



## APEX TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT FRIDAY, JANUARY 29 AND SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 2016

Lance Olive, Mayor  
Nicole L. Dozier, Mayor Pro Tempore  
Eugene J. Schulze, William S. Jensen, Denise C. Wilkie,  
and Wesley M. Moyer, Council Members  
Drew Havens, Interim Town Manager  
Tim Donnelly, Interim Assistant Town Manager  
Donna B. Hosch, CMC, NCCMC, Town Clerk  
Laurie L. Hohe, Town Attorney

The Strategic Planning Retreat of the Apex Town Council scheduled for Friday, January 29 at 4:30 p.m. and Saturday, January 30, 2016, at 8:30 a.m. was held at the Apex Public Works Administration Building, 105-B Upchurch Street

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2016

In attendance were: Mayor Lance Olive, Mayor Pro Tem Nicole Dozier, and Council Members Eugene Schulze, Denise Wilkie, and Wesley Moyer. Absent was Council Member Bill Jensen. Also in attendance were Interim Town Manager Drew Havens, Interim Assistant Town Manager Tim Donnelly, and Town Clerk Donna Hosch.

The session was facilitated by Lydian Altman, School of Government Facilitator, who was assisted by her MPA student Kathryn Hughes.

### COMMENCEMENT

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Mayor Olive called the meeting to order.

Mayor Olive reminded Council that this was not the normal annual retreat; that will be held in March. This session was to focus on strategic planning and to put an identity to the Council. He wanted the high level objective to be defining the 'stars', going forward as a group, and defining the 'guiding stars'. The Manager and Assistant Manager will put the objectives in document form and distribute it to staff. It can also be published for the citizens of Apex. This will help staff as well as Council. The duration of this document could be 18-20 months. Mayor Olive believed this is what the people of Apex want us to be doing and that they want this group to be functional. With functional and well-defined bodies of government, companies wanting to come to this area will watch us to see if we have our act together and know that if there are negotiations, we can be trusted.

Altman stated this session would be to remember what we want and building the thinking to organize resources. She detailed her role at the School of Government and her experience in leading strategic planning sessions. She summarized how she got to this session and proposed being flexible in the way things proceed.

Altman canvassed Council's and staffs' thoughts on what they thought strategic planning was.

Council introduced itself and stated what happened in the last year which made them the most proud – number one town designation; a good, diverse, engaging community; people are proud of this community; the things this town is able to provide, i.e., the skate park which has been a big success; the new park coming on board; another thoroughfare coming through; the hiring of Havens who has stepped up as interim manager and Helms in Economic Development; how this community works, thinks, and solves issues; how much the town invests in the community and its people; families gathering around town; the citizen and business vested interest in the community; the athletic success; “happiest town in NC”; sense of town pride; disc golf at the Nature Park; bringing Costco to Apex which will benefit the people of Apex; most people really love living here; helping Council to achieve great things and goals; the courage of Council to make good decisions and spend the money necessary to follow through; first small town to achieve our bond rating; the electric system and where it developed from; our rates. The last piece needed to make this town something to be proud of for a long, long time is solving the transportation problems. Altman pointed out how the things that are being enjoyed today were in the strategic planning stages years ago.

Altman talked about the three things that are important for a successful work group – individual and collective needs being met, and individuals wanting to continue working together.

Altman stated the guidelines for effective meetings. Focus would be on asking curious questions, explaining reasoning, agreeing on what “important” words mean, and checking assumptions. Mayor Olive stated he's working on guidelines of behavior which he will present to Council and to which he hoped they would agree. He wants to get to where the Council is not second guessing itself or others.

Altman addressed ‘what are we responsible for’? The group participated in an exercise of what each felt they were responsible for and what they felt others say they are responsible for. They then determined how Council would be held accountable for these things.

The group identified the following "to do" items:

- Council orientation
- Write-up of email protocol
- Media relations
- Interest in having a preliminary summary prepared
- Consider ways to streamline public comments

Altman began conversation on Operating Principles – *If I overheard people talking positively about the Apex Town Council, I'd like them to say we:*

- Are engaged
- Have a common direction after decisions
- Handle differences with respect
- Are reflective
- Take our work seriously
- Are well informed and seek information
- Get things done
- Are representative of whole town
- Are proactive
- Anticipate and solve future problems before they become problems
- Are open to the viewpoint of others
- Have transparency – decisions don't get made in groups of three

The group discussed how all Council Members can be kept informed of the conversation in Committee meetings of which they are not a member. Possibly the Chairperson could, in short order (within one or two days), email all Council with bullet points of the meeting. Council was in agreement with the latter.

Altman suggested an agenda for the next day. She additionally gave a brief summary of this night's activities.

Mayor Olive adjourned the meeting for the evening.

