



**CITY COUNCIL**

February 6, 2010

**Special Session Meeting**

1. Call to Order - 8:30 A.M., Saturday, February 6, 2010, Bay Harbor Conference Center Harbor Room
2. Roll Call
3. Review of Dr. Ohren's Summary of January 8-9, 2010, Session
  - (a) General reflections on the opening sessions
  - (b) Reactions to specific issues:
    - 1) Would you add to the list from Friday, January 8, meeting any other barriers to effective decision-making?
    - 2) Would you suggest any other strategies for improving our decision process that we should consider adopting in the next month or so?
    - 3) Would you add to the list of norms we created earlier? Is it worth the time to explore the concept of the norms?
    - 4) Are there any questions or comments about work sessions as a means for strengthening the decision process?
    - 5) Any further thoughts about public participation in meetings and citizen involvement or engagement in decision-making more generally?
    - 6) Are you comfortable with the summary of our discussion about the nature and extent of information to be provided to the City Council by City staff?
    - 7) Do we all accept the notion that the City Manager is the "go to" person with respect to questions and requests for information?
4. Public Comment
5. Revising and Strengthening the Draft Action Plan
  - (a) Are you comfortable with the language of the goals (remember, these are your goals, not mine)?
  - (b) Are there additional strategies that we should add to any one of the board goals before we establish priorities?
  - (c) Of the strategies listed for each goal, which are the most important, perhaps to be pursued over the next 10 to 12 months?
  - (d) Of those strategies deemed highest priority, who should be designed as responsible, what timeline should be set, and what metrics or benchmarks might we put into place?
6. Next Steps in the Planning Process
7. Public Comment
8. Adjournment - 4:00 P.M.

**DR. OHREN'S SUMMARY  
OF  
JANUARY 8-9 SESSIONS**

## MEMO

January 26, 2010

TO: Mayor and Council Members, City of Petoskey  
Dan Ralley, City Manager  
CC: Other Participants in the Planning Retreat  
FROM: Dr. Joe Ohren  
RE: Retreat Minutes, January 8-9, 2010

As I promised after our session earlier this month, I have summarized our retreat session dialogue for review, reaction and amendment as we continue discussing the action plan to guide future decisions in Petoskey. As I indicated I would, I have also included throughout my own thoughts and suggestions about how you might strengthen working relationships. Also attached is the essay on work sessions I mentioned Friday evening and a second essay on Citizen Involvement since that topic came up at several points in our meeting.

The action plan is presented in narrative format at this point; we will continue our work on the plan at our follow-up session on February 6<sup>th</sup> and focus on establishing priorities among action items; if time permits we can also address measures or benchmarks for assessing accomplishments at a later point in time. See the homework assignment at the end of the minutes as you prepare for our follow-up session and the conclusion of our work together.

These notes, prepared by Dr. Joe Ohren, constitute an attachment to the official record of the work session of January 8-9, 2010 (for the record, I have also attached a digital copy of the Homework Summaries that were distributed at the sessions). The first section provides an overview of the retreat, the second focuses on what were perceived as critical elements of effective groups, the third focuses on the barriers to effective decision-making identified in the discussion and the strategies for addressing them, the fourth section identifies a list of issues or challenges facing the city that were deemed most critical, while the last section includes the draft Action Plan for addressing those most critical issues.

### **I. Friday evening overview**

Our agenda for the Friday evening session focused on what I referred to as decision process issues, working relationships between and among the leadership group, especially important given the new faces around the table. The discussion was fueled by responses to a brief survey distributed in advance of the work session, and for the record I have attached a digital copy of those responses. You will note that in preparing the summary I have not tried to capture the discussion in great detail, and made no effort to attribute specific comments or thoughts to particular individuals. Rather, I have focused on key themes that emerged, elaborated on the barriers to reflect the tenor of the discussion, and provided some personal insight on suggested strategies based on my work in other communities.

## II. Decision process issues

**Introductory Comments**—At the start of the discussion I emphasized the importance of frank and open discussion throughout our work together. As we introduced ourselves it was apparent that there was much experience around the table, although four members of council are in their first terms of office and the manager has been on board for less than six months. While newcomers to council, members had been involved in one or more committees or activities in the community, some for many years; this manifests both commitment and experience that can add to effective collective decision-making.

