

**SULTAN CITY COUNCIL**  
**AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

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ITEM NO: Consent C 4

DATE: February 22, 2007

SUBJECT: Council Retreat Notes

CONTACT PERSON: Laura Koenig, City Clerk

SUMMARY: Attached are the notes from the Council Retreat that was held on February 10, 2007 as prepared by Cynthia Stewart, Northwest Small Cities Services.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Approve as submitted.

MOTION: Move to accept the consent agenda as presented.

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COUNCIL ACTION:

DATE:

**CITY OF SULTAN  
SPRING RETREAT  
February 10, 2007**

**NOTES**

**Participants:**

Ben Tolson, Mayor  
Bruce Champeaux, Councilmember  
John Seehuus, Councilmember  
Jim Flower, Councilmember  
Kristina Blair, Councilmember  
Derek Boyd, Councilmember  
Ron Wiediger, Councilmember  
Steve Slawson, Councilmember

Deborah Knight, City Administrator  
Fred Walser, Chief of Police  
Rick Cisar, Planning Director  
Laura Koenig, Clerk/Deputy Finance  
Director  
Donna Murphy, Grants and Economic  
Development  
Connie Dunn, Public Works Director  
Cynthia Stewart, Northwest Small Cities  
Services, Facilitator

**I. VISIONING EXERCISE**

The group brainstormed metaphors for what they would like Sultan to be in 15-20 years and selected the top three metaphors to determine what the common characteristics were. Metaphors identified included the following (*recorded in no particular order*). Numbers in parentheses following each metaphor indicate the number of votes that metaphor received when voting on the top three:

- |  |                                     |   |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| • Gateway to Adventure (1)               | • Charming (2)                      | • Stop & Shop                               |
| • Monarche Butterfly (3)                 | • Urban                             | • Cash Cow (1)                              |
| • Home Sanctuary (3)                     | • Home of Success &<br>Beauty       | • What the Hell<br>Happened to Sultan (2)   |
| • Langley; LaConner                      | • Gridlock (2)                      | • Financial Dynamo (1)                      |
| • Vibrant & Welcoming                    | • Safe Haven                        | • Progressive                               |
| • Where People Live, Work<br>& Play (3)  | • Home (1)                          | • A Total Community &<br>Shopping Mecca (3) |
| • Fishing Hole (1)                       | • Pedestrian Friendly               | • The Gem of Sky Valley<br>(6)              |
| • Recreation & Scenic<br>Destination (5) | • Vibrant Mountain<br>Community (5) |   |

The top three selected were:

- **The Gem of Sky Valley (6)**
- **Vibrant Mountain Community (5)**
- **Recreation & Scenic Destination (5)**

Participants identified the following common characteristics of these three metaphors:

- |                          |   |  |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| • Inviting               | • What we have now is<br>protected                    | • Thoughtful develop-<br>ment, with balance and a<br>visual connection |
| • Prosperous             | • But the natural resource<br>gems are kept untouched | • between development<br>and the natural resources                     |
| • Visually Aesthetic     | • Sultan is a destination                             |  |
| • Physical openness      |   |  |
| • Location and resources |   |  |

- are taken advantage of
- An education opportunity because of the natural resources available

(cont'd next page)

- Distinctive retail development (accessible and appealing)

of the area

- Pride in community
- Recreation destination (capturing recreational visitors' dollars)

**CONCLUSION: It was the consensus of the participants that the vision statements provided in packets from the Comprehensive Plan Vision – 1994, the Industrial Park Master Plan, and Downtown Sultan 2020 are all compatible with these characteristics and do not need to be modified. Sultan will continue to use those vision statements as currently written.**

From the Visioning Exercise, priority actions for the next 24 months were brainstormed, as follows:

