

City of Norcross

*65 Lawrenceville Street
Norcross, GA 30071*



Meeting Minutes

Friday, February 7, 2020

9:00 AM

2nd Floor Community Room

Mayor and Council Retreat

Mayor Craig Newton

Mayor Pro Tem Josh Bare

Councilmember Andrew Hixson

Councilmember Elaine Puckett

Councilmember Matt Myers

Councilmember Bruce Gaynor

A. Roll Call (recorded)

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Craig Newton	Mayor	Present	
Josh Bare	Mayor Pro Tem	Present	
Andrew Hixson	Councilmember	Present	
Elaine Puckett	Councilmember	Present	
Matt Myers	Councilmember	Present	
Bruce Gaynor	Councilmember	Present	

Special Meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM by Mayor Craig Newton

B. 9:00 AM Welcome & Opening Remarks Mayor Craig Newton

C. 9:05 AM Closed for Exec Session - Personnel

D. 10:15 AM Mayor's Vision

MAYORS VISION & BEYOND

Mayor Newton presented his aspirations for the City of Norcross and his top new initiatives for 2020.

Aspirations:

- Be a welcoming community in which generations of diverse citizens can engage, create, contribute, and flourish
- Maintain a vibrant economy and continue to facilitate job growth
- Further the City's tradition of strong leadership and high level of quality services.

New Initiatives:

- Develop a Five-Year Strategic Plan
- Strategically Promote the City to Diversify Tax Base
- Means Testing and Abatements for Taxes and Utilities
- Update Five-Year Financial Forecasting Plan

Council agreed all were critical initiatives on which to focus.

E. 10:45 AM Project/Discussion Prioritization Paige Havens

- Boards and Council Communications
- Marketing/PR/Communications
- Buford Highway Redevelopment Master Plan
- Multicultural Advisory Committee
- Walk/friendly Community
- Infrastructure Planning - Other Master Plans Needed
- Holding Developers Accountable (agreements made with the City)
- Affordable/Workforce housing
- Preservation of Historic Homes
- Citizen Budget Review commission
- Community Work Program
- Railroad Pedestrian Crossing
- Annexation Planning & Preparedness
- Community Center long-term plans
- Linear Parks
- Norcross 101/Youth Commission
- Leveraging our Resources (Norcross Power)

F. 11:05 AM - 3:30 AM Council Discussions Part I, Part II, & Part III**Council's Key Priorities****COUNCIL'S KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2020**

Additionally Council members shared key projects they wanted to set forth as top priorities for 2020. They are presented in prioritized order below with key discussion points and action items listed.

Boards & Council Communication

- Each community board should have an assigned staff member and Council representative.
- Each board and their work should be directly aligned with the City's Comprehensive Plan. Each should have a working priority list that aligns with staff and council priorities.
- Effort should be made to ensure strong alignment, connectivity and collaboration between boards. Board chairs should meet collectively several times a year.
- Boards should report out quarterly to the Council as to their mission, top priorities, and support needed.
- Boards should be diligent about taking minutes and those minutes shared with Council.
- Evaluate mission and need for each board based upon current priorities of the City. Determine which should be advisory and which are decision-making.
- Identify if any additional appointments are needed to strengthen boards.
- Have Tracy Rye report back to Council after the training in March.

Marketing/PR/Communications

- Councilwoman Puckett submitted a proposal for Council review and consideration regarding greater citizen engagement in the City's marketing efforts. She proposed creation of a Media, Marketing & Communications Citizens Advisory Task Force. (see Attachment 1)
- Council feels the need to strengthen communications with citizens and constituents
- There is concern that there are multiple marketing efforts being led by different entities and there are missed cross-marketing opportunities.
(General citizen communication vs. Economic Development marketing vs. Tourism/Event messaging vs. Police Public Information Officers vs. City public relations)
- There is great need for more bilingual marketing resources.
- Not interested in replacing what we have in place now but strengthening collaboration and impact

Buford Highway Redevelopment Master Plan

- City MUST craft a vision for the Buford Highway Corridor. To ensure future development evolves in the right direction, the City needs to cast vision that the private development community can embrace and bring to life. Redevelopment will take place block-by-block, parcel-by-parcel. If there isn't a master plan in place then there will not be a coordinated effort with controlled result.
- Necessary zoning is now in place.
- Funding is the big issue - current proposal is \$75k for Jacobs Study. Council asked Tracy Rye to determine how we could leverage completed studies done to-date, in-house expertise, community partners (CID/ECG/ARC), and external consultants to generate the most efficient, effective plan.