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**SATURDAY – JANUARY 30, 2016 – 8:30 A.M.**

In attendance were: Mayor Lance Olive, Mayor Pro Tem Nicole Dozier, and Council Members Bill Jensen, Eugene Schulze, Denise Wilkie, and Wesley Moyer. Also in attendance were Interim Town Manager (ITM) Drew Havens, Interim Assistant Town Manager Tim Donnelly, Town Clerk Donna Hosch, Police Chief John Letteney, Fire Chief Keith McGee, Engineering Director Kent Jackson, Parks and Recreation Director John Brown, Communications Manager Stacie Galloway, IT Director Erika Sacco, Facilities and Maintenance Director Marty Mitchell, EMS Chief Randall Heath, Finance Director Vance Holloman, Public Works Director David Hughes, Town Attorney Laurie Hohe, Planning Director Dianne Khin, Economic Director Joanna Helms, and HR Director Eleanor Green.

The session was facilitated by Lydian Altman, School of Government Facilitator who was assisted by her MPA student Kathryn Hughes.

## **COMMENCEMENT**

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Mayor Olive called the meeting to order, stated the purpose and goal of the meeting, explained how the day would proceed, and introduced Lydian Altman with the School of Government. The Mayor stated last night's session was great, and Council was ready on this day to jump off from there.

Altman expounded on the guidelines outlined by the Mayor. She asked each department head of what they were most proud in Apex. There were several echoes from the previous night with the following additions: the way in which the town has weathered many changes; departments being allowed to teach our citizens; addition of employees who have done extremely well since being here; promotions of employees who have done well; working for an organization that values facilities and a team with the skills to make things happen; starting up a new department; working with some of the best department directors in the state of NC; our commitment to high architectural quality; department being fully staffed; the new water reclamation facility; financing in place for fire station 5; approval of the bond referendum. Altman stated all in the room will have a legacy in what happens in Apex in the future.

The group was instructed in an exercise involving a timeline of changes that will be faced short term, mid term, and long term. The group discussed their thoughts on the latter keeping in mind population projections.

There was a 15 minute break.

*Altman offered "Plans are nothing; planning is everything" – Dwight D. Eisenhower*

Altman asked *Why It's Important to Think Ahead:* to be clear about priorities, to allocate resources towards those priorities, to manage performance to carry out the funded programs, to evaluate performance in terms of objectives.

Altman asked *What is Strategic Planning Leadership:* a plan with legs to carry it through and the leadership to carry it forward.

*Benefits to Your Organization:* transforms ideas into actions, provides guidance, aligns resources with community values for the future, and aligns core government functions with desired strategies.

Altman presented *How Organizations Use Strategic Plans:* benchmarking, performance evaluation, budgeting/resource allocation, internal and external communication, citizen engagement and education, and employee orientation.

The group gave examples of using a plan. Discussed were such things as having a dashboard in place. Altman presented *Tips for Success:* use direction, incorporate flexibility, keep it simple, and directly link strategic planning to other organizational efforts.

Altman presented *Strategic Public Leadership:* evaluate, envision, enact. Manage progress, evaluate results, understand context, create goals and objective, develop action plans, and allocate resources. Altman explained these aspects are ongoing.

*"Discipline is remembering what you want." – David Campbell, Founder of Saks Fifth Avenue*

Altman presented *Thinking Forward: Paired Discussion:* What aspects of your community's daily life do you want to hold onto? What is your vision of the future? What 'big rock' or 'fork in the road' actions or decisions must be made now? What is town government's role in achieving this vision?

The group began participation in an exercise – what do you like about your community and what is your vision in the next 20-30 years?

The group broke for lunch.

Continuing on the exercise started prior to lunch, ideas were presented, the top five were rated in order of importance, and detailed discussion centered on these.

Altman presented *Goal Development*: What conditions would you like to create to address these upcoming changes? What difference could we expect to see as a result?

The group initiated conversation on the goals for the organization:

- Infrastructure
- Public Safety
- Economic Development
- Quality of life
- Workforce development
- Technology
- Regionalism

ITM Havens reviewed the five strategic 'buckets' (priorities) identified for 2015, and stated that their time has run out. The group began identifying its new buckets, beginning with those common from last year and those identified in this session. Strategic buckets identified for 2016:

- Infrastructure
- Public safety
- Development
- Workforce
- Community

There was brief discussion about taxes, fees, residential growth rates, and revenue streams. Altman stated she did not hear the formulation of goals from the conversation. ITM Havens stated goals will be drafted from the identified buckets for 2016/17. Staff stated it would love to have goal statements from Council. Altman stated the missing piece is prioritization. Council stated he wished to use of the Work Sessions to formulate the goals. Council decided it would need the written notes from this session from Altman for reference before beginning to formulate goal statements. Altman reminded that a good strategic goal statement could take six months to formulate.

The group provided feedback to the facilitators on what went well today as well as feedback on what they would have liked done differently. Altman asked everyone for a one word descriptor of how they felt at the end of the session.

Mayor Olive expressed what he would like to see moving forward. Basically, he wanted staff to be informed and not have to guess about in what direction Council wants to see things go. He understood that this might take some time to complete since he wants to see things done right.

Mayor Olive adjourned the meeting.

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Donna B. Hosch, CMC, NCCMC  
Town Clerk

ATTEST:

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Lance Olive  
Mayor