

**City of Beverly Hills
City Council Retreat**

November 2013

**Management
Partners**

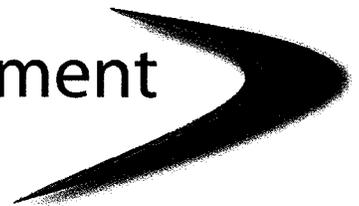


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Summary Report

Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision – the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.

Andrew Carnegie

On November 5, 2013, the City Council held a retreat from 2:30 to 5:45 p.m. It was held in City Hall and was a public meeting properly noticed pursuant to the Brown Act.

Participants in the workshop were:

- Mayor John Mirisch
- Vice Mayor Lili Bosse
- Councilmember Willie Bren
- Councilmember Julian Gold
- Councilmember Nancy Krasne
- City Manager Jeff Kolin
- City Attorney Larry Weiner (Richards Watson Gershon)
- Assistant City Manager Mahdi Aluzri

The facilitator for the workshop was Jan Perkins of Management Partners.

Workshop Objectives and Agenda

The objectives for the day were as follows:

- Discuss possible changes in Council procedures to increase effectiveness of Council and staff
- Review norms which will assist the Council and staff in carrying out the business of the City
- Strengthen teamwork between Council and staff

The agenda for the meeting was as follows:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Public comment
3. Icebreaker
4. Clarifications to specific Council procedures
5. Review of norms
6. Wrap up

Workshop Ground Rules: At the start of the workshop, the facilitator asked Council and staff for suggestions about ground rules to help the Council and staff have a successful workshop.

- Listen with respect and a spirit of inquiry
- Focus on the issues not the person (don't personalize)
- Seek consensus
- Consider new ideas

Icebreaker

At the start of the workshop, working in pairs, the Council and staff responded to the following situation:

You are scheduled to be on a panel at the League of California Cities on the topic of "Best Practices for Councilmembers and City Managers for Working Together on Behalf of the Community: What Works Best." What tips would you give them?

Tips for Councilmembers

- Listen to residents (public information should be widely available, keep your pulse on the city in a variety of ways)
- A majority view on a topic may not be present in the council chamber
- Listen carefully to the staff presentation and use it as part of your evaluation of the issues
- Listen to staff, dialogue with other Councilmembers as well as with the public
- The best interests of the city should always come first; everyone affected should be considered (including daytime populations as well as residents)
- Think about consequences of a decision on everyone impacted
- City council sets policy and staff executes
- Give early feedback to staff; ask questions before meetings
- Direction and policy require three Councilmembers

- Do your homework, read materials
- Be respectful of others' time and opinions
- Be brief, when possible
- D.T.I.P.: Don't Take It Personally
- Once a decision is made, it's made
- Closed session is closed session

Tips for City Managers

- D.T.I.P.: Don't Take It Personally
- Present both sides but don't be afraid to express a position if you have a strong point of view
- Offer options for decision making
- Respect the Councilmembers and give your input; tell us what you think
- Best interest of the city should always come first; think about the consequences for everyone
- Provide clear and concise information to Council
- Commit to implementing direction
- Provide professional, non-political advice
- Put city good before personal good
- Don't try to be a 6th city councilmember or drive policy behind the scenes
- When in doubt, ask the Council
- Listen to the residents

Council Operating Policies and Procedures

Several issues pertaining to the *Council Policy and Operations Manual* were discussed. The results of the discussions are summarized below.

Council Meeting Schedule: This issue had to do with eliminating confusion about when Council meetings will be held and minimizing changes to the schedule. After discussing the issue, the Council agreed on the following guidelines:

- The standard schedule for Council meetings will be the first and third Tuesdays of each month.
- The City Clerk will provide a calendar for a six-month period, noting any holidays that may conflict with the standard schedule.
- In a Council meeting, the City Council will review the calendar and note any conflicts they may have and wish for consideration

of alternative dates. The Council will then set the calendar for six months.

- If a Councilmember finds that he or she is unable to make a meeting, once the calendar is set, the Council meeting will take place.
- The calendar will be set three months prior to the start of the six month period for which it applies.
- Staff will explore calendaring software that may be helpful for finding dates with no conflicts for Councilmembers.
- With regards to study session items, if a Councilmember who proposed a discussion item cannot make the meeting at the last minute, the item will be delayed, but will go to the end of the list, rather than impacting the schedule of other items. When staff has sufficient notice that a Councilmember will be absent from a meeting where a study session item of interest to him or her is scheduled to be discussed, staff will move the item to another meeting, but only if it does not impact other study session items.