I also emphasized, at different points in the evening discussion, several other elements of local government decision-making worth remembering:

- a. The council is a collective body, not a single decision-maker. The council only acts to the extent that a majority of its members can agree on a decision. And, no single member of the body can exercise authority on behalf of the council; e.g., directing the work of the city manager, city attorney or department heads.
- b. Because of the authority vested in the council, it makes a difference **who** serves. Hence, council members tend to feel strongly themselves about the issues that are most salient at any given point in time. Often that is what motivated an individual to run for office. Such strong feelings however can also fuel conflict among those with different views.
- c. The very nature of elected bodies means that there will be periodic turnover, and that at times newcomers to the group will have “run for office” on a campaign critical of incumbents. This doesn’t necessarily make for smooth working relationships on the new council. We shared a handout on group dynamics—forming, storming, norming and performing—to capture some of the challenge associated with this phenomena, and even identified some possible norms later in the discussion.
- d. Because we tend to be suspicious of those who wield power on our behalf, we carefully circumscribe council’s authority, requiring them to post their meetings, announce their agenda, share their information, and discuss and reach consensus in public; e.g., remember our admonitions about public access to council email. This complicates the process of bargaining and compromise that is necessary at times to build consensus around controversial issues; this by the way is one of the important differences between the public and the private sector—we don’t get to witness all the negotiation and compromise that goes on the private sector board room.
- e. And, at all points we need to be cognizant of the views of the public, make every effort to engage citizens in discussion, and we have an obligation to help residents know what the issues are and why we are taking the action we are to address problems. This places a special burden on local governing boards because sometimes there is little local media that can help in sharing information about city matters.

This opening dialogue set the stage for the discussion, organized during the meeting and in the narrative that follows by the several survey questions circulated in advance.

**A. Characteristics of effective decision-making groups**—We began by focusing briefly on characteristics of effective decision-making bodies, identifying several characteristics noted below. This was intended in large part as an ice-breaker, to get the discussion flowing. But, as sometimes happens, I suspect our views about what constitute characteristics of effective groups is influenced by our perceptions of what might be lacking in our own group.

1. Effective leaders who encourages all to have input in the decision making process
2. Members who respect each other
3. Everybody participates
4. Group has a clear focus or goal(s)
5. Open communications
6. Trust

One of the key conclusions to the discussion was a recognition that the power of groups such as this leadership team stems from the diversity of members; differences in point of view, in age and experience, in education and work background, in tenure in the community, and in views about what we “ought” to do as a local government. The diversity within the group can be a powerful source of ideas and insights on the whole range of issues and challenges that you face as a community.

I often use the metaphor of the “lens” through which we see and understand the world; each of us has our own lens shaped by our backgrounds and experiences, which influence the way we think about things. And, as I mentioned in passing, elected officials see things through a different lens than the manager and department heads; this doesn’t imply that one or the other is right or wrong; it just acknowledges the differences between us as we work together.

Indeed, those differences can become one of the most critical stumbling blocks to effective group action if they are not effectively addressed. Differences can mean conflict, disagreement, and contention over our goals, how problems are defined, what issues should be addressed, how they might be addressed, even perceptions about what we can and cannot do as a local government—all the things we identified as characteristic of effective groups.

Hence, the differences can be viewed as the proverbial two sides of the same coin; differences among members are the greatest source of strength for groups and at the same time the source of most conflict among group members. What is crucial is a willingness to acknowledge our differences, express our views about how we see things and be open to others with contrary views, and pursue agreement about how to work together for the good of the community.

This does not mean that conflict is to be avoided, or that we should work toward unanimous decisions. It means that we air our views and we accept the differences that emerge—indeed, recognizing that the differences can in fact strengthen the decision-making process. We make decisions even if it means split decisions, honor the official decisions that are made by council even if we weren’t in the majority or didn’t support the position, and continue to work together to address the next issue in a spirit of respect, trust and cooperation. That in part is the motivation for this retreat.

**B. Barriers to effective working relationships/decision-making**—We used the discussion of effective groups to segue to an assessment of perceived barriers to effective decision-making in Petoskey, and then discussed how those barriers might be overcome. I made the point that no matter how good you are as a group in the decision-making process, you can always be better, through self-conscious assessment and continual improvement. This can create some anxiety, as we potentially air “dirty laundry” in the deliberations. But, it is only through self-assessment and self-reflection that we can come to grips with those things that get in the way of being the most effective leadership for the community.

And, the reality is, despite our emphasis on evaluating performance, there is no meaningful mechanism for assessing our performance as a group (we all recognize that elections are the means by which the public “evaluates” members of council individually). Thus, our process is designed to allow us to collectively assess how well we are doing. And, given the importance of elected council members, the manager and department heads to the collective leadership of the community, we engaged the entire group in the discussion.

