City of Atascadero  
Notes from the  
Annual Strategic Planning Workshop  
February 23/24, 2007

February 23, 2007

Mayor Luna opened the Council meeting; took roll call, and turned it over to Dr. Bill Mathis. Discussion was held with Council members regarding changes taking place in the City of Atascadero.

How Councils are different?

- New group, new Council members
- Discussion with Dr. Bill and Council/City Manager regarding where we’re headed
  - Understanding where each is coming from
    - Values/Culture
  - Exercise with Council members – when you discover you’re “riding a dead horse” ~ best strategy is to dismount.
    - 1. Personal basis
    - 2. Business basis  [Great discussion with all Council Members]
- Dr. Bill – Discussion of “Less is More”

Public Comment ~

- Concern that Council Norms be followed

Dr. Bill discussed open communication and strategy to help the Council get to know each other... Getting to know the Council Members

1. Council Members’ stories
2. What they learned from the election?
3. How they make decisions?
4. 2 Talents they can each contribute?
5. 2 Pet peeves?
6. 2 Areas of interest?
Tom ~ Memories of the good old days in Atascadero; history in town, relationships with people, wants the restoration of historical town. 
Learned – Community is polarized; majority appreciate the positive approach 
Decisions – Wants facts, cost, analytical, history, future impacts and fairness for all 
Talents – Sees both sides needed; inspires folks to positive direction 
Pet Peeves – Mean-spirited, dishonesty – healing needed through working together 
Interests – Campaign reform, regional tourism, stadium/zoo – ecotourism, natural potential – people centered events/community events

Ellen ~ She’s an athlete – on track; this has kept her focused and disciplined 
Learned – There is power in public education; don’t believe everything in the newspaper 
Decisions – Gathers information, all facts, all viewpoints; follows rules, listens to public, asks questions of staff 
Talents – Stays on track 
Pet Peeves – Unjust criticism; lack of respect 
Interests – Building public trust; eliminating distrust; working on openness; urban forests – less destruction; open spaces; public participation

Jerry ~ He is committed to Atascadero – all his life 
Decisions – What’s best for community; he is verbal, asks questions; his mind is mostly made up 
Talents – History of Atascadero; experiences; role in representing the working folks 
Pet Peeves – When people cave in under pressure; when staff gets punished in public meetings 
Interests – Wal-Mart; super grocery store

George ~ Worked toward consensus in creating Redevelopment; worked with staff; was successful. He would like to work through a consensus approach for more projects. 
Learned – The community doesn’t want super Wal-Mart; Council wants openness 
Decisions – Does homework, studies General Plan; listens to public 
Talents – Open to ideas; is very patient with public 
Pet Peeves – Listening to nonsense 
Interests – City commitment; climate control; campaign finance reform

Mike ~ Raised in military family – Germany to California, poor neighborhood – fought for survival = don't judge book by its cover. 
Learned – By speaking from the heart – they listened; good people in Atascadero 
Decisions – Wants to educate himself, studies; please offer information and assistance to him; wants to have hands on – listen and compromise
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Talents – Honesty, is trustworthy
Pet Peeves - He isn’t past Councilmember! Wants to work together
Interests – Commercial growth – inside the General Plan; campaign reform

Straight Talk / Courageous Conversations with Council members ~ Issues and baggage from election

- Comments about Staff during election? Do you still feel that way?
  Problem regarding:
  o How do we trust each other? How do we work together?
    ▪ Quit sniping at City Council meetings; earn each other’s trust
    ▪ Televise the meetings – show the people what’s going on
    ▪ Stop bickering at each other; don’t shut down communication
    ▪ Mike will meet with Jerry

- Thought we would let ‘by-gones be by-gones’ – don’t want division; want to work with other City Council Members – has been offended that we haven’t tried harder to work with each other.
  o Don’t criticize on the dais; please respect each other on the dais – want to keep the ‘peace of the Council’ in meetings

- Campaign finance – discussion of fairness; receiving money from developers; image of wrong-doing or unethical conduct
  o Need to support FPPC guidelines
  o Central Coast Taxpayers Group (for Wal-Mart) influenced the election
  o May 30th meeting was not good… it hurt the City

Dr. Bill – Negative comments shouldn’t be said – especially while on the dais. Need to speak as unified body on the dais – not “those guys”, “you guys”, etc.; it’s disruptive to the discourse. Need to move forward.

