Update on City Council Strategic Planning Goals

RECOMMENDATION:

Council provide direction on the progress and status of the City Council’s strategic planning goals.

DISCUSSION:

At the strategic planning meeting of February 23-24, 2007, the City Council adopted six major goals. The goals were last revisited at the January 8, 2008 City Council meeting. This report outlines the progress being made relative to each of these goals during the past six months. The six goals are:

1. Improving City’s Economic Base
2. Continue Emphasis on Roads
3. Repair City Hall
4. Enhance Public Safety
5. Campaign Reform
6. Natural Resources Program

Improving the City’s Economic Base

Enhancing the City’s economic base to ensure adequate revenues for services remains a top priority for the City Council. Staff has accomplished the following:

- Continued revitalization of the Vons shopping center by working with Rite Aid to build a stand-alone, new Rite Aid at the corner of 41/101. The existing Rite Aid will be remodeled for an additional 20,000 square feet of retail space. The project has received approval from the Planning Commission. The Lube n’ Go Oil Change has opened.
In April the City Council hired Applied Development Economics to update the City’s economic development strategy. Staff is working closely with the consultants to get the process started. A household survey is being sent out and interviews have taken place with business leaders and members of the community selected by each member of the City Council. A focus group meeting with the public in attendance was held on June 26, 2008 to conduct a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. Three focus groups with industry sectors were held the following day. The project is in its first phase, data gathering and analysis.

Successfully promoted and supported infill development including the following:

- Home Depot Center (working with developer to locate a hotel and restaurant on the site)
- Mission Oaks (working to obtain a final tenant)
- Colony Square (project is moving forward, working with developer to obtain construction loan, additional equity and to reduce costs)
- Downtown business district improvements

Staff continued the “Just Listening” campaign. Workshops were held to discuss the status of downtown and the redevelopment agency. The workshops were well attended.

Staff interviewed several downtown business owners to better understand what can be done by both the private and public sector to help downtown. In addition to interviews, preplanning services are being conducted to prepare for the redevelopment of several downtown buildings, a downtown building inventory is being created and the “Open for Business” sign campaign is being expanded.

The wayfinding program consisting of identification and directional signs in the downtown that will be constructed with the downtown streetscape enhancements.

Several new hotels and business projects have been completed or are nearing completion.

Working to retain and attract new businesses to the community, particularly in the downtown area. Staff has made contacts with specialty stores, restaurants, RV dealers, manufactured home dealers and others.

Working with the Buxton Company to update the previous data and create an interactive business location tool that will provide up-to-date market analysis and information.

Working on a Tourism Study as part of a regional effort with the Economic Vitality Corporation.
During the next several months staff will continue to work on several high priority economic development projects in an effort to broaden the City’s tax base and increase sales and hotel taxes.

**Continue Emphasis on Roads**

Updated progress on the Atascadero Road Program between January and June of 2008 is as follows:

- The design is complete and we have received bids on the following roads:
  - San Jacinto Road – El Camino Real to Nogales Ave
  - Del Rio Road – Obispo Road to San Anselmo Road

- The following roads were paved by contractors:
  - Atascadero Ave Repair – San Diego Road to San Rafael Road
  - Mountain View Drive - Portola Road to Santa Rosa Road

- Public Works operations staff is currently working on major road patching and repair. A total of 225 tons of asphalt has been applied at various locations throughout Atascadero. Public Works Streets Division staff has concentrated on neglected sections of local roads and on road sections with time intensive pot-hole problems.

- Staff will be repaving Dolores Avenue from San Jacinto to San Anselmo in the fall of 2008.

- The City will be spending $400,000 on pavement preservation projects in the summer of 2008. This preventative maintenance work will include slurry seals, chip seal and other covering to extend the life of roads recently paved. Roads to be included are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Santa Ysabel</th>
<th>SR 41</th>
<th>Curbaril</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atascadero Avenue</td>
<td>11165 Atas. Ave</td>
<td>11105 Atas. Ave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portola</td>
<td>Ardilla</td>
<td>7455 Portola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curbaril</td>
<td>ECR</td>
<td>Sycamore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sycamore</td>
<td>Curbaril</td>
<td>Capistrano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graves Creek</td>
<td>Monterey Rd.</td>
<td>San Fernando</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Staff is working on the design of Balboa Road access and is bringing the report to the City Council on July 8th. We will be using $103,220 from the 5-year road maintenance program to complete this work.