Participants identified seven perceived barriers through this brainstorming, but made no effort to prioritize or rank order the list or to secure any sense of consensus on individual items on the list. The point was to generate a list of barriers that could then lead to thinking about improving the decision-making process. (On Saturday morning I handed out a list of barriers that were identified in many of the other communities with which I have worked—my point was that many of the barriers we identified here were common in other areas.)

1. Not being prepared for discussions
2. Not having all the information or not having the right information
3. Different people have different information needs; some want a lot of detail, others don't
4. Lack of a clear vision, or not utilizing a vision that we have adopted to guide decision-making
5. Lack of clear expectations for following the chain of command
6. Lack of opportunities to build a relationship among council members and between council members and staff
7. Lack of agreement on some issues—we just can't agree

**C. Strategies for improving our effectiveness as a leadership team**— The listing of barriers then led to a discussion of strategies to address some of those that were deemed important.

1. Agree on common goals and expectations and use them as a basis for decisions and subsequent evaluation/assessment of how well we are doing
2. Develop measures or benchmarks to be used for assessing how well we are doing
3. Do a better job of providing council an overview of departmental operations/major issues and goals perhaps on an annual basis
4. Develop a set of council norms that might become the basis for working relationship (see below)
5. Consider using special sessions as a way of addressing certain major issues
6. Seek clarification of uses of executive sessions

Let me reflect on several of these barriers and strategies in anticipation of our follow-up discussion—the first item on our agenda for Saturday February 6<sup>th</sup> will be a review of these minutes and I want to focus most specifically during that discussion on these strategies for strengthening the decision process. Thus, I have posed questions at several points (in bold font) to stimulate your thinking and prompt further discussion.

Goals for the Community: As I suspect is obvious, one of the reasons for our work together in the goal-setting program is to try to build consensus around a set of goals and action strategies to guide future decisions. This should help everybody “get on the same page” as the saying goes. This will help, but as we discussed, it will also require using the action plan as a basis for decisions, reporting accomplishments on the basis of the plan, identifying where and why we have fallen short, and periodically revisiting the plan to keep it current and relevant. This will also require some thought in the planning process, as the second item suggests, to measures and benchmarks, to let us know when and if we have accomplished what we set out to do.

In discussing the characteristics of effective groups, we noted that consensus on clear goals—what we are trying to accomplish for the community—is critical. Without such consensus, the governing board may have a tendency to go off in a variety of directions, responding to the issue at hand—being reactive rather than proactive—and fragmenting resources and action. The goal-setting process itself can also be a means for helping all participants understand the issues facing the community, our past efforts at addressing them, and some of the challenges involved in doing so.

Council Norms: During Friday evening I distributed a handout referring to the stages of group dynamics—the forming, storming, norming and performing processes I referred to earlier. While we did not attempt to identify norms in a systematic way we did refer to several specific norms in the dialogue, which I have inserted below (I included these in the handout Saturday morning). I have also included a sample set of norms on the next page adopted by another community with which I worked some time ago for information purposes. **Do we want to add to the list that you created? Is it worth the time to make explicit in this fashion our expectations of one another?**

#### *Norms for Petoskey*

1. Review the council packet prior to council meetings
2. Direct questions to or seek additional information from the city manager in advance of the council meeting
3. Exercise restraint in raising questions with individual staff or employees; most communication with respect to questions and information should be channeled through the city manager
4. Be open to and respectful of the views of other council members on issues
5. Be mindful of your role in providing information and explanation to the public about the nature of issues and the rationale for acting as we have done
6. Devote time periodically to discussing decision process issues

Over the years several of the governing boards with which I have worked thought it was useful to make explicit their expectations of one another. A Township board drafted the set of statements below as part of the process of group development to guide the behavior of members and others in relationship to one another.

There are no mechanisms for enforcing such rules; rather the agreement to live by the norms is what governs the behavior of members. As in many things we do, the process of collectively developing the norms is what is important, not necessarily the substance of the rules themselves. It is your collective agreement that is important, and hence why you just can't simply pick up somebody else's and adopt them as your own.