- Develop a Pro-Active Strategy to Increase the Sultan Retail Tax Base
  - Considerations include:
    - A population base high enough to attract the volumes needed for large retail stores must be demonstrated
    - The highway generates traffic of 19,000 – 30,000 trips/day (weekdays and weekends, respectively)
    - There should be a balance between housing and retail
    - The highway frontage should be protected for retail (e.g., Fire District purchased property that should be retained for retail instead)
    - In-town shopping off the highway should also be supported and customers drawn in
    - The City has to be attractive for people to be drawn in
    - There should be shopping in town for residents who commute (e.g., after 7:00 p.m.)
    - An expert in community identity should be considered to help develop a plan
    - Need some place for out of town visitors to stay; there is currently no motel or campground
    - Need to identify the trade population base
    - Remember that when skiing is active, that is a market
    - Need retail activity that is not dependent upon customers that fluctuate seasonally
    - An Economic Development Director to focus on commercial development of specific properties would be helpful
    - The future Monroe bypass may create an opportunity for Sultan
- Revise the development code to attract business
- Develop incentives for the kind of economic development we want
- Update the Comprehensive Plan to prioritize the best use of Sultan's limited land resources

- Move emergency responders (Fire and Police) out of the flood plain
- Identify how the recreation destination concept can be implemented
  - Considerations include:
    - Trails near retail stores
    - Make Sportsman's Park more attractive
    - Integrate fishing, spawning, river rafting, etc., into retail development
    - Working with the County to achieve this, especially a master plan for the area across the road
- Create a town identity and community information attraction (using signage, etc.)

**CONCLUSION: The group concluded that development of a pro-active strategy for increasing the retail sales base in Sultan should be its top priority over the next 24 months. From that conclusion, the following sequence of events was agreed upon. Staff will prepare the following documents in consultation with Council and they will be sent to Council for consideration and adoption approximately in the time frame provided.**

| Action  | Time Frame  |
|---|-------------|
| Comprehensive Plan Amendment  | 4/30/07     |
| Annual Docket   | 7/1/07      |
| Comprehensive Plan Update   | 8/07 – 2/08 |
| Review and Update Development Code <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create retail development incentives (<i>possibly with the assistance of a new Economic Development Coordinator</i>)</li> <li>• Develop a new signage code</li> </ul> | 2/08 – 2/09 |
| Identify Funding for a new position and hire Economic Development Coordinator   | 2008 - 2009 |
| Parks and Trails Master Plan(s) <i>tied to economic development and including a focus on safety</i>   | 2008-2009   |

**II. LAND USE – PROPOSED HOD ZONE AMENDMENTS**

Rick Cisar started this agenda item with a description of what Mixed Use Developments are, a review of the current Sultan zoning map, and discussion of the proposed Highway Oriented Development zoning changes. He made the following points:

- Urban Center mixed use development encourages mixed uses and reduces parking requirements by establishing areas that can be shared by different populations at different times of the day/night. Some examples of mixed use development also include some open space.

- Sultan has two zoning districts at which mixed use might be appropriate, one of which is the Highway Oriented Development (HOD) zone. The Industrial Zone Master Plan removed any residential as a permitted use in that area.
- One of the issues with the downtown is that it is on a flood plane, and structures must be elevated to successfully be used in that area.
- The specific proposal that has been made is to provide retail with a mix of residential uses behind the retail.

In its discussion, the group identified the following issues:

- There is a high cost involved with raising structures located in the flood plain
- This can be mitigated for the developer by allowing an additional floor in the building
- Dead space below the occupancy areas could be used for parking
- Parking at the base of retail and multi-family housing developments does not give a good appearance
- Fire Department may require additional equipment to respond to emergencies in higher buildings; but this can be mitigated by the developer
- More parking capacity downtown is needed
- The City appearance has to be addressed
- It is important to have a short walking distance from parking and/or transit to services in order for people to take advantage of them
- Turning radii for large vehicles (e.g., buses) should be considered in designing parking lot and other layouts

**CONCLUSION: The following direction was given to staff for incorporation in Comprehensive Plan and zoning amendments that will be developed per the schedule above:**

