

South Portland City Council Goal-Setting Workshop

Highlight Notes

Tuesday, February 25, 2020

The Sheraton at Sable Oaks, 200 Sable Oaks Drive, South Portland

This report contains notes taken on the spot by Facilitator Craig Freshley. It is not a complete reflection of all that was discussed, has not been checked for accuracy, and has not been approved by the group.

About the Workshop

Outcomes

- Shared understanding of progress on existing goals.
- General conclusions about prioritization of goals for 2020.
- Agreement on specific steps and responsibilities for top priority goals.
- Council members get to know each other better and appreciate each other's perspectives.

Attendance

- Katherine W. Lewis, Mayor and City Councilor
- Claude V.Z. Morgan, City Councilor
- Misha C. Pride, City Councilor
- April L. Caricchio, City Councilor
- Deqa A. Dhalac, City Councilor
- Susan Henderson, City Councilor
- Katelyn S. Bruzgo, City Councilor

- Scott Morelli, City Manager
- Emily Scully, City Clerk

- Craig Freshley, Facilitator

Planned Agenda

- 5:30 **Dinner**
- 6:00 **Opening**
Mayor Kate Lewis will open the workshop and briefly explain our objectives. Facilitator Craig Freshley will briefly explain the agenda and a few ground rules.
- 6:10 **2019 Goals Review**
We will begin with a brief progress report on the 2019 goals from City Manager Scott Morelli. Councilors will then offer their own assessments of progress. For those goals largely achieved, we will try to identify the “success factors” that contributed to their achievement. For goals not achieved, we will try to identify why not.
- 6:50 **Goals Prioritization**
We will begin with a presentation by Craig on advance input received from Councilors. Craig will share with us current goals that appear to not be a high priority and Councilors’ ideas for new goals. As a group we will discuss and try to come to consensus on the Council’s short list of high priority goals for 2020. We will also discuss our priorities for longer term goals.
- 7:40 **Break**
- 8:00 **Goals Details**
For each of the high priority goals we will discuss the specific steps required to achieve each one including timelines. We will also name lead responsibilities for each goal and perhaps other details also.
- 9:20 **Closing Comments**
Each member of the City Council and the City Manager will have an opportunity to make a brief closing comment, perhaps a reflection about the workshop or perhaps a particular lingering hope or concern.
- 9:30 **Adjourn**

Ground Rules

- What's best for the City as a whole
- Discussion among Councilors and the Town Manager and City Clerk
- Let Craig call on people
- Minimize distractions
- Flexible agenda
- No formal decisions
- Neutral facilitation and report

2019 Goals Review

Waterfront Master Plan

- Presentation
 - We approved \$100k for Waterfront Master Plan but held off on it.
 - Used some of the money to fund the Clean Air Advisory Council.
- Comments
 - Wonder if we are waiting for the One Climate Future report.
 - Needs to get folded into the comprehensive planning process.
 - Need to bring key property owners on board to discuss planning around Bug Light.

Public safety and environmental mitigation

- Presentation
 - Nearly complete.
 - Received some “brownfield assurance”.
 - LD 2033 recently passed the ENR Committee – would be a huge win for South Portland.
 - Updated Council on evaluation protocols.
 - Making statements about sustainability considerations when new vehicles or equipment are requested – cost should not be a consideration.

- Comments
 - Make the evacuation plan accessible.
 - Make sure it's updated.
 - Would be good to have a real understanding of the timeline for converting all vehicles.
 - We need ramp up our emergency planning.
 - Need to plan for development of an asylum-seeking shelter.
 - Requires coordination with nearby communities.
 - Need to have a way of verifying credentials.

Increase diversity

- Presentation
 - Made some progress with hiring women and African Americans.
 - Revamped our application forms.
 - More work to do but some progress.
- Comments
 - Find better and more specific ways to do outreach to bring more diversity to our committees.

