

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
TEAM BUILDING/PROBLEM SOLVING SESSION
CITY COUNCIL, VENICE, FLORIDA

January 11, 2013

A Team Building/Problem Solving Session of the City Council was held this date at Venice Community Center, 326 South Nokomis Avenue, Venice, Florida. Bob Bessom served as facilitator. The meeting began at 8:03 a.m.

ELECTED OFFICIALS AND OTHERS PRESENT

The following elected officials were present: Mayor John Holic, Vice Mayor Kit McKeon, and Council Members Jim Bennett, Emilio Carlesimo, Bob Daniels, Jeanette Gates, and Dave Sherman.

Also present: City Clerk Lori Stelzer, City Manager Ed Lavallee, City Attorney Bob Anderson, Recording Secretary Judy Gamel, and for certain items on the agenda: Community Development Director Chad Minor, Building Official Vince LaPorta, Information Technology Director Jeff Bolen, Information Systems Manager Nancy Hurley, Police Chief Tom McNulty, Public Works Director John Veneziano, Director of Historical Resources James Hagler, Fire Chief James Warman, Marketing and Communications Officer Pam Johnson, City Engineer Kathleen Weeden, Stormwater Engineer James Clinch, Benefits Coordinator Mary Ann Ellis, Finance Director Jeff Snyder, Chief Accountant Linda Senne, Utilities Director Len Bramble, Executive Assistant Raeanne Keefe, and Facilitator Bob Bessom.

Mr. Bessom reviewed the agenda.

Mr. Daniels distributed and read his memorandum dated January 10, 2013 expressing concerns relating to a prior Staff Team Building Retreat. Mr. Daniels suggested canceling today's workshop.

Mr. Bessom and Mr. Lavallee provided their perspectives of the Staff Team Building Retreat.

Council members offered their observations of the retreat including the anonymity of those being assessed, and interactions with staff.

Mr. Daniels left the workshop at 8:50 a.m. and did not return.

Discussion continued regarding the purpose of the retreat.

Don O'Connell, 500 Hauser Lane, clarified his public records request.

Mr. Bessom clarified that self assessment questions asked at the retreat were derived from best practices across the United States.

Mr. Bessom reviewed the purpose, process, and desired outcomes of this session including why some teams are not successful and the key elements for effective team performance. Mr. Bessom also discussed roles of team members, elements for effective team performance, and operating procedures.

Discussion followed regarding council and staff interactions and council working for betterment of the city.

Recess was taken from 9:39 a.m. until 9:58 a.m.

Discussion continued regarding following the chain of command, prioritizing tasks, and micromanaging.

(10:05) Mr. Bessom reviewed the results of the January 11, 2013 Team Building Session that included questions relating to staffing, use of available resources, communication, impacts of council decisions, establishing goals, following the chain of command, departmental objectives, financing council actions, better use of technology, and training.

Council members offered comments relating to micromanagement and financial impacts of council decisions.

Mr. Lavallee discussed staff complaints, protocols and procedures, role of the city manager, staff determining the funding of council directives, and council making policy decisions.

Mr. Bessom opened discussion relating to motivation for staff responses at the Team Building Session.

Council members offered opinions concerning council direction versus management direction, providing clear directions to staff, council micromanagement, council working effectively with the city manager, council members relaying concerns of voters, trusting staff to make decisions, need for an assistant city manager, prioritizing, responding to complaints, reprioritizing and rearranging policies, creating a council procedures manual, Venice being a small city with a great deal of activity taking place, staffing, state of the city reporting, and short term goals.

Mr. Bessom initiated discussion concerning financing council directives and council members commented on solutions costing more than problems, financial reporting, solid waste pickup schedules, consultant costs, project costs versus quality of life for city residents, in-house studies versus hiring a consultant, obtaining council input prior to initiating studies, rewriting ordinances, and providing solutions to problems as soon as possible.

(10:58) The next topic of discussion was reactive versus proactive decision making and council member comments focused on business plans, following the chain of command, council supporting staff, council self-policing, staff providing feedback, employee morale, council members' commitment to deal with issues, creating a sense of awareness, staff responding to council member requests, and strategic planning meeting structure.

Mr. Bessom asked council members to provide input regarding identifying issues and offering solutions, proactive versus reactive responses, spending money to improve the economy, millage rates, other sources of revenue, staffing priorities, whether or not an assistant city manager is needed, how would additional funding be spent, management of available resources, establishing priorities, employee training, understanding both council member and staff issues, staff not receiving pay increases, hiring additional staff, staff time spent on providing reports to council, scheduling staff reports, department heads directing staff members, council working more effectively during council meetings, creating a policies and procedures manual, and council's image as a collegial body.

Mr. Lavalley outlined processes and timing for putting results of this session into action. He commended council members for being industrious and energetic.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

ATTEST:

Mayor – City of Venice

City Clerk