Council Ad Hoc Committees: The Council has approximately 14 ad hoc committees serving a variety of uses. These committees are in addition to the Council's standing committees. Staff reviewed the practices pertaining to agendas and materials for the ad hoc committees and found that there was fairly wide variation. At the retreat, staff raised several questions for discussion by the Council. The questions and the Council's direction are stated below.

Question 1: Should meetings of ad hoc committees be posted as open public meetings?

Council direction: Determine the answer to this on a committee-by-committee basis, depending on the purpose of the discussion. The two assigned Councilmember will make the determination.

Question 2: Should materials for the ad hoc committees be distributed in advance?

Council direction: This should be determined by the preference of the two assigned Councilmembers.

Question 3: Should materials that are prepared and distributed in advance to Councilmembers also be posted on the website?

Council direction: If the ad hoc committee meeting is posted as open to the public and if materials are provided in advance to

committee members, then the materials will also be posted on the City's website.

Question 4: Who is responsible for reviewing meeting notes? Who decides if there is a disagreement?

Council direction: Meeting notes will be submitted to the two assigned Councilmembers to review. (This also applies to meeting notes of standing committees.)

List of Ad Hoc Committees: As a result of reviewing the list of ad hoc committees, it was also determined that some of them should be removed from the list because they have not met in quite some time. The City Attorney pointed out that an ad hoc committee, by its nature, is short term in nature with a limited purpose, and should not continue indefinitely.

The Council discussion included the following comments:

- Review the list of ad hoc committees at a future priority setting session and determine whether any should be eliminated or should be elevated to a standing committee
- If a committee has not met in more than a year, terminate it
- Continue a practice of having the Mayor to review the list each year
- Staff will review the entire list and provide additional information to the Council for its discussion about eliminating or elevating any of the ad hoc committees

Use of Liaison Committee for Development Projects: The Council and staff discussed the current "Two-Step Process" for development projects and determined that it was not working as intended, and that the former use of a Liaison Committee was more effective. The Council decided to re-institute the use of a Liaison Committee and eliminate the "Two-Step Process." The Liaison Committee is comprised of two Councilmembers and two members of either the Planning Commission, Architectural Commission or Design Review Commission.

Other Revisions to Council Policy and Operations Manual: The City Attorney noted that his office is working on an alternative to Robert's Rules of Order to provide a more streamlined and a clearer set of guidelines for the Council to follow. The proposed revisions will be brought to the Council in the near future.

Reflections on Norms

Norms are a set of operating principles or expectations agreed to by the team for working together. They set the plate for carrying out the business of the City in an effective and efficient manner.

A worksheet containing all of the norms identified at the October 2012 retreat was provided to the Council and staff. Each person placed colored dots on posters of the worksheets to share opinions of whether the Council and staff were “doing well” with the norm or “need to do more.” The results of the dot voting are provided below. A third column was created to show norms where individuals felt that it was going well *and* that the group needed to do more.

After the dot voting, in the short amount of time remaining in the retreat, item 2 was discussed, pertaining to surprises. The dot voting indicated a variation of opinion. The group agreed that there should be no surprises and that both the Council and staff needed to work more on that.

Table Key: C = Council, S = Staff

A. Overall Norms	Doing Well With This	Doing Well AND Need to Do More	Need to Do More
1. Teamwork between the Council, residents and staff is important to carry out the business of the City	2S	5C	1S
2. There should be no surprises to Council by staff or to staff by Council	1C 1S	2C 1S	2C 1S
3. Councilmembers should be accessible to residents	2C 3S	1C	
4. Council, residents and staff should show respect to each other		3C	2C 3S
5. Take concerns about staff to the City Manager; do not publically criticize individual staff members; focus on the work product or process, not the person	2C 1S	2C	2C 1S
6. Have vigorous but respectful disagreements	2C 3S	2C	
7. Seek consensus and compromise while respecting individual opinions and votes; it is OK to disagree and clearly state your concerns	3C	2C 2S	
8. Respect the decision of the majority when there is a split vote	1C 2S	3C	1C 1S
9. Ask questions of staff prior to the Council meeting to get questions answered in advance and to help ensure that staff can provide complete answers at the Council meeting	3C 1S		1C 2S
10. Keep confidential matters confidential		1S	4C 2S