### **Guidelines for Effective Board Action (Draft)**

1. The Board shall establish policies for the Township.
2. Authority rests with the Board in legal sessions and not with individual members.
3. No single member speaks for the Board of Trustees.
4. Members shall abide by Board decisions, once decisions are made.
5. Members shall resist efforts at undermining Board decisions; continuing concerns about a Board decision should be expressed privately.
6. Members shall make attendance at all meetings of the Board a high priority.
7. Members should come informed in advance about issues to be considered at Board meetings.
8. Members should ask for clarifying information in advance of a Board meeting when an agenda item is not clear.
9. Members shall respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged.
10. Members shall respect each other's views in spite of differences of opinion that arise during debate.
11. The Board shall establish and abide by a process for facilitating the expression of citizen complaints and insuring that such complaints are addressed.
12. The Board shall establish and enforce fundamental management policies and procedures for the Township.
13. The Board shall provide an orientation program for new members that includes information about the Township, responsibilities of members, and operating guidelines.

Council Executive Sessions: As I understood the discussion of this item the concern had to do with a relatively "conservative" interpretation of Michigan law controlling the use of executive sessions by governing boards. I am not sure there was a specific example used to help participants understand the concern, but my view is that if there are some concerns about how and when we might employ such "closed" meetings, that needs to be done with advice from counsel. Given the new members on the board, arranging for counsel to discuss the issue, perhaps in a work session where questions can be addressed, might be a fruitful way to proceed. **Should that be scheduled, perhaps by itself or as part of a larger work session agenda? Is it important enough to spend the time?**

Work Sessions: Given the reference above to a work session, I also noted that at several points in the discussion we explored the value of work sessions, whether and when they should be scheduled and for what purposes, and how they should be conducted. Participants are familiar with such sessions since they are regularly used for review of the proposed budget, but several suggestions were made about other possible uses; for major projects or programs, for consideration of future issues, such as the ongoing retreat, and other major tasks. I noted that many communities routinely schedule such sessions to go over items on the agenda that might spark considerable discussion, since the format of the work session allows face-to-face communication and questions and answers between and among staff and council members as issues are explored.

Council might adopt a policy that it will hold such meetings, and communicate that policy widely and regularly through appropriate channels. The policy should specify the broad purposes of such sessions (one suggestion reflected in the action plan is a work session on the Bay Harbor leachate issue), indicate when they will be held—as we discussed there are a range of examples among communities—and where and how the sessions will be conducted.

Most communities schedule such sessions in an alternate venue from the regular meeting chamber, or if held there, use a different physical arrangement of members to facilitate discussion. And finally, as noted below, the policy should spell out whether public participation will be permitted in such sessions. As I noted earlier, I have attached as a separate file an essay I prepared for the Michigan Municipal League on the subject – one of their downloadable handouts.

Public participation at meetings: Work sessions are primarily for council and staff deliberations, a regular part of the normal decision-making process. They are required to be posted and open to the public. Public participation is not required but often councils decide to open up the sessions to public comment, as we did at the work session on both Friday night and Saturday afternoon. If council decides to do this, it should address these issues in the policy described above, with the same provisos or limits as discussed below.

Public participation is required for regular council sessions, which also must be posted and open to the public. But, councils are allowed to spell out:

1. When public comment occurs—some communities place the public comment period at the end of the regular agenda, other communities place the public comment period at the start of the meeting before old business is taken up, or in some cases, council sets aside a specified period of time at the start of the meeting and a second specified time at the end of the session. The first period is intended to allow comments on current agenda items, while the latter period allows wide-ranging comments. Still other communities allow public comment during the regular agenda at the point when specific items of interest are taken up.
2. The length of such comments—many communities impose and enforce time limits on public comments from an individual, limiting comments to two or three minutes, simply to allow as many people to comment as possible and to limit the time in the meeting devoted to comment as opposed to the work of the council and the city. This is particularly critical if time is scheduled at the start of the meeting for public comment.
3. Whether a prior sign-up is required—this is usually intended to provide some order to the proceedings, and often done on a first come-first up basis. Again, this is particularly critical if time is scheduled at the start of the agenda for comment.
4. Rules of decorum or appropriate behavior during public comment—such rules are intended primarily to provide a degree of civility to the process.

These “rules” should be spelled out in advance in the form of a policy statement by council simply to avoid having to deal with issues on the fly, or in the “heat” of discussion on a particularly controversial issue. The same policy can apply to both regular meetings and work

sessions, to simplify matters, and copies of the policy and the “rules of decorum” can be distributed at all meetings—I have seen them copied on the back of the meeting agenda so that everybody who comes and takes an agenda has them. I would recommend that a sign-up process be used, and those signing up can be reminded of the policy at the time they sign-up. It will require some discipline on the part of the mayor as presiding officer to enforce the policy—people often see this as an infringement on their right to speak—but limiting people allows others to speak and requiring civility facilitates good decision-making.