- 1. The following issues should be addressed.**
  - Preserve the highway frontage for retail. Only retail/commercial uses at the highway; residential should be located behind the commercial
  - Increase the amount of retail
  - Protect the vision that was just reinforced
  - No code amendments should be adopted for a single developer; only code amendments that support the City vision should be considered
  - Some mixed use development is appropriate; the entire City should be examined to consider where this should be located
  - Analysis is needed to determine how to incorporate housing in the HOD and how to expand the HOD
  - No changes should come to Council without Planning Board review in advance
  - Offset standards should be incorporated in whatever is developed
- 2. Code and Industrial Park Master Plan amendments for downtown and the HOD should be developed in accordance with what the Council's vision is and then a public process should be initiated.**

- The public process would be to explain the vision and amendments and ask for additional solutions and concerns
  - Educate the public and property owners; explain the benefits to them
  - Need to get buy-in and increase trust
  - Decisions only for single property owners are to be avoided
3. **Methods of partnering with property owners should be developed and implemented.**

### III. PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES

Discussion began with a round-robin set of comments about how each person sees police services currently. The following points were made:

- The currently defined police level of service stated in the Comprehensive Plan is not realistic; it should be changed to text that describes a policy of providing the “best possible” police service; police service will be the best the City can afford and also cover the cost of its other needs
- The public needs to be educated that the City cannot afford a higher level of service for police. However, it is recognized that this may be a difficult message at a time when certain people perceive a “crime wave”
- There may be a public perception that the Council is holding back funding from police
- The City suffers now from a staffing short-fall over the last two years. Last year, the Police Department was operating with only five officers. That is not enough (and the budget allows a greater staffing level, but the positions are hard to fill quickly). The Police Department could get by with one additional officer in the next three years. Ten officers are really needed for 24/7 coverage; with nine officers, there is a great deal of overtime.
- The City is no longer hiring brand new police officers. New officers are experienced and very professional, and the City will experience the benefits of having them
- The Police Department is still doing a good job. It had a 90% solve rate. Note that five years ago, Sultan’s police were number one in the state and received media acclamation for that.
- There is, nevertheless, some perception that specific police officers are doing a less than optimal job communicating with the public (and in some cases, with elected officials)
- The City is continuing to engage in community policing; a specific policy is not needed to address that
- However, if there were a policy with performance measures, this information could be used to educate the public.
- Two funding mechanisms were suggested: a levy for funding police services was mentioned; others felt it was too unreliable as a funding source. A police impact fee

was suggested, but it was pointed out that this is a one-time revenue source and not a source of operations funding.

- Regardless of numbers, police need to get back into the community – visibility, rebuild trust
- Both Council and police have obligation to outreach and build trust
- Many financial constraints have been outside our control (e.g., Initiatives); but we can control our internal budget – we are impacted by previous decisions to spend down the reserves
- Let the public know if not enough money; that’s the message not out there
- The City needs to be more proactive with the public

### City Administrator Role

The City Administrator asked for clarification of the “liaison” role that is referenced in the Municipal Code as it pertains to the Chief of Police. Discussion included the following points:

- A single point of management for all departments is needed for accountability
- The word “liaison” is vague
- The Mayor is legally the Chief Law Enforcement Officer of the City
- What is the purpose of another layer of management between the Mayor and Chief of Police?
- The City at a later date should consider eliminating the Civil Service provision for the Chief of Police and make that position “at-will”
- The Mayor needs the City Administrator in the loop on everything

**CONSENSUS: It was broadly agreed that the Chief of Police reports to the City Administrator on day-to-day issues and to the Mayor, who is the Chief Law Enforcement Officer of the City, on internal issues. The Chief, Mayor and City Administrator were asked to work out a proposal for further definition of the “liaison” role of the City Administrator that is referenced in the Municipal Code.**

### Community Policing

Specific direction on the question of whether or not the City should adopt a community policing policy, with performance standards, was requested from the retreat. Discussion included the following points;

- There is a perception that there has been a change in how people are being dealt with that needs to be addressed
- Community policing is a philosophy (one that the Police Department already has); establishing a specific policy could add costs
- Some basis for communicating with the public about what the police are doing is needed. A program with priorities and performance standards – against which

performance can be measured and documented - is not the same as codifying a requirement.