Walk-Friendly Community Certification

- Application was submitted but denied. There is a list of steps still to accomplish. Community Development Department will present gaps back to Council.
- Sidewalks are a big piece of this designation. Norcross has a long list of substandard sidewalks that need to be repaired, as well as new sidewalks that are needed to complete connectivity. This is not a quick fix.
- One easy step that can be done is for the Council to adopt a pledge. That will be presented back to Council at the next meeting for completion.

- Council brainstormed possible funding to help with this effort (CDBG Grants, Development Work, ARC) - staff was asked to seek out other grant opportunities to help fund this effort.
- Council asked that staff work closely with Sustainable Norcross to push this effort forward. They can help identify/monitor gaps, staff can prioritize and the Council will fund as needed.

Multicultural Advisory Committee

- Council wants to establish an advisory board/committee to spur cross-cultural community engagement. There are City residents that feel absent from government and don't feel their voices and needs are heard. Group should focus on addressing inclusivity.
- Councilman Hixson has agreed to lead the charge on this effort.
- Communication to all residents needs to be expanded, in multiple languages.
- Marketing/PR Communications team is asked to provide a cost/benefit analysis to mail newsletter to all citizens.
- A new multi-lingual resident welcome packet should be created.
- Explore launching a City Ambassador program to help citizens feel greater like stakeholders in Norcross. Another goal of this effort would be grow future City leaders. As the Gateway International Festival moves to Pinnacle Park, that could be a great place to launch this effort. Graduates of the City's Citizen Police Academy would be good sources for referrals.

Infrastructure/Master Planning

- There is a desire to work long-term for Norcross to be designated a "Smart City." We are in the fact-finding/researching phase now to determine exactly what that means for Norcross. Might be good to develop a citizens/business advisory board of highly technical experts for the staff and Council to work with. Could there be an opportunity for Norcross to open a fiber connectivity utility to better position the City for the future? What other new revenue generating opportunities could exist in this space? How can we strengthen WiFi/interconnectivity across the City? How can we help low-income families have access to the technology they need to better succeed? What technology-related economic development incentives could be put into place? Councilman Myers has agreed to lead this charge.
- There is also need to develop a 30-year plan to bury utilities.
- A sidewalk master plan is also needed to address the ongoing need for connectivity and walkability.

Developer Accountability

- Councilman Gaynor asked for more information about how the City can hold developers accountable when conditions are put into place during the permitting process. Tracy Rye explained strengths and weaknesses to current process.
- Current Architectural Review Board (ARB) can approve conditions without Mayor and Council approval. The Council needs to decide if they want these matters to be brought for the Council. Should ARB be a recommending body, like planning and zoning board, requiring Council approval?
- It would be good to write some newsletter articles to educate citizens about this process.
- City needs to carefully follow current legislation proposed (HB 302) that could take away some approval privileges from Council.
- Sound ordinances need more teeth.
- Council encouraged staff to continue to be mindful and diligent moving forward and supported unique ordinance for each individual property if necessary detailing conditions of zoning and permitting. Council will honor staff's work in this area.

Affordable - Workforce Housing

- What more can Norcross do to incentivize staff, fire fighters, police officers, workforce of City businesses, and teachers to live in the City?
- Is there land to be donated to offer public/private, subsidized housing partnerships?
- A broader discussion needs to be had with Live Norcross. There is much work to be done in this area and it needs to be high-priority.

Historic Home Preservation

- Norcross' historic story is important. Does the "historic district" need to be expanded?
- The land use plan and ordinances need to be reviewed with this filter in mind. How can Norcross incentivize citizens to save old homes or penalize them for lack of upkeep?
- Council asked staff to meet with the Historic Preservation Board to further explore how to improve historic preservation efforts.

Community Work Program

- Council asks to designate two hours to score/rank the current community work program. The staff is asked to first make their prioritizations and then the Council will work to merge those with the Council's project prioritization list.

