

December 9, 2019

Mayor Brian Williams
City of East Ridge
1517 Tombras Avenue
East Ridge, TN 37412

VIA ELECTRONIC

Dear Mayor Williams:

Thank you for allowing MTAS to participate in the Council's strategic planning process on November 5 and 25. It was a great retreat and I firmly believe that the results were worth the time and energy.

As you recall, we began the session with an overview of the strategic planning process. The objectives of the process were to create a mission statement, scan the internal and external environments, create a vision statement, then to devise goals to guide the city in achieving its vision, and finally to have fun. I believe we successfully fulfilled all of the stated objectives.

We discussed the different roles that elected officials and staff perform and the percentages of time that each group should devote to planning. The Council should spend a greater amount of time in planning (steering) than any other group in the municipal government.

The first task was to write a mission statement. A mission statement should explain the purpose of a city's being and why it exists. Through a process of worksheets and small group discussions, the Council created the following statement:

Our mission is to provide services through effective and efficient governance which promotes business opportunities, sports tourism, and quality of life within our diverse, inclusive, and safe neighborhoods.

The Council then studied a variety of statistics about the global economy, the incoming workforce (the class of 2023), U.S. labor data, state information, Hamilton County facts, and then finally city specific statistics. Using all of this information, the Council then was charged with coming up with a vision statement that builds upon the city's mission and takes it to the next level; a desired future state.

The Council worked as a whole group on this effort and crafted the following vision statement:

As the Gateway to Tennessee, East Ridge strives to be the Pioneer of economic progress, where all people can reach their full potential while embracing culture, recreation and family values.

The next step was to do a SWOT analysis – identify the internal Strengths and Weaknesses and the external Opportunities and Threats facing the City of East Ridge. These were not necessarily agreed on by the entire team, but were items offered by individual members. The numbers listed behind bulleted items indicate the number of times the issue was repeated among Council members.

The strengths that were listed include:

- Teamwork between city manager and Council
- Strong, qualified workforce
- Citizen involvement and support
- Good leaders with good contacts
- Border Region Act
- Design standards
- Citizen Police Academy
- Red Wolves and Jordan Crossing development
- Liquor by the drink
- Camp Jordan
- Community Center
- Community Hospital
- Civic volunteers / fundraising
- Councils and Commission involvement
- Low property taxes
- Location

The weaknesses identified were:

- Aging infrastructure
- Aging workforce
- Aging fleet
- Land locked / geographically challenged
- Floodplain
- Community development close to residential
- Vacant Commission space
- Tight budget
- Large amount of rental spaces
- Aging housing stock
- Workforce compensation
- Lack of control over utilities
- Need to develop Council/Commission expectations
- Employee longevity
- History of city manager turnover

The opportunities in the area include:

- Business development interest
- Growth of housing interest
- Aging community infrastructure
- Tourism opportunities
- Border Region Tax
- Grant opportunities
- Location (Gateway to TN, central)

- Traffic and upcoming interstate repairs
- Senior Living Housing availability
- Job creation

And finally, the threats are:

- Cyber threats
- Outside drugs, crime, human trafficking
- Recession, economic downturn
- Natural disasters
- Insurance premiums
- Mortgage rates

Next, each Council member worked individually to identify goals and objectives that: address the key issues, meet the mission of the city and help the city to achieve its vision. Each member took a turn listing a goal until all goals everyone had were listed on a chart. Council members were again given five stickers and asked to place them on the chart. The results of that voting are (in order of highest to lowest):

- Seek grants for housing opportunities for seniors and disabled
- Financial plan for maintaining current fund balances
- Increase rainy day fund and plan for future revenue increasing options (fiscal stability plan)
- Create an action plan for increasing teamwork
- Embrace opportunities for homeownership
- Reduce crime (would need to set a percentage if chosen)
- Establish a plan for infrastructure improvement
- Attract a large industry
- Establish an enhanced entryway to East Ridge from GA
- Create a long-term master plan (10 year)
- Build multiple dog parks
- Create a cyber-security plan
- Build a third fire hall
- Develop a town square or center
- Continue education for Council
- Create a Workforce Development / Succession plan
- Evaluate and set plan for city Councils and commissions
- Border Region – city develop a standard offer plan
- Foster environment for economic development
- Implement fleet maintenance and replacement plan
- Budget for police and fire academy
- Build a new animal shelter

The end result was five goals. In no particular order, the goals were:

- 1) Create a finance plan to increase revenue and maintain fund balances
- 2) Build a new animal shelter
- 3) Evaluate the need for a third fire hall and create a plan for building one if needed
- 4) Build a dog park
- 5) Establish an employee retention/succession plan

The final step in the process of strategic planning is to create a list of programs and policies (objectives) that will help the City achieve the goals. I am happy to assist you with this step as needed.

In closing, I have a couple of thoughts for you. First, I encourage you to consider assigning a Council member to act as liaison for each goal. This will allow someone to keep other Council members informed about the progression towards achieving it. This plan is on top of an already full and complete work load for you and having someone focus on one goal will allow it to not become too overwhelming. Second, this is an ambitious plan and one that should be a living document; examine it regularly and adjust as needed but always keep the vision in mind when doing so. I encourage you to set a time now for review, whether that is three, six, or twelve months away.

Giving up two afternoons, especially during the work week, was a big sacrifice on the part of the elected officials. You are all to be commended for their active participation and tenacity throughout the process.

I look forward to completing the process with you and the Council and hope that you will contact MTAS if we can be of any assistance to the city in achieving its goals and vision.

Sincerely,



Honna Rogers
Municipal Management Consultant

cc: Vice Mayor Helton
Councilmember Cagle
Councilmember Chauncey
Councilmember Witt