



CITY OF NOVI
Long-Range Strategic Planning Committee Meeting
September 4, 2024, 5:30 p.m.
Mayor's Conference Room | Novi Civic Center | 45175 Ten Mile Road
(248) 347-0445

CALL TO ORDER: 5:36 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Mayor Pro Tem Casey, Council Members Gurumurthy, Staudt

STAFF LIAISON: Victor Cardenas, City Manager

ALSO PRESENT: Danielle Mahoney, Assistant City Manager
Katherine Oppermann, Recording Secretary

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion Staudt; Seconded Gurumurthy; Approved 3:0

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

1. Committee Norms & Meeting Cadence

Mayor Pro Tem Casey started by saying that she would prefer the pace of meetings to be roughly twice a month, and that they last no longer than 90 minutes individually. She then asked the other Committee members as to what days and times are ideal for them. Following discussion, it was determined that Wednesdays at 6:00pm would be best going forward. The next two meeting dates were decided as:

Wednesday, October 2 at 5:30pm
Wednesday, October 23 at 6:00pm

Mayor Pro Tem Casey requested that Ms. Oppermann formalize the dates on the City calendar and closed discussion on the topic.

2. Discussion of Long-Range Strategic Planning

Mayor Pro Tem Casey opened the discussion by asking the other Committee members what strategic planning means to them.

Councilmember Staudt stated his concerns about having a long-term plan when the Council Officials serve four-year terms. He also inquired as to how this Committee will overlap with other existing committees. Mayor Pro Tem Casey stated that she sees it as a combination of both giving and receiving direction from other committees.

Mayor Pro Tem asked Assistant City Manager Mahoney how Cary, NC worked with their own Strategic Plan. Ms. Mahoney explained that Cary has a "Community Plan" and was built in partnership with the community and around what residents wanted.

She also stated that as a plan it was broad enough so that individual policies can change while still aiming for the same key goals. Under each broad goal there are smaller key points and objectives, it also incorporates other city plans.

Councilmember Staudt asked if an outside consultant was used in the plan creation. Ms. Mahoney stated that yes, a consultant was brought on to work closely with the City Manager and Community Development offices. Due to the amount of research, focus groups, etc. it would be difficult for existing staff to have tackled on their own. She stressed once more that the Strategic Plan/Community Plan is a high-level plan that gives broad vision but also has freedom and flexibility to allow for changing policies and administration.

Councilmember Staudt then asked how long Cary worked on their plan to which Ms. Mahoney responded that it was roughly a 2½ to 3-year process.

Councilmember Staudt asked if the Community Plan was used as a supplement to or as a replacement of goal setting. Ms. Mahoney stated that goal setting still takes annually, the plan provides vision and continuity to those goal setting sessions. She also noted that through such a Plan councilmembers can see their goals live on even as new councilmembers adopt and adapt them in the future. Mayor Pro Tem Casey agreed that she sees such a plan as a "guiding light" for the community.

Councilmember Staudt asked City Manager Cardenas how the City has previously "got along" without such a plan. Mr. Cardenas replied that, historically, it was City Council alone that provided such guidance. A document like this could help to solidify plans, guide how we budget, etc. Councilmember Gurumurthy agree that visioning a 2050 Novi helps to provide framework to creating goals. Ms. Mahoney stated that the way a Strategic Plan is implemented means that everything ties back to and is driven by the plan. It would inform every decision making and budgeting process. It also can help to spark conversation as to what might be "off course" and what might need to be done or added to correct. Ms. Mahoney also added that, despite their differences, Cary was in a very similar place (built-out and in need of a sustaining plan) as Novi when they decided to implement their Community Plan.

Councilmember Staudt voiced some of his concerns regarding a Strategic Plan being implemented such as it being overly costly and consultant-driven, that its creation could lead to tangents and a focus on bundling "pretty ideas" without consideration for the costs behind implementing such ideas, that such a document is doomed to endless rewrites, potential political ramifications, etc.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey noted that a lot of the plan creation will come down to prioritization. She doesn't yet have all the answers to Councilmember Staudt's concerns but believes that through the course of this Committee's discussions they will be able to work out the answers and details. She thinks it is important to look at the totality of what the City will look like in 20 years. Each individual has their own priorities, and we will need to have discussions about how to handle those. She agrees that things are changing all around us and that we should be looking at and planning for that change. For example, what does it mean for City revenue once the City is fully built-out. She then asked Councilmember Gurumurthy for her input.

Councilmember Gurumurthy agrees with Councilmember Staudt that the plan will inevitably change over time. She thinks that anything we do should tie back to the framework and pillars of a Strategic Plan and that it will allow clearer prioritization and measurement of progress. She also thinks that it is important to get input from the community at all levels: from High School youth, from other committees and Councilmembers, as well as staff. Naturally everyone will have individual visions but we can have a broad framework to return to for guidance.

Ms. Mahoney affirmed that having a Strategic Plan is about immortalizing the vision.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked the other Committee members and that she believed this was an important conversation to have, especially ahead of their upcoming Leader's Exchange trip to other communities that have such plans in place. As next steps she stated that they and the other councilmembers will connect while they are on the upcoming trip and that they can work on having a clearer outline.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS: None

ADJOURNMENT: 6:42 p.m.