We will work together to further our trust; focus our real attention on the business being done. We’re on the dock; let’s work together to set sail. We have to be responsible for our own behavior. We represent our constituents – do not always think alike.

Wade discussed Council setting the example for the public at Council meetings. Need to be diplomatic.

Roles of Council, City Manager, Staff, Direction and responsibilities. The conversation was helpful for all to have – clear communication and courageous conversations. ‘Strength in diversity’
Rating Communication Rules for Effective Team Building

Rating: Worst = 1 ~ Best = 10

- **Staying on Topic** – Rating = 5; Could be better
- **Cross Talk** – Rating = Not bad, we do pretty well
- **Allow others to finish ideas** – Rating = Pretty well most the time
- **All opinions are okay** – Rating = 5; sometimes 3 ½
- **Crystal Balling** – Rating = Sometimes we do this

Best part about tonight –

**Jerry** – Good to clear the air; we made progress

**Tom** - It’s helpful for me that we detoured from the agenda into a good conversation. It was helpful to get off task and discuss the fundamental barrier between us. We know what to work on; we want to clear all baggage – tonight was worth the time.

**Ellen** – Best part was that we spent time together, listened to each other; got rid of some of our baggage. It’s not finished, but we’re in the same boat moving forward; we have things we want to get done.

**Mike** – We put our cards on the table – very important. We need to choose our words carefully; I have my opinions; we all need to look at things this way.

**George** – We didn’t get completely past the election; when we discuss goals tomorrow we will establish more trust.

**Wade** – The discussion was good to have so we can get on to the business. We’re moving forward.

**Jerry** – Diversity is good.

Meeting adjourned at 8:57.
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Saturday, February 24, 2007 ~ 8:30 a.m.

City Council, All Staff, Facilitator, and Public

Mayor welcomed, called roll, and the meeting began with all Staff Reports.

Questions from Council; answers from staff and discussion… Update on accomplishments over the past year.

- Enhance Public Safety
- Improving City’s Financial Condition
- Construction of Youth/Senior Recreation Center
- Continuing Emphasis on Road Maintenance
- Repair of the Historic City Hall Building

Public Comment:

- We welcome this discussion; was glad to hear that we will hear a public process regarding the transit center – would like full public outreach and involvement.

- Member of the Board of Supervisors - Echoing some of what he heard this morning; basically the same message as the County’s message – cost escalation vs. costs for maintaining, balancing the budget, etc. Will have to be more creative in the future; working regionally, establish partnerships among community, county, reaching out in this process to communicate the needs with the citizens.

  Similar challenges; working together, rethink our levels of service – what is acceptable for increasing revenue, working efficiently without reducing services? Where do we cut? Maybe we could raise funds for deferred maintenance through Mayor’s dinner, other events, etc. transportation, we haven’t begun… there us little money for expansion and capacity is limited. Park and ride, alternatives, etc., need to think smarter, together, long-term, smart growth; same issues are going on everywhere. We need to be part of the dialog – keep it alive in working together to solve some of the regional problems. Need to work regionally, communicate better regarding the challenges we all face – think beyond the boundaries with cities, counties in solving internal issues.

- The job is to generate the money to keep the bare minimum of what we have; need to raise the salaries of Public Safety. Look at the advancements the city has made; it has come on the backs of city employees.
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- Need to know how we’re going to maintain the quality of life; want to talk about the zoo. We need to advance this city’s quality of life through retrenching, maintaining and expanding what we have. Ideas of paths, youth center, etc. are great but this isn’t where our dollars need to be. The zoo is part of the educational program – good for all. Tourist draw and revenue generator for the City. Don’t look at building new or stretching for future – look at what we have and maintain in this area.

  o Response from Council; the City has always been supportive of the zoo.