11. Encourage respectful dialogue with each other	1C 2S	4S	1S
B. Specific norms about Council interaction with staff at Council meetings	Doing Well With This	Doing Well AND Need to Do More	Need to Do More
1. Talk to the City Manager about complaints about staff; do not criticize individual staff members in public	2C	2S	2C
2. When a Council members wishes to express a negative opinion about staff work, he or she should focus on the work product and address comments to the City Manager	2C 2S	1C	1C
3. Ask questions about agenda reports prior to the Council meeting so that staff can be prepared to answer the questions; seek to avoid surprising staff with questions, whenever possible, at the Council meetings	2C 1S	2C	1C 2S
C. Expectations about staff reports to Council	Doing Well With This	Doing Well AND Need to Do More	Need to Do More
1. A recommendation based on professional expertise, facts and Council policy	2C 1S	1C 1S	1C 1S
2. Discussion of alternatives and the impacts of each; when no alternatives exist, explain why	1C	2C 1S	2C 2S
3. For issues extending over a long period of time, include the history of the item and prior Council actions to provide context and understanding of reasons for prior decisions and direction	1C 1S		4C 2S
D. Addressing complex issues	Doing Well With This	Doing Well AND Need to Do More	Need to Do More
1. Providing agenda materials several days or more ahead of the regular schedule	2C 3S	2C	1C
2. Having an initial meeting to discuss the issue without the need for a decision at that meeting, and then a subsequent meeting for action to be taken (a "two step" process)	4C 2S	1C	1S
E. Use of advance planning Council meeting calendar	Doing Well With This	Doing Well But Need to Do More	Need to Do More
Council members are encouraged to review this planning calendar which contains a list of upcoming agenda items and let the City Manager know when there is an item for which information is desired earlier than the Friday agenda packet.	4C 1S		1C 1S
F. Putting annual priorities into context of longer-term issues and goals	Doing Well With This	Doing Well But Need to Do More	Need to Do More
In addition to the annual priority setting discussions with Council, there is a desire to have discussions about longer term issues so that the annual priorities are set in context of broader goals and issues. This will also assist the Council and staff in understanding the impact of new projects or matters that arise during the year that are not on a priority list.		3C 2S	2C 1S

G. Method for a Councilmember to propose an item to be studied	Doing Well With This	Doing Well But Need to Do More	Need to Do More
<p>The Council refined the existing process through which a Councilmember can propose studying an issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councilmembers are encouraged to talk to the City Manager about ideas they are thinking about proposing for study so that the City Manager can determine what level of minimal staff work could be done to assist the Councilmember. An informal “one hour rule” is suggested to guide the amount of time that may be allocated for this initial, minimal research. • Once a Councilmember decides to place an item on a study session agenda, he or she will describe the question involved and the reasons for proposing a study of the issue. • Staff will then provide minimal information, sufficient to enable the Council to determine if they wish to authorize staff to study the issue. Among the information provided by staff in this initial report will be the amount of time a report or project is expected to require and the impact this work would have on other priorities. 	<p>3C 2S 4C 2S</p>	<p>1C 3C 4S</p>	
H. What Staff Needs from Council to be Most Effective	Doing Well With This	Doing Well But Need to Do More	Need to Do More
<p>1. It would be helpful for the City Manager to have more time with individual Councilmembers on a regular basis to discuss important issues, hear concerns, and ensure good communications.</p>	<p>3C 1S</p>		<p>2C 2S</p>
<p>2. The City Manager appreciates it when individual Councilmembers share information with him about community concerns they are hearing.</p>	<p>4C 2S</p>		
<p>3. It will be helpful to hear from Councilmembers what they need in staff reports in order for them to be able to make decisions, and for Councilmembers to ask their questions about agenda reports prior to Council meetings so the staff can answer the questions and be most prepared for Council meetings.</p>	<p>2C 3S</p>	<p>1C</p>	<p>2C</p>
<p>4. When Councilmembers have requests for staff effort on an item, it is helpful when they recognize their impacts on staff time and other priorities.</p>	<p>1C 1S</p>	<p>4C 2S</p>	
<p>5. The City Manager would like to hold these retreats as “tune ups” on a regular basis (one or two times a year) in order to have discussions about process and continuously improving how we carry out the business of the City.</p>		<p>3C</p>	<p>2C 3S</p>

Bike Rack

One item was placed on the bike rack for future discussion. That item was commission reform. Three issues were noted that need attention, including appointment of members, consistency of meeting format, and rotation of chairpersons.

Wrap Up

At the end of the retreat, Councilmembers and staff noted that they appreciated the opportunity to talk with each other about important issues. The City Manager suggested that it would be helpful to have a longer retreat and one that would be able to focus on major issues, now that the norms and procedural issues have been discussed at two retreats.