Improve bike and pedestrian safety

- Presentation
 - Good progress.
 - Broadway Corridor and Westbrook Street multi-use path.
 - Safety report identified 10 areas that require funding.
 - Cottage Road Improvements.
 - Made a significant investment in sidewalks (\$350k) – expect to do more next year.
 - \$75k in operating budget for maintenance.
 - Hired an additional traffic officer.
 - Working on traffic calming – funded some capital improvements.
- Comments
 - Increase bus use and public transportation is related to this.
 - Let's encourage the Transit Advisory Committee.
 - We have a Bike/Ped Committee AND Calm the Traffic.
 - Concern about the Lincoln Vachon Street multi-use path.

Incorporate affordable housing throughout the City

- Presentation
 - Made some progress.
 - Improved low income tax credit on Westbrook Street.
 - 10% of O'Neil Street housing to be affordable.
 - Established goal of 10% increase in affordable housing.
- Comments
 - Our city has two sides – on one side of our city we have affordable housing going in and on the other side we do not. Recently, the disparity has increased.
 - We need to think about affordable housing as not just renting, but ownership.

Increase sustainability

- Presentation
 - New community gardens throughout the city.
 - Issued our own RFP for solar power in land fill and at our community center.
 - Tracking building energy consumption.
 - Made a huge investment in heat pumps.
 - Stricter energy standards in new construction.
 - Have coordinated with Portland very well.
 - Working on a parks and open space zone.
 - Engaged the public in declaring a climate emergence.
 - Several public education programs regarding climate change, including partnership with the library.
 - Focusing on people who are typically under-represented but likely to be disproportionately affected.
- Comments
 - Very proud of what we have done.

Senior services and aging-in-place

- Presentation
 - Shopper shuttle pilot project.
 - CIP proposal to create a daily Senior drop in center.
 - Senior Expo was a hit.
 - Designated as an age-friendly community.
 - Sand delivery program.
 - Library outreach position added and library programming for Seniors.

- Comments
 - This committee really did a lot.
 - More to be done and opportunities exist.

Continue with neighborhood master plans

- Presentation
 - In progress.
 - Currently requesting funds for Mall area and cash Corner Master Plans.
 - We will need a new Comprehensive Plan by 2022.
 - One Climate Future Report will be forthcoming.
- Comments
 - Need to focus on Cash Corner.

2020 Top Priority Goals

After much discussion, there was general agreement on the following list of 8 top priority goals for 2020.

1. Address climate Change

- Aggressively implement the climate change goal set by the Council in 2019.
- Sustainability.
- Environmental mitigation.
- Air quality.
- Improve zoning and codes for new and existing development.

2. Develop complete streets

- Improve bike and pedestrian safety.
- Sidewalks.
- Roads.

3. Improve transit

- Add more frequency, busses, and routes.
- Explore regional opportunities.

4. Improve Housing

- Affordability, availability, and geographic distribution.

5. Increase diversity

- Membership on committees.
- Access through technology.

6. Long Range Planning

- Waterfront Master Plan.
- Cash Corner Master Plan.
- Prep for Comprehensive Plan update.
- Capital investment planning with equitable geographic distribution.

7. Support Public Health and Human Services

- Aging in place.
- Addressing opioid crisis.
- Immigrants.
- People with disabilities.
- Families with new babies.

8. Better Communications

- Better disseminate information.
- More rationale/alignment with goals when City staff explain things.

Specific Plans for Top Priority Goals

As time allowed we discussed the top priority goals that Councilors most wanted to discuss. Results are as follows.

Address climate Change

- What we mean by this
 - Aggressively implement the climate change goal set by the Council in 2019.
 - Sustainability.
 - Food and community gardens.
 - Energy use.
 - Coordinate with Portland.
 - Zoning.
 - Green space.
 - Educate and engage people in this “emergency”.
 - Municipal owned electric utility - we could decide where the power comes from.
 - Sea level rise/adaptation.
 - Air quality.
 - Improve zoning and codes for new and existing development.