- Regarding deferred maintenance – need to have a required linkage for deferred maintenance every time we spend for new work. Some roads are more important than others; exit roads, roads for safety, emergency access, are priorities for keeping improved.

  o Roads are calculated, estimated travel, highest priority road (circulation roads), etc.

- Atascadero State Hospital – encouraged that the City get involved with people at the hospital regarding ASH and policymakers, mayor pro tem, etc. – They are doing this. Staff is directed to send a second letter – will be put on Council Agenda.

Discussion with Council and staff regarding goals, brainstorming, Council’s direction, costing out by Staff – bringing to the budget.

Citizen comments on goals for 2007/08 ~

- Citizen from Paso Robles – serves on zoo society; urges council to support the zoo. The zoo is for the region. Improve zoo funding – follow attendance history.

- Important to build on the past; City’s economic development strategy project report spells out businesses, new, closed, retention, apartments, sales taxes – all components of the big picture – big dollar sign. Revisit the strategy of last couple of years for next couple of years – create a business report card. Assets we have are in the biking trails, hiking trails, historic downtown – historical activities, and tourism activities that will preserve and enhance.

- Chamber of Commerce may already have much of the data that the City has already developed – there is a partnership with them – staff is working on this right now and will be here by budget time.
• Encourage and participate in regional partnership, land use planning, transportation, public safety, and economic development. Zoo is part of conservation, environment, etc. The County supports this already. This is the time to work together in all of these areas.

• Little League person – Reinforcing Parks & Recreation – deferred maintenance programs are needed – outdoor programs and facilities need to be taken care of; 280 kids signed up, need lighting for tournaments, need restroom facility; want to have community love to be here. Deterioration in fencing, need dirt brought in, outfield grass is wearing out, borders/fencing coming undone, etc.

• Reinforce need for deferred maintenance with parks; need to develop the master plan, unsafe playground equipment has been removed; need playground for kids to play. Tourism is an absolute must. Implement the Master Plan for the Zoo. Housing needs study for what we need in apartments, housing. Campaign finance recommended.

• Campaign reform is necessary before next election. Progress in Climate protection. Need to improve our strategies. Open spaces, trees, quality of life. City arborist, grants person for open space – would pay off in many ways.

• Appreciation of board and City staff for support of the zoo. Notice the themes, tourism, cooperation. Need funding, marketing for the zoo. Pursue the Master Plan. Deferred maintenance of Zoo Park and the zoo. Need more support from City for the zoo, increase in signage, conservation/education standpoint.

• Tree ordinance needs to be brought back; the forest is old, aging, and dying. Need to look at open space. Our forest is the hallmark of Atascadero, history is also. Need new trees now.

• Need to consolidate efforts, the City expand the tourism committee to provide a place for people from all arms of tourism

• Expand commercial development – seek the retail that we need. Keep an open mind regarding commercial developments, revenue. Keep public safety as priority; major goal that needs to be sustained in our City.

• Use City’s guideline as a hook that we can use as a marketing tool. Recreation equipment, group projects, tree ordinance, economic development. Need to have standards – electric that is high level; business will be attracted.
• Last night we saw the human side of Council members – it was amazing to see them working and communicating together. Atascadero has done an amazing job. We need economic development that is sustainable and compatible today. Need to use Highway 101 through the City – how do we tap this? Grapes are the number #1 crop grown here. How can we capture people off the Highway 101 – leverage into what makes this City so special. Capture the beauty! Need the road map for where we want to go. What can we do to create a vision?

• Want to hear about City Council transparency – televising City Council meetings; also on Charter Cable – all are approved to be done. Municipal policies need to be put on the website. Have Brown Act rules available for citizens, on the web.

• Preserving downtown, CalTrans needs to be intervened with, want to bring my business into the City – but cannot. Change turn-lanes to accommodate traffic. Some landscaping is hazardous to traffic. Regarding old City Hall – don’t go back to the old City Hall. Lease it out. We have a good City Hall right now. Need a parking garage right now. City Park – crown jewel in the City. Put the pool in. Historical homes, routes, need sidewalks. Open system needed.