As an aside, council members also should be attentive during the public comment period—nothing is more alienating and frustrating for people to be speaking to their elected officials and the impression is left that no one is paying attention. But members should not engage in debate with speakers, ask questions or even respond to questions that arise during this period. If questions do come up, the presiding officer should indicate that one of the staff will follow-up with the individual and address the issue.

A related but broader issue has to do with the best means for securing public input and involvement in community decision-making. It was clear that the leadership group saw this as important—indeed one of the action strategies in the plan refers to continuing the survey that is currently being conducted to tap citizen perceptions of services. I think we also agree intuitively that while public participation at regular council meetings is important (and required as I noted above), that public comment or even those at a required public hearing (such as at budget time or on zoning changes) are not really very effective at engaging the larger community in thinking about the challenges facing the community. Thus, you may want to explore alternative and perhaps even multiple means for communicating with and engaging the community; as noted earlier, I have attached another essay on this matter prepared for another purpose that might help you think about some of the alternatives and which might be most effective.

Role of staff: Discussion of these strategies were a natural lead in to the broader question of the role of the staff in the decision-making process, and even more specifically, the relationship between council members and department heads and at a later point, the nature and extent of the information provided to council on agenda items.

Early in the retreat I had made the point that in the council-manager form of government no one individual on the governing body directs the work of the manager or department heads (even of those individuals like the clerk and city attorney who report directly to council); that is the responsibility of the collective body, acting in public session. And, while the governing body provides goals and policy direction for the manager and other administrators, the direction ought to be broad and policy oriented.

Council’s job is not to micro-manage—it is to set policy and hold administrators accountable for carrying out the policies set by the council. That is why you hire a professional manager and appoint professionals to head departments. But, accountability is key, and part of our purpose for meeting is to spell out expectations, especially for the manager, that can then be used as the basis for an assessment in a year or so. And, part of our follow-up discussions will need to address putting in place a mechanism or mechanisms for regularly examining “how well are we doing?”

The discussion of manager-council relationships led to further exploration of council-employee relationships more generally, and again it is worth repeating some of those points. The practice in the past I gather is for individual members of council to work exclusively through the manager to seek information, address questions, or to pass along citizen complaints. Some council members expressed frustration with such an approach, especially when seeking what might be deemed a simple response to a request for information—the example that was used if I remember was a question of the Public Safety Director as to what happened to the police car that was being towed away from what was perceived as the scene of an accident (the cruiser wouldn't start and was loaded on the flatbed when the tow truck was called to the scene of another accident to remove a car).

Sorting out what might be deemed a simple question and what might be perceived by a department head or an employee as *direction* can be tricky. Such questions or requests can potentially undermine the authority of the manager, can create havoc with individual department work schedules, and can create the perception on the part of employees that an individual member of council may be “exerting pressure” when they call and ask a question. While the mayor or council member may perceive a question as “innocent,” the employee may see things very differently (remember my comment about the “lens” through which we perceive things?).

While it is incumbent on council members to be familiar with the work of city departments—indeed one of the strategies suggested that we need to do a better job of this—members of council should be communicating to department heads or staff through the manager, or seeking information or asking questions of the manager (indeed that was the language we employed in drafting what I referred to as a norm). And, he in turn needs to be reporting on actions and sharing information to all members of council; e.g., remember our point, everybody gets the same information at the same time so no one is advantaged or disadvantaged. **On reflection, are we all comfortable with this strategy? Do we all accept the notion that the manager is the “go to” person with respect to questions and requests for information?**

This led naturally to some discussion about the nature and extent of the information that is provided by staff to council; I think we all agree that the role of staff is to provide the best information possible on issues before council. There appeared to be some difference of opinion however, as to what constitutes “best,” and more specifically the scope of the information on particular agenda items. In some communities the council packet will include the staff recommendation on a given item, with little supporting information. In other communities, the recommendation would be accompanied by detailed information on the definition of the problem, on the alternatives considered, and the rationale behind the specific recommendation.

