort to make meaningful improvement.

Curliss stated that Staff should not interpret her Council committee initiative as a comment upon Staff ability to do their jobs. Council committees do the work of Council, she said, not the work of Staff.

Salmeron noted that Council has lofty goals while often Staff need to focus on basics, and he appreciated the ability to align both of these perspectives.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:00pm, Curliss MOVED, and MacQueen SECONDED a MOTION TO ADJOURN. The MOTION PASSED 5-0 on a voice vote.

Brian Housh, Council President

Attest: Judy Kintner, Clerk of Council