• Thanks the City, staff etc. for caring about the town. Support of the Babe Ruth Field has been good over several years. Snack bar, restroom, roof are all rotting. Lights are very old. We’ve been improving it ourselves. Need to address the de-composing facilities, lighting and redo all.

Question for Council is, what’s manageable? And what’s achievable? Council needs to keep this in mind as they go down the road. We need 5-6 achievable goals.

Public Comment ~

• Pleased to see Council work for community - not personal issues; taking to a higher level
• Council are terrific people; good to see them talking. Want tourism, wine festival…
• Election was shock to all – rough! The voters spoke
• Likes seeing Council respect each other; okay to disagree – hearts are in the right place – working together
• Respect of each other (Council) is important to the people; willing to work together civilly
• Commissions have helped with Council Members
Council Discussion after Public Comment ~

- **Tom** ~ Tourism – facing 35-40% increase in hotels; risk is that occupancy is high risk; need regional collaboration, analysis, wine study. Infrastructure needs to be improved and maintained for events, transportation coming through the City. Need economic report; wants bed & breakfast businesses in City. Signage needed in town. Need accreditation for zoo; regarding Tourism, PR material, brochures, marketing the assets we have, develop portable assets to be moved to other locations. Private / Public partnerships needed.
  
  - Questions, remarks – Pretty ambitious agenda regarding tourism. Would like to start commercial development in town – can initiatives be tied to results desired? Need to make sure that what we do for tourism is also good for our town. Need to get more revenue first. Need signage for our assets – golf courses, etc.
  
  - Council direction needs to be specific; involve the public for their vision. Town meetings to get ideas, consensus, and support.
  
  - The General Plan spells out with proposal – Council needs to be part of this prior to the Plan being finalized.
  
  - Need community workshop to assess what we want to do; get community input; bring it all together so we can give direction to staff. Focus attention on annex for retention. Shopping needs help – recruitment, etc.

Council’s Direction to Staff:

City Manager Wade McKinney briefed Council on the current economic development policy in place regarding previous direction from Council. Council concurred with the current policy and emphasized that development should conform to the General Plan.

**Televising Council Meetings** – Council meetings will be televised.

**Economic Base** – Council directed staff to prepare action plans developing the City’s economic base. The plans should include:

- A process to work with the development at Del Rio and El Camino Real.
- A process to create citywide policies regarding commercial development
- Continuation on the current Economic Strategy within the confines of the General Plan.

**Tourism** – Council directed staff to report on what is currently being done or spent regarding tourism including Chamber of Commerce, Main Street and
others. The Council agreed to review a report prepared by community members interested in tourism (as suggested by Steve Martin) which would include options, possibilities and alternative ways to pay for and provide tourism. This issue would be reviewed as a potential work plan under ‘Enhance the City’s Economic Base’ and needs to come back for discussion at a future meeting.

Openness and Transparency – Campaign Finance – Council directed staff to prepare a management report so Council can discuss concerns and issues; limits on campaign contributions, ordinances from other cities in the County, campaign signs – everything related to campaign reform.

Council Norms – Are more inclusive of Ethics. Dr. Bill suggested that Council hold a separate one day session of Council Norms at a later time. Staff will schedule with Council.

Employee Satisfaction Survey – Through best practices of employees, find out how satisfied, what training they might need; provide statistics on employee retention by department. Consultant who will ensure there is confidentiality.

Code Enforcement Complaints – Confidentiality – Those who make complaints can do this up-front – after it has been confirmed, to ensure there is actually a violation – prior to any names being released. City Attorney will come back with a report that includes rules.

Independent Investigations – Review Personnel and Procedures to update regarding Personnel Procedures; want independent analysis; appeal process. All issues are conducted by City Manager and/or City Attorney – not City Council. Add information sheet to give the process for personnel grievances.

Council Meetings; length; controversial issues – Not limiting people’s right to speak; controversial issues – need to have time limit of 11 p.m. for Council meetings. Could plan third Council meeting to catch up and get things done. Council Member can make a motion to adjourn at any time.

Prioritizing Goals and Objectives...

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

Meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.