Requesting more information can be perceived by department heads as “lack of trust”—we are professionals, we have done our homework, often over many months, and here is our recommendation. Council members on the other hand may field questions from residents about “why did we do that”? And, as I have suggested elsewhere, council members also have a specific responsibility to help the community understand the issues we face, the alternatives that have been considered, and the rationale behind a decision. In order to play this “teacher role” as I have referred to it elsewhere, council needs to have greater access to information; again, this is the reason for suggesting as we did that we need to “do a better job of providing council an

overview of departmental operations/major issues and goals” among our strategies for strengthening the decision process. We recognize that it puts a greater burden on staff, but the leadership group needs to make decisions as a collective body, with as much information as possible shared back and forth. **Are we comfortable with this broader mandate for information on issues before council? Are there mechanisms available to simplify this task for department heads and the manager?**

### **III. Identifying Strategic Issues**

Following our extended discussion of decision process issues, Friday night and at the start of the session Saturday morning, we identified a list of what were deemed the challenges or problems facing the city, based on the responses to the homework assignment. It became quite apparent in reflecting on the issues that there was a great deal of consensus as to what were the most critical issues. I have listed them below.

- Quality of our neighborhoods
- The strength and vitality of our downtown core
- The strength and vitality of all our commercial corridors
- Financial challenges, sustainability
- Infrastructure investments needed for sustainability
- Quality of housing stock, nuisance issues, rental inspection
- Economic development policy
- Petoskey as a destination for investment, tourism, residence
- Bay Harbor issues, service challenges, ongoing legal action, leachate question

### **IV. Action Planning**

As we discussed these issues further we recognized the overlap in several of the items and emerged with an even shorter list that is reflected in the goal statements in the following section. The five were not ranked in order of importance and they were stated as problems or challenges. As we began thinking in terms of action planning, I restated the issues as goal statements, and have presented them in tentative language below. We should discuss this language at our follow-up session to be sure that you are comfortable with it (they are your goals, not mine).

**Strengthen City Finances to Insure Sustainability**  
**Address City Infrastructure Issues**  
**Improve the Quality of Life of Petoskey Neighborhoods**  
**Strengthen the Petoskey Economy**  
**Address Bay Harbor Service Issues**

The group devoted most of the afternoon Saturday to identifying strategies designed to address each of the goals identified above. For ease of understanding, the ideas generated through the afternoon discussion have been presented in the form of a draft Action Plan. Note that some of our discussion of action strategies was neither detailed nor explicit, but I have tried to make clear the intent in the language.

I have also added my own notes in boxed text to provide help in interpreting the action strategies. We did not have time to set priorities among strategies, to address possible measures of success or indicate exactly who would be carrying out these activities. These issues will be discussed explicitly at the follow-up session.

### Homework Assignment

In anticipation of the follow-up session, please read over these notes carefully. I want to be sure that every participant has a chance to comment on them if they feel so motivated. **Did I miss anything? Do other thoughts come to mind as you read the notes? Do my questions of you about barriers and strategies for strengthening decision-making require further attention?**

More importantly, review the details in the action plan; **are you comfortable with the language of the goals**—these are your goals not mine so be sure you agree with them. As you read through the strategies, **do other ideas come to mind?**

Finally, as a prelude to our priority setting, **indicate with an X or check mark** those two or three strategies for each goal that you believe are the highest priority. In other words, recognizing that we don't have the resources—money, time, energy, and so on—to do everything, **which things should be done first?** For each goal, identify perhaps two or three strategies that need to be accomplished during the next year.

#### Attachments

- Homework summary
- Work sessions
- Citizen Involvement

**Ohren's Note:** As I indicated in the narrative above, I have transcribed as carefully as I could the ideas and insights on strategies shared during our Saturday afternoon brainstorming. A good number of ideas emerged, but we made no effort to secure consensus or to set priorities for action. As we adjourned I indicated the tasks before us for Saturday February 6. We will want to add to and revise where necessary the draft plan presented below; you will note that I have provided room for additional ideas on tasks or strategies for achieving the goals, and shared where I thought it might be helpful my own comments in boxed text.

We will then devote time to setting priorities among the strategies for each goal. Focusing on priorities will be a critical step as we continue our discussion; it will help facilitate consensus and make clear to the manager and staff what the council's expectations are. To the extent we have time, we can elaborate in the plan on task responsibility, timelines and possible benchmarks for assessment. These latter elements may have to come from the departments after completion and adoption of the Action Plan, but we may be able to provide some collective guidance on these matters at our Saturday session.