- The design of the repaving of San Andres Avenue from Santa Lucia Road to Morro Road has begun and the work will be completed in the summer of 2009.
• City Staff continues to follow the Action Plan to minimize the impact of the construction of the 101/41 Interchange Project. Progress goes well.

**Repair City Hall**

The repair and rehabilitation of our historic City Hall remains a priority, as it is the center of Atascadero’s downtown. The process of repairing and restoring the historic City Hall is moving forward. Specifically, staff:

• Submitted the first level appeal to the state Office of Emergency Services (OES) on February 1, 2008. The appeal seeks to get additional funding in several categories to the restoration of City Hall.

• An all-hands meeting consisting of senior officials from OES, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), staff from Congressman McCarthy’s office, City consultants, and City staff members was conducted on April 18. The meeting was a success in communicating several of the City’s concerns and included a tour of the building. The officials were able to see a large extent of the damage and the complexity of the repair issues.

• FEMA has hired a technical engineering consultant to review the appeal. The consultant has begun to request additional information from the City, and staff is responding as promptly as possible.

• The California Cultural and Historical Endowment (CCHE) grant was fully secured with an additional $6.5 million appropriation by the Redevelopment Agency.

• Staff will be presenting a request for an award of contract for Architecture and Engineering services in the next couple of months. These services will include design development and the creation of construction documents, which will take approximately nine months. Construction is still estimated to take approximately 22 months.

• Architects are in the preliminary stages of programming for the historic building. In this process, staff and the architects will work carefully to design the most effective and economical layout of the building with the long-term efficiency in mind.

**Enhance Public Safety**

Public safety remains an important goal and the Police and Fire Departments continue to make significant progress on making Atascadero safer.

To date, staff has completed the following:
Recruitment and retention of qualified staff remains a high priority for the Police Department. A comprehensive training plan has been put in place to ensure that the career goals of employees are identified. The goals are tied to training and development opportunities.

The Police Department continues to aggressively pursue top candidates for Police Officer positions. The department is not currently at full staffing.

Public education remains a key component to the Police Department’s outreach goal. Staff has participated in a number of programs including National Night Out, Cops and Kids Day, and static displays at the schools and public events.

Car-seat clinics are being conducted to continue to ensure the safety of young children.

The Internet Safety Program specifically dealing with “My Space” access has been well received by concerned parents.

The Police Department continues to foster its relationship with the Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, and other City departments.

The Fire, Police and Public Works Departments continue to monitor the comprehensive traffic plan related to the Hwy 41/101 project. The plan’s focus is to maintain effective traffic flow while protecting neighborhoods and ensuring safety.

The Police Department is building increased ties to the business community by officer participation at business events, mixers, and meetings.

The Police Department has begun a pilot program to develop relationships with downtown businesses. In connection with this program, staff has been monitoring the Sunken Gardens to ensure it remains a safe and enjoyable location for all.

A Task Force has been formed between the Police Department, the Atascadero School District Office, Atascadero High School, Atascadero Junior High School and the continuation schools to develop a comprehensive and proactive approach to resolving student issues and concerns in the downtown area.

The Police Department has aggressively investigated numerous cases resulting in arrests and prosecutions.

The new Police, Fire & Public Works radio system is complete. The City’s radio infrastructure consists of three mountain top radio systems which are linked via a microwave system.
• The Fire Department worked with Pierce Manufacturing to specify, design and build a ladder truck specifically for Atascadero. The City took delivery in May; outfitting and training have been ongoing since the trucks arrival. The first ever “AFD Truck Academy” took place May 27th through the 30th.