Railroad Pedestrian Crossing

- This continues to be a work in progress. Mayor committed to follow up with legal and to keep pushing for a resolution with the Department of Transportation.

Annexation Planning & Preparedness

- With passage through the legislature, 2021 is the launch.
- Staff is leading the charge at this point and will continue to keep the Mayor and Council fully briefed on progress.
- Council asks that staff identify now what funding will be required, resources needed, and what decisions that will need to be made to ensure smooth launch. Council requests a Annexation Launch Plan be presented in the next month or so to ensure everyone knows what the plan of action will be.

Long-Term Plans for Community Center

- Council requests that an information-gathering phase begin and a cost-benefit analysis be done on various options for the expansion of the community center.
- A similar study was conducted in South Fulton recently that is worth looking into.
- Council would like budget, staffing levels and positive community benefits to be included.
- Sonja is asked to seek funding for study to be done, as well as identify possible grants to fund the overall project. This could be a possible 2023 SPLOST target project for Norcross.

Linear Parks

- Councilman Bare has a vision and will put together a proposal for Council input and consideration. He will plan to present the proposal at the May policy meeting.

Norcross 101 - Youth Commission

- Councilman Hixson challenged the Council to begin to think about how Norcross is going to intentionally grow future leaders. The county and other cities have programs focused on next generation leadership development, but Norcross does not.
- The Citizens Police Academy has been very successful, so a similarly modeled program is a good place to start.
- There are opportunities for public/private partnerships.
- The communications team should work to spotlight the accomplishments of Norcross youth in the community.
- It was suggested that a Junior Councilman program be developed that could allow for days of shadowing to help younger generations learn more about how City government works. Could partner with local schools to develop selection criteria and identify students to participate.

KEY ACTION ITEMS DERIVED FROM COUNCIL PROJECT DISCUSSIONS:

- Assign staff and council member to serve as representatives on working boards and committees to align work of each with City's comprehensive plan and priorities
- Hold at least two meetings annually with chairs of all City boards and committee, staff representatives and Council members
- Have chairs of boards and committees report quarterly to Council as to their mission, top priorities, and support needed.
- Ensure boards and committee meeting minutes are shared with Council.
- Fill any open positions on boards and working committees
- Tracy Rye to share a recap of the March ARC CDAP Boards Training
- Form Media, Marketing & Communications Citizens Advisory Task Force
- Enhance multilingual marketing
- Identify funding for and develop Buford Highway Redevelopment Master Plan
- Have Council adopt pledge for Walk-Friendly Community Certification
- Have Community Development Department share with Council the gaps needed to be addressed in Walk-Friendly Community Certification
- Establish Cross Cultural Citizens Advisory Board
- Present a cost-benefit analysis to Council to mail newsletters to all City residents
- Develop a multilingual resident welcome packet
- Design and launch a City Ambassador program
- Assist Councilman Myers in establishing an effort to help Norcross earn "Smart City" designation.
- Begin development of 30-year utility burial effort
- Begin development of long-term sidewalk master plan for Norcross
- Determine if Council will approval ARB conditions
- Have staff make recommendations as to how to give more "teeth" to Sound Ordinance
- Explore incentives possible to encourage more affordable/workforce housing in Norcross
- Staff to work with HPB to explore how to improve historic preservation efforts
- Hold working session with Council and staff to prioritize community work program for 2020
- Continue pushing for railroad pedestrian crossing resolution
- Continue pursuing and preparing for 2021 annexation
- Develop Annexation Launch Plan
- Begin long-term planning efforts for Community Center
- Assist Councilman Bare with Linear Parks Proposal for Council
- Develop/Launch Junior Councilman program

The Council also spent time reviewing their working priority list from 2019 and updated it for 2020. (Provided via separate spreadsheet.) Council will work to merge their 2020 Priority List with the 2020 Community Work Program.

G. 3:30 PM Next Steps**1. 2536 : 2020 Priorities List****H. 3:55 PM Closing Remarks****Paige Havens****I. 4:00 PM Adjournment****Signed by _____ Mayor Craig Newton****Attest _____ Monique Lang, City Clerk**