**City of Petoskey**  
**Draft Action Plan (January 2010)**

**Goal One**                      **Strengthen City Finances to Insure Sustainability**  
*Action Strategies*

1. Anticipate and address proactively the request for a countywide public transit millage, providing information, assessing potential cost and service implications for Petoskey residents
2. Develop cost of service data to link more explicitly services and costs for residents and to establish and update user fees used to finance certain city services
3. Share information on utility rates more systematically with residents
4. Complete, analyze and share information from the ICMA citizen survey
5. Seek partnerships in service delivery where appropriate and cost effective (e.g., the local Indian Tribe for road improvements, other local government units for a corridor improvement authority)

**Other strategies to be considered?**

**Goal Two                      Address City Infrastructure Issues**  
*Action Strategies*

1. Revisit the capital improvement program (CIP) and provide more detail on out-year projects, costs and potential funding, indicating to the extent possible what **must** be done and what **might** be done if funding were available
2. Complete cost and rate studies to generate recommendations on extent of potential revenues available to support improvements
3. Develop a plan, with costs estimates, for implementing a Geographic Information System for use in a variety of city service applications
4. Conduct a work session for council discussion of infrastructure funding and improvements and host a public meeting or meetings to secure citizen understanding of and input on the CIP

**Other strategies to be considered?**

**Goal Three                      Improve the Quality of Life of Petoskey Neighborhoods**  
*Action Strategies*

1. Continue efforts to review and adopt a nuisance ordinance: address alternative enforcement strategies and enforcement mechanisms, and provide public education/information on the ordinance
2. Continue discussions of a possible rental inspection program, providing opportunities for council deliberations with staff at a work session and hosting a community forum or forums on a possible program
3. Increase efforts to share more information through a variety of means to residents concerning common problems in neighborhoods; e.g., street lawn responsibilities, sidewalk clearing, odd-even parking
4. Develop and implement strategies to improve and enhance commercial nodes throughout the city
5. Develop and implement strategies for slowing traffic in residential neighborhoods, especially on connecting streets

**Other strategies to be considered?**

**Goal Four                      Strengthen the Petoskey Economy**  
*Action Strategies*

1. Address a broad range of economic development policies and options
  - Update the city policy on abatements, considering best practices and what other local units employ
  - Explore the potential application of other economic development tools, especially those that have been recently approved by the state legislature
  
2. Preserve and enhance the downtown
  - Improve signage for entry points to the downtown area
  - Develop a policy on cost allocation between the city and the DDA/DMB for downtown improvements
  - Insure public understanding of the situation surrounding the Petoskey Pointe development
  - Revisit the option of creating a Local Historic District, perhaps hosting a public forum to secure input on whether the city should establish a local study commission
  
3. Employ other appropriate economic development activities
  - Work with adjacent townships
  - Collaborate with the Chamber and the DDA/DMB to strengthen city efforts on business retention and marketing
  - Host a joint session of council and the DDA/DMB board
  
4. Consider the purchase of private properties in the city to play a proactive role in shaping and influencing desirable economic development; e.g., Continental Plastics, Lumber company property

**Ohren's Note:** this latter suggestion emerged in the discussion of improving neighborhood quality but since it represents a specific economic development strategy I thought it best to include it in this goal.

**Other strategies to be considered?**

## Goal Five

## Address Bay Harbor Service Issues

**Ohren's Note:** we addressed two separate sets of issues related to the Bay Harbor community, one specifically focused on the leachate issue and the other revolving around the provision of public safety service. I have combined them here under the broad heading of addressing Bay Harbor service issues since they are related. The point was also made that to some extent the ongoing lawsuit shapes much of the discussion and city action on serving the Bay Harbor community, and the actions of others will likely influence the outcome of the efforts to address the leachate emerging from the utility.

### *Action Strategies*

#### A. Bay Harbor leachate issue

1. Circulate the consultant's report on the leachate issue to council and convene a work session to insure a full airing of the problem, the alternatives, the technical issues remaining to be resolved, and the process for and timing of a decision on the issue
2. Provide periodic updates to council on the outcome of the facilitated stakeholder's group that is meeting to address the issue
3. Consider hosting a public forum on the issue at an appropriate time to provide information to the community

#### B. Bay Harbor public safety service issues

**Ohren's Note:** the initial discussion of the item revolved around a public safety facility and the options that might emerge from use of an existing property/building in the area. As the discussion progressed, however, it was refocused on the broader question of how best to provide public safety services to the community, and beyond that, services more generally. That led to thinking about short term and long term strategies, recognizing that the latter might be influenced by the outcome of the ongoing lawsuit.