• Three Reserve Firefighters graduated from the Cuesta College Central Coast Paramedic Program. An additional Reserve Firefighter is enrolled in the fall 2008 program.

• Six Seasonal Firefighters were hired in May to assist with the upcoming fire season. These firefighters augment staffing throughout the season and are laid off in fall when it rains.

• Fire staff spent considerable time specifying a replacement wildland fire engine this past winter. Staff expects to bring the purchase to Council in July or August.

Campaign Reform

The City Council selected Campaign Reform as one of their top priorities at their strategic planning session in February 2007. They included Council Norms, ethics training, campaign finance reform, election campaign behavior, and election signs in this category. A few members of the public stressed that campaign finance reform should be adopted immediately.

Staff conducted research on this issue and concluded that campaign finance reform is just the tip of the iceberg. Other cities that had only adopted a campaign finance contribution limit ordinance, without addressing other Council and campaign issues, have found the results less than successful. Staff held an Educational Forum on Campaign Reform in September 2007 with three experts in the field of campaign reform speaking on the issue and answering questions. This Forum confirmed Atascadero’s need to address all facets of campaign reform.

In November 2007, the City Council gave staff direction to work with Council Members Béraud and O’Malley to develop a Community Ethics / Campaign Reform Program. This committee decided to hire one of the experts from the Educational Forum, Dr. Tom Shanks, to facilitate a Building Public Trust Program, beginning in April 2008 (delayed from January due to illness of the facilitator). The goals of the committee are:

1. Build Public Trust with the Council and the community.
2. Create an environment for the best community leaders to be elected.
3. Improve community relationships.

Two workshops have been held with the full City Council. The committee is proceeding to conduct three election-related forums for the November 2008 election. The first forum was held on June 26th and was designed to provide information about the nuts and bolts of running for a City Council seat. The remaining two forums will be candidate opportunities to address issues facing the City. The City Attorney has prepared a report
for the July City Council meeting to provide a foundation to discuss Campaign Finance Reform.

**Natural Resources Program**

Staff has been working on three major projects to implement the City Council’s Natural Resources Program: (1) Native Tree Planting; (2) Hiring of a staff Arborist Consultant; and (3) Hiring of a staff Biologist Consultant.

*The Native Tree Planting Program:*

- Thomas Gaman (Registered Forester of East-West Forestry Associates) has been contracted to assist staff in implementation of the Native Tree Planting Program. Mr. Gaman’s experience with the City’s Native Tree and Biological GIS Mapping Inventory has been applied to selecting appropriate sites for re-vegetation of native trees throughout the City.

- Staff has organized a task group consisting of Mr. Gaman, members of the Atascadero Native Tree Association (ANTA), and Community Development staff to identify planting methods and sites that will ensure the highest level of success with minimal start-up and maintenance costs.

- To date over 400 native trees have been planted at the Heilmann Grove and Atascadero Creek Reservations. The plantings were installed by the California Conservation Corps and are being monitored by public works staff. A water contract with KCI Environmental has been issued for planting areas that could not be irrigated automatically.
Consultant Tom Gaman and ANTA member Joan O'Keefe inspecting a Valley Oak replanting at Heilmann Grove in May 2008.
CCC crew member watering a newly planted oak seedling. Each tree is installed with a deer browse protection fence and an underground gopher protection “basket.”

Oak tree replanting area along Atascadero Creek.
• Staff is now working on the fall planting program. On October 25, 2008, the City and ANTA will host an oak “Seedling Giveaway Program” in conjunction with the Day of the Oak. Over 2000 local acorns have been collected and shipped to a CFD nursery for propagation. These seedlings will be given away to local residents to enhance regeneration of native Blue Oaks and Valley Oak trees. Staff is currently in the process of using GPS and GIS to identify the best sites of replanting. Targeted mailings inviting residents to participate in the oak tree giveaway program will be sent to areas that are in need of oak tree regeneration. The City’s replanting program with the CCC’s will resume in late fall and winter.