- New officers may need to introduce themselves to the community and also be educated in how small towns work, contrasted to the larger jurisdictions where they formerly worked
- Citizens could be invited to get involved (e.g., through a Block Watch program). Volunteerism will help in keeping citizens informed as well as improve public safety.
- There are already many volunteers for Block Watch, but the officer who will be organizing that program has not yet been available to do it.
- Councilmembers should ride along with the police officers, if they haven't already done so, to get a better idea of what policing is actually like.

**CONCLUSION: It was agreed that the upcoming March 15 public meeting should be used to provide information to the community regarding what the police are actually doing and what public safety costs relative to other budget items – and to get public input on community policing. A tighter format than was used at the last public meeting was suggested.**

**It was also agreed that the City would re-approach the School District regarding sharing the cost of school policing efforts.**

#### Contracting with the County for Police Service

Another issue for which direction was sought from the retreat is whether or not the City should pursue the option of contracting with Snohomish County for police services instead of having the City Police Department. Thomas Greene, Administrative Services bureau Chief, Snohomish County Sheriff's Office, attended the meeting with two Lieutenants to describe how the Sheriff's Office approaches contracting.

Chief Greene described options, or models, that the Sheriff's Office uses, each of which has a different level of service and a different cost. These include:

- Calls for Service Only
- Calls for Service plus Patrol Time
- Dedicated FTEs/Partial Coverage
- Dedicated FTEs/Full Coverage
- Regional Contract
- Chief of Police Only

He explained that regardless of which model is selected, the Sheriff charges only the direct variable cost of serving the City under that model. Indirect costs are not included. Additionally, because the Sheriff's Office is large and can distribute staff, if there is a vacancy, the City absorbs only a limited amount of the cost of that vacancy. The contracts include certain overtime assumptions based on county-wide averages. If the City uses more, the Sheriff

absorbs the difference; if the City uses less, that is the City's risk. If the City's existing officers want to, they can be hired by the Sheriff's Office, though they have to meet all of the same standards (e.g., background check) as the other Sheriff Deputies do, and they have a probation period. However, once having passed probation, they begin with the tenure they achieved at the City. The Sheriff's contract costs include reserve funding for equipment replacement, but in the first three-year contract, the City would be credited for any equipment it sold to the County.

Chief Greene also reviewed hypothetical costs, which the Mayor indicated are about \$100,000 over the current cost of the City's police department.

**CONCLUSION: Staff was asked to work with the Sheriff's Office to develop an apples-to-apples cost comparison of the City's costs relative to the Sheriff's costs using the assumptions of ten dedicated officers, City identity and credit for existing City equipment. This information will be presented to Council when it is available for further discussion of the contracting option.**

#### **IV. FINANCIAL POLICIES**

Staff provided a number of examples of financial policies that the City either must update or add in order to meet Auditor requirements and/or exercise other good financial management practices and requested direction from the retreat.

**CONCLUSION: It was agreed that the Finance Director will propose policies and meet with the Finance Committee to prepare recommendations to the full Council.**

## MEETING EVALUATION

| +   | Δ   |
|---|---|
| (Liked about the retreat)   | (would do differently)  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the metaphors</li> <li>• Nothing was said about grants</li> <li>• √√ Stayed on task</li> <li>• √√ It was informative</li> <li>• It was focused and we made plans</li> <li>• √√ Staff got good feedback</li> <li>• It was a great start (and not an end)</li> <li>• √ Liked the packets</li> <li>• Had facilitation</li> <li>• Liked the full outline, agenda</li> <li>• Had everyone here</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• √ Sometimes felt too rushed</li> <li>• It is hard to put in this much time</li> <li>• Laura should go first next time</li> <li>• Needed more time</li> <li>• Needed more time on land use issues</li> <li>• Too much on the agenda</li> <li>• Nothing was said about grants</li> </ul> |