4. In the short term implement appropriate alternative patrol strategies to increase the public safety presence in the Bay Harbor community and reduce response times
5. Consider hiring a consultant to provide recommendations on the most cost effective ways to provide enhanced service to the Bay Harbor community
6. Explore alternatives for financing necessary facilities for the Bay Harbor community
7. Prepare as needed facility options and cost estimates for serving the Bay Harbor community

### **Other strategies to be considered?**

**DRAFT ACTION PLAN**

**City of Petoskey  
Draft Action Plan,  
January 2010**

**Ohren's Note: I have reproduced below a clean version of the Action Plan that emerged from our discussions in early January. It may be easier to use this version as we work today to identify priorities, responsible staff and timelines for carrying out specific tasks.**

**Goal One                      Strengthen City Finances to Insure Sustainability**

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
1. Anticipate and address proactively the request for a countywide public transit millage, providing information, assessing potential cost and service implications for Petoskey residents			
2. Develop cost of service data to link more explicitly services and costs for residents and to establish and update user fees used to finance certain city services			
3. Share information on utility rates more systematically with residents			
4. Complete, analyze and share information from the ICMA citizen survey			
5. Seek partnerships in service delivery where appropriate and cost effective (e.g., the local Indian Tribe for road improvements, other local government units for a corridor improvement authority			

**Goal Two**

**Address City Infrastructure Issues**

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
1. Revisit the capital improvement program (CIP) and provide more detail on out-year projects, costs and potential funding, indicating to the extent possible what <b>must</b> be done and what <b>might</b> be done if funding were available			
2. Complete cost and rate studies to generate recommendations on extent of potential revenues available to support improvements			
3. Develop a plan, with costs estimates, for implementing a Geographic Information System for use in a variety of city service applications			
4. Conduct a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• work session for council discussion of infrastructure funding and improvements, and</li><li>• public meeting or meetings to secure citizen understanding of and input on the CIP</li></ul>			

**Goal Three**

**Improve the Quality of Life of Petoskey Neighborhoods**

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
1. Continue efforts to review and adopt a nuisance ordinance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• address alternative enforcement strategies and enforcement mechanisms, and</li><li>• provide public education/information on the ordinance</li></ul>			
2. Continue discussions of a possible rental inspection program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• provide opportunities for council deliberations with staff at a work session, and</li><li>• host a community forum or forums on a possible program</li></ul>			
3. Increase efforts to share more information through a variety of means to residents concerning common problems in neighborhoods; e.g., street lawn responsibilities, sidewalk clearing, odd-even parking			
4. Develop and implement strategies to improve and enhance commercial nodes throughout the city			
5. Develop and implement strategies for slowing traffic in residential neighborhoods, especially on connecting streets			

**Goal Four                      Strengthen the Petoskey Economy**

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Address a broad range of economic development policies and options:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update city policy on abatements, considering best practices and what other local units employ</li> <li>• Explore potential application of other economic development tools, especially those recently approved by the state legislature</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Preserve/enhance downtown               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve signage for entry points to the downtown area</li> <li>• Develop policy on cost allocation between the city and the DDA/DMB for downtown improvements</li> <li>• Insure public understanding of the situation surrounding the Petoskey Pointe development</li> <li>• Revisit creating a Local Historic District, perhaps hosting a public forum to secure input on whether the city should establish a local study commission</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Employ other appropriate economic development activities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with adjacent townships</li> <li>• Collaborate with Chamber and the DDA/DMB to strengthen city efforts on business retention and marketing</li> <li>• Host a joint session of council and the DDA/DMB board</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Consider purchase of private properties in the city to play a proactive role in shaping and influencing desirable economic development; e.g., Continental Plastics, Lumber company</li> </ol>			

**Goal Five**

**Address Bay Harbor Service Issues**

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
<p><b>A. Bay Harbor leachate issue</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Circulate the consultant’s report on the leachate issue to council and convene a work session to insure a full airing of the problem, the alternatives, the technical issues remaining to be resolved, and the process for and timing of a decision on the issue</li><li>2. Provide periodic updates to council on the outcome of the facilitated stakeholder’s group that is meeting to address the issue</li><li>3. Consider hosting a public forum on the issue at an appropriate time to provide information to the community</li></ol>			
<p><b>B. Bay Harbor public safety service issues</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. In the short term implement appropriate alternative patrol strategies to increase public safety presence in Bay Harbor and reduce response times</li><li>5. Consider hiring a consultant to provide recommendations on the most cost effective ways to provide enhanced service to the Bay Harbor community</li><li>6. Explore alternatives for financing necessary facilities for the Bay Harbor community</li><li>7. Prepare as needed facility options and cost estimates for serving the Bay Harbor community</li></ol>			