Consulting Arborist

• Staff has interviewed and hired a contract arborist to assist the City in tree inspection and protection activities. Davey Resources Group was selected as the best qualified firm out of an interview pool of five consultants. Davey has the most diverse services ranging from construction level tree protection inspections to regional forestry, habitat and environmental assessment capabilities. Davey is also experienced with Sudden Oak Death (SOD) which is plaguing northern California. Michael Bova has been assigned as the City’s primary arborist. Additional support from other specialists is available as requested by the City. Davey was introduced to the Planning Commission on June 3, 2008, and made a special presentation regarding the firm and its capabilities.

Consulting Biologist

• Staff has interviewed and hired a contract biologist to assist the City in the review and permitting of projects that involve wetlands, blueline creeks, and other sensitive habitats. Althouse and Meade was selected as the best qualified firm out of an interview pool of five consultants. Lynndee Althouse will be the City’s primary biologist, but she will be able to bring in other experts from her firm as needed. Ms. Althouse is recognized throughout San Luis Obispo County as an expert on biological issues, mitigations, and working with State and Federal agency permitting processes. Ms. Althouse was instrumental in helping the City design and permit the Atascadero Creek creekbank repair project behind City Hall and the Lewis Avenue Bridge. Staff expects that Althouse and Meade will play a very important role in the Eagle Ranch Specific Plan process.
**Next Steps**

Staff will continue to concentrate on the City Council’s goals through the end of the year. The City will again participate in a strategic planning program in the beginning of 2009 to develop goals and a foundation on which to build the 2009-2011 operating and capital budget.

In addition to work on the City Council’s goals, the Council has directed other work by staff including:

- Develop an Ordinance to control motorcycle riding in residential areas. (not scheduled)
- Develop a policy regarding “drive-thru” facilities. (scheduled for August, expected staff hours 100+, 10% complete)
- Conduct a public process and implement a project to construct trails consistent with a grant initially received by the Upper Salinas Resource Conservation District (RCD). (not scheduled)
- Conduct a public process and determine a location for the Wrestling Bacchantes. (not scheduled) Scheduled for August, expected staff hours 40+, 0% complete
- Develop a policy on recording meetings. (scheduled for September, no estimate of hours)
- Develop a use policy for City cable programming. (scheduled for September, no estimate of hours)
- Printery. (not scheduled)
- Troubled development projects. (not scheduled)
- Report on Policy for public comment. (not scheduled)
- Creek setbacks. (not scheduled until after 11/2008)
- Balboa Road improvements. (scheduled July for Council, expected staff hours 100+, 70% complete)

There are also several mandates and projects initiated this year that will affect staffing and meeting resources. They include:

- The Annex (not scheduled)
- Wal Mart (scheduled for August to return to Council. Expected staff hours 80, 50% complete)
- Eagle Ranch (not scheduled, significant staff commitment)
- Storm Water Master Plan (not scheduled, waiting on direction from RWQCD)
- Transit Center (not scheduled)
- Housing First Forum to eliminate homelessness. (16 hours per month)

This is an aggressive work plan for Council and staff. There are currently a variety of public processes underway or getting ready to kick off, including:

- The Economic Development Strategy (several meetings this year and next)
- The Public Trust Program (three forums scheduled)
- RCD Trails Project (not scheduled)
- Paloma Park Improvements (no additional meetings scheduled at this time)
- Eagle Ranch (public meeting in August)
• Wal Mart (public meetings in fall)
• Affordable Housing Assistance Policy (one or two additional workshops)

The Council should review the programs and projects planned, focusing staff efforts on Council priorities. Only eight regular Council meetings remain before the end of 2008, assuming the Council will not meet on Veterans Day, and several will be encumbered by the election process. The election occurs before the first Council meeting in November and seating of the new Council occurs the first meeting in December potentially leaving both months ineffective for City business. This means five full agenda regular meetings, some of which are already impacted with controversial issues.

Several of the issues facing the City have significant public involvement. Embracing this involvement will take staff and meeting time, reducing the number of issues that can be discussed at a single meeting.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

None.