- Comments
 - Consider municipal electric.
 - Consider having our own utility.
 - Consider consumer-owned electric.
 - We could put all our wires underground and plant more trees.
 - Home weatherization – existing homes and new development.
 - Building codes for new development.
 - Act on the One Climate Future Report.
 - More electric vehicles.
 - Consider sustainability in every decision that we make.
 - With every Council decision, ask: How does this affect our environment?
 - Require the internalization of externalities.

Improve transit

- What we mean by this
 - Add more frequency, busses, and routes.
 - Explore regional opportunities.
- Ideas for what to do
 - Think outside the box.
 - We are stuck on the idea of a big bus with a driver.
 - Get the right people on the Transit Committee.
 - Explore best practices – what other successful cities are doing (similar size with similar challenges).
 - More bus routes on the weekends.
 - Accomplish the unified fare system.
 - Help market and promote it.
 - Inventory bus stops and make improvements as needed.
 - Explore “bus only routes”.
 - Explore upgrading buses with more doors.
 - New busses need to be electric.
 - Claude serve as lead on conversations with GPCOG.
 - Make sure level of service is maintained or improved for South Portland residents.
- Steps
 - Revamp the Transit Advisory Committee and ask them to take the lead on the above-noted issues
 - Appoint people to this committees
 - Keep diversity in mind
 - Each Councilor will consider who to appoint
 - This committee should be operational in 2 months

Support public health and human services

- What we mean by this
 - Aging in place.
 - Addressing opioid crisis.
 - Immigrants.
 - People with disabilities.
 - Families with children.
 - Providing temporary/emergency shelter as needed.
- Ideas for what to do
 - Make it known that this a key goal for us.
 - Impress upon the Public Board of Health that all these things are important.
 - Improve coordination of holistic health care.
 - Special attention to those who can't advocate for themselves: children.
 - Work to develop a temporary/emergency shelter.
 - Including making sure workers are properly credentialed and trained.
 - Provide training to specific City Staff so they are better equipped to identify issues and intervene.
 - Narcan training (provide access to training if we don't do it ourselves).
 - Explore needle exchanges.
- Steps
 - Ask the Public Board of Health for their recommendations on how to proceed with the above ideas.
 - We expect to hear an update from the Public Board of Health by July.
 - Participate in regional efforts to establish a temporary/emergency shelter.
 - Kate and Claude are lead on this.

Housing

- What we mean by this
 - Affordability, availability, and geographic distribution.
- Ideas for what to do
 - Inventory of affordable housing projects.
 - Where is project located and who they are serving?
 - Regulate that housing can only transfer to people who live here.
 - Establish a committee to search best practices.
 - Reach out to other communities who have experienced similar challenges.
 - Establish a “set of policies” that we can use to open conversations and entice housing developers.

- Have a mini-summit among housing experts and policy makers to explore possibilities.
- Build on ideas of our own affordable housing committees.
- Have a more aggressive goal.
- Work with new developers to have stricter requirements.
- Steps
 - Conduct an inventory and research/explore ideas and best practices.
 - Ask the Affordable Housing committee how they think this should be done.
 - Do this exploration.
 - We expect to hear an update from the Affordable Housing Committee in September.
 - Establish more aggressive goals and a basket of policies.

Closing Comments

- This is an opportunity to be alone and un-judged and it's remarkable how effective the goal-setting is.
- This evening matters.
- Grateful to work with everyone here.
- I have seen growth in myself. When I seem quick to anger, please have tolerance. It's never personal.
- This council really pulls in the same direction.
- Really appreciate how Scott tees things up for us.
- Appreciate everything that's been said.
- It feels like our goals are really being incorporated into our work.
- It's a privilege to be a part of this work.
- Really appreciate the staff.
- Thank you, Craig.
- I respect each goal that we worked on last year.
- Excited about the new Public Health and Human Services goal.
- Feel honored to be a part of this.
- Really appreciate everyone's passion.
- Really helpful to see how you work together, and very impressive how well you work together.
- We are getting even better as a team. We have been able to build year after year.
- Scott's recaps throughout the year are very helpful.
- Very grateful to Craig for keeping us on task.