

Kenmore City Council January 20, 2023 Retreat Report

Introduction

The Kenmore City Council held a “Mini” Retreat on January 20th, 2023 at the Kenmore City Hall. The purpose of this retreat was to discuss, in depth, key projects and policy issues identified by the participants during a pre-retreat interview to establish the agenda. The following agenda guided the discussions during this council retreat:

1. Visual Work Plans and Docket Items
2. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
3. Updates
4. Middle Housing
5. The “Bench”
6. Council Relations
7. Financial Condition of the City
8. How new programs will be considered in 2023
9. Town Halls
10. Swamp Creek Restoration
11. Coffee with Council

The following report is a summary of the discussions and outcomes of the retreat (a complete recording of this retreat was made and is retained by City officials):

Visual Work Plans and Docket Items

The City Manager briefly discussed the 2023 visual work plans for each department. The work plans are color coded: yellow for more steady work, orange for medium workload, and green for heavier workload items etc. In addition, the Planning Commission docket was included for contextual purposes and it was noted that this docket will be discussed in more detail at the January 23rd, 2023 City Council meeting.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA)

The next discussion module focused on several items under DEIA topic area.

DEIA Strategic Plan Development Schedule. Staff presented an overview of recent and current work defining the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) policy. This work included efforts to identify DEIA

Kenmore City Council January 20, 2023 Retreat Report

strategies across various city departments to determine what is currently in place and what needs to be accomplished to improve diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in City operations and in the community. In addition, efforts include using recommendations from the assessment process to evaluate opportunities to implement strategic initiatives to increase accessibility and improve outcomes for staff to include items that are not currently staffed or funded. The timeline to develop the five-year road map was presented. It was noted that the final DEIA strategic plan will be in front of the City Council in June 2023 for final adoption with a projected start date of July 1st, 2023.

Juneteenth Event. The participants next discussed a Juneteenth event for the city. The history and nature of Juneteenth as a recognition of a day of “Jubilee and “day of true freedom” from enslavement of African Americans in Galveston, Texas was presented and discussed. It was noted that there have been discussions of broadening the nature of a Juneteenth to be more of a multi-cultural event rather than a singular focus on the African American experience. The pros and cons of broadening the event were discussed in terms of both inclusion of all and the importance of a singular focus on the freedom of Black people. It was noted that while inclusion of all is an important commitment, it is also important not to “erase or silence” the voice of African Americans by generalizing the event across all cultures. The issue of “tokenism” was discussed and the importance of avoiding the view that “let’s not celebrate anybody if we cannot celebrate everybody” becoming the guide post. After a long discussion the participants made the following agreement:

Agreement One: Go forward with a Juneteenth Event with a specific African American focus and look for other opportunities/events that would focus on a Multi-Cultural celebration and focus.

Human Rights Campaign Municipal Equality Index. The participants next discussed a measurement system used to score and/or recognize municipal governments’ work in the DEIA area. The nature of the tool was presented and discussed. In addition, the process for submitting materials and other data to obtain the score was discussed. It was discussed that this measurement could be beneficial for the city as it may serve as a way for people to view a city’s commitment to important issues such as non-discrimination laws, employment, housing and other key features of a city that is known for its commitment or not to DEIA. The possible impact on staff was noted as a potential workload concern and in need of further understanding. In addition, it was noted that perhaps the best approach would be to consider whether to include this effort as part of the

Kenmore City Council January 20, 2023 Retreat Report

overall DEIA strategic plan. After a discussion the participants agreed to the following:

Agreement Two: Staff will review the nature and impacts of the Human Rights Campaign Municipal Equality Index and advise the City Council on whether to consider using the Index within the context of the DEIA Five-Year Strategic Plan.

Updates on Selected City Projects and Issues

The participants next received and discussed updates on several city projects and issues.

Regional Aquatic Center Update. Staff presented an update report on the Regional Aquatic Center project. The city has received two “feasibility” grants one in partnership with Kirkland and the other in partnership with Lake Forest Park and Shoreline totaling \$200,000. These grants will fund the study of multiple potential sites for an aquatic center. In addition, an RFP will be released to obtain a consultant to conduct the siting study.

The Bench. Staff presented an update report on the property on the southside of 522 known as “the bench” which was recently purchased by the city. The city has hired a consultant to review the twelve parcels of properties associated with the bench and come up with recommendations on possible uses, etc. This work is on-going and results are planned to be presented to the City Council in March 2023. In March the staff will ask the Council for direction on this property based upon the consultant recommendations. Participants noted possible approaches/uses for such as a location for affordable housing, mixed businesses, the demolition of buildings and the possible selling of the property.

Kenmore Village. Staff presented an update on the Kenmore Village project. A consultant is currently looking at next steps with a specific focus on the city-owned post office, and neighboring properties to include opportunities for redevelopment. A report will come to the City Council in March of 2023.

Middle Housing

The participants next discussed the policy area known as missing middle or middle housing. Staff noted that this issue will be coming to the City Council in February for an update on the community engagement piece of this effort. This update will include consultant suggestions for a public process as part of the over all process. It was noted that this issue was contentious when discussed

Kenmore City Council January 20, 2023 Retreat Report

in 2022 and the public process going forward would need to be encompassing and robust to include ways for people to express themselves in informal ways. It was noted that this issue may have strained relations within the Council but overall was handled well. It was noted that differences of opinions are both healthy and often lead to the best public policy. It was also noted that public process during consideration of this issue was influenced by the pandemic which limited process options. It was noted by several that all members of the Council care about the community and addressed this and all issues with the best of intentions. It was noted that the “heart” of a great policy team is the ability to disagree effectively with each other.

City Council Relations: Where is the fun?

City Council Meetings. The participants next discussed the state of Council relations and in particular the impact of the pandemic on process, meetings and activities. It was noted that there has been less fun in serving on the council than in the past, that online meetings have been tedious and that the need for a more “healthy approach” to meetings and activities would be helpful going forward. The importance of more social time, longer breaks and having snacks/food together was noted. The importance of giving compliments to each other and hearing about accomplishments was noted and as well as the value of noting things that are “cool” about Kenmore. Ideas such as highlighting current activities, hearing from students in the community and value of a “3 minute” beginning to each meeting highlighting the positive would be very useful.

June Retreat. The participants next discussed the upcoming June City Council retreat. The pros and cons of going “away” for the retreat were discussed. The participants agreed to the following:

Agreement Three: The date for the retreat will be Friday June 30th and Saturday July 1st, 2023. The retreat will be held off site away from city hall.

Financial Condition of the City

The participants next discussed the financial condition of the City with a particular focus on the impacts of inflation on both the city organization and the residents of the City. Staff reviewed the current fiscal status and noted that while the current budget anticipated inflation, the actual inflation rate was higher than expected. This has been reflected in a number of items such as the significant

Kenmore City Council January 20, 2023 Retreat Report

raise in the police contract costs. The impact is that the “lines are going to cross” sooner than 2028 as originally projected. It was noted that the budget is balanced through 2024. The Financial Sustainability Plan Task Force will need to reconvene in 2024. Participants noted the impacts on the community and how inflation would impact all policy issues. In addition, it was noted that it will be important to be innovative as well as looking to what other cities are going to address fiscal issues.

How will new programs be considered in 2023

Participants next discussed the process for identifying and selecting new programs for 2023. It was quickly noted that the processes would remain as in the past, where the June retreat will be the primary forum for new considerations. It was also noted that there are standing council procedures for bringing up new ideas during meetings. Typically, the only deviation from these processes (retreat and standing procedures) can be during emergencies.

Town Halls

Participants next discussed the value of having City Council “Town Halls” or City Council meetings in out in the community in various setting such as schools, other meeting sites etc. It was noted that town halls have been used in the past with success. These town hall-style meetings gave people a chance to come and engage directly in two-way dialogue with the City Council. It was noted that there can be logistical issues such as arranging sound equipment, but these have been overcome in the past. After a discussion the participants agreed to the following:

Agreement Four: There is positive interest in conducting one or two annual Town Halls. Staff will review the idea and bring back a proposal for the City Council to review and approve.

Swamp Creek Restoration

Participants discussed the importance, strategy, and opportunities for restorations projects and initiatives at Swamp Creek. The positive impact on climate change along with the link to restoration grants etc. that can come with restoration work at Swamp Creek were noted. It was noted that such work should not be “piecemeal” but should be ecosystem wide necessitating work

Kenmore City Council January 20, 2023 Retreat Report

with other jurisdictions such as Snohomish County to mitigate upstream pollution etc. Several participants agreed that a holistic approach is necessary to include the entirety of Swamp Creek where it joins with the Sammamish River. Staff noted that in fact they are looking into a Swamp Creek Basin evaluation for potential restoration. This effort included tasking a consultant to analyze properties and specific elements of a possible restoration to obtain “real life” data to inform a possible approach. It was noted that this staff work is an “add on” to an already existing workload that is heavy. Participants expressed their appreciation of this effort and noted the need to delay other projects to make room for this project and to provide funding necessary to assist staff.

Coffee with Council

Participants next discussed the value of the “Coffee with Council” meetings. These meetings have historically been held as a drop-in opportunity for residents to talk with individual Council Members. After a discussion, the participants agreed to the following:

Agreement Five: Coffee with Council will continue. These meetings will be held at 7:30 a.m. the first Monday of the month and 9:00 a.m. the third Saturday of the month¹. These meetings will be in person and with Zoom no longer utilized. Staff will reserve the Beaver Room in the Hangar and create/implement a sign-up sheet for Council Members to be scheduled to attend these meetings.

¹ The third Saturday time was subsequently adjusted to 9:30 a.m. to accommodate another group that has been meeting at the Hangar on Saturday mornings.

Kenmore City Council January 20, 2023 Retreat Report

Appendix One Retreat Participants

Mayor
Nigel Herbig

Deputy Mayor
Melanie O’Cain

Council Member
David Baker

Councilmember
Angela Kugler

Councilmember
Joe Marshall

Councilmember
Corina Pfeil

Councilmember
Debra Srebnik

City Manager
Rob Karlinsey

Selected Department Directors Participated During Specific Conversations

Facilitator
Michael Pendleton