

TOWN OF FOUNTAIN HILLS COUNCIL RETREAT 2006



Introduction

On February 10, 2006, the Town of Fountain Hills Town Council and Town Manager met at Saguro Lake Ranch to consider goals and objectives for the 2006-2007 budget year, July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007. This one-day off-site retreat is part of an annual planning program.

The meeting was posted as a public meeting, though no decisions were made and no formal votes were taken. The participants included:

- Mayor Wally Nichols
- Vice-Mayor Jay Schlum
- Council Member Mike Archambault
- Council Member John Kavanagh
- Council Member Ed Kehe
- Council Member Keith McMahan
- Town Manager Tim Pickering

Several Senior Staff members were present as observers, as were several members of the public, including some candidates for Town Council positions.

The meeting was facilitated by Phillip Blackerby and Lynne Brown of Blackerby Associates.

A week after the Town Council Retreat, on February 17, 2006, the Town Senior Staff convened in the same location to consider to develop plans to meet the Town Council's goals.

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Personal Shields

As an icebreaker and teambuilding exercise, participants were asked to develop and share their personal shield, consisting of five key elements:

- Background, in terms of location, profession and interests;
- A description of what the participant likes to do when not working;
- Hot buttons: types of people or events that inspire emotional reactions, either good or bad;
- One great accomplishment that the participant is proud.
- Personal motto or philosophy, by which the participant tries to live his life.

Responses included:

Mayor Wally Nichols

Background

Massachusetts
New Jersey
Illinois
Paradise: Fountain Hills

When not working...

Reading
Travel
Dogs
Teach
Work out

Hot buttons

Stupidity
Intolerance

One great accomplishment

Raise funds for Fountain Hills Boys & Girls
Club

My personal motto:

Character, honesty

Vice Mayor Jay Schlum

Background

Michigan, '77
Fountain Hills Elementary School
Family in Arizona now

When not working...

Coaching
Volunteering
Working
Travel/Vacations
Learning
Family

Hot buttons

Selfishness

One great accomplishment

Being a good parent

My personal motto:

Caring and helping others; family, loving
father, husband

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Personal Shields (Cont.)

Council Member Mike

Archambault

Background

Cabinet maker
Came from Columbus, OH
Active in civic clubs
Enjoys listening to employees
Employs 15 people

When not working...

Rebuilds vintage car engines
Surprises wife with an evening out or trip

Hot buttons

Misinformation
Disrespect for our flag and country

One great accomplishment

I was happy to be able to work and raise my family in Fountain Hills

My personal motto:

Find the Magic in an ordinary day.

Council Member John

Kavanagh

Background

New York City
Detective at Port Authority
Teacher
Big mouth

When not working...

Football
Television
Theater
Driving

Hot buttons

Illogic (1+1=3)

One great accomplishment

Basketball leagues

My personal motto:

Contribute something

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Personal Shields (Cont.)

Council Member Ed Kehe

Background

New York
Teacher
Coach
Athletic Director

When not working...

Gardening
Hiking & camping
Oil painting
Phoenix Symphony
Musical comedy
Arizona Opera
Sailboat racing

Hot buttons

Broad spectrum, including environmental issues
Local governmental concerns pre-dating council service and arrival in Fountain Hills

One great accomplishment

Family
Former students and athletes

My personal motto:

When you are knocked down, get up.

Council Member Keith

McMahan

Background

Advertising agency
Adventuring
Advertising in L.A., San Francisco
Worked with original Fountain Hills developer in advertising and organization publicity
In Fountain Hills since 1971

When not working...

Movies
Theater
Fishing & boating
Restaurants
Reading
Dabbling in politics

Hot buttons

Rigidity in people
Inflexibility
Bureaucracy
Inability to change
Opinionated people

One great accomplishment

Helped in the development and growth of the Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce over 30 years

My personal motto:

Work hard, listen to people, and have fun!

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Personal Shields (Cont.)

Town Manager Tim Pickering

Background

Basketball
Baseball
Football
St. Louis, MO

When not working...

Music
Golf

Hot buttons

Liars

One great accomplishment

Town Hall (that I get to have an office in for more than a week!)

My personal motto:

D.I.P (Do It Properly); D.I.N. (Do It Now); I'm Responsible

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Common Themes from Town Council Interviews

The following common themes were compiled from interviews with Town Council Members and the Town Manager on January 24 and January 30, 2006, by facilitator Lynne Brown. A “common theme” occurs when more than one interviewee mentioned the same topic. If only one person mentions a topic, it is not recorded here, to protect the anonymity of that individual.

What's going well?

- Town Council Meetings are much shorter than they used to be thanks to Wally's facilitation skills.
- Most council members seem well prepared for meetings.
- Town Council Meetings are much less contentious and much more professional; members treat each other with dignity and respect; they listen to one another; they are open minded.
- Special interests do not “rule decisions,” as they used to.
- The Strategic Plan was completed; “the people spoke...we listened;” this Strategic Plan will help the Council make decisions.
- Many goals were completed.
- Most Council Members make an effort to attend community functions.

What could go better?

- Would like to receive more frequent and specific updates on goal and project status directly from the Town staff (rather than quarterly updates through the Town Manager); this approach will build a closer relationship between the Council and the Town staff.
- Would like to have a closer relationship with schools and service organizations than presently.
- Election is at the wrong time of year; *i.e.*, new Council takes effect June 1, after the budget and goals have been created for new year.
- Decisions may be made too prematurely without having accurate information and without understanding the consequences of the decisions.

What suggestions do you have for improving the Town Council?

- Council Members need to understand thoroughly the finances for the town.
- Would like to move the elections to the fall.
- Perhaps we need to make sure that our listening includes asking a lot of questions to get “to the bottom” of issues.
- Have an additional retreat after new Council Members are on board.

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Possible Topics for the Retreat Discussion

The following possible discussion topics were also compiled from the interviews with Town Council Members and the Town Manager, but they are not “common themes,” as only one interviewee may have mentioned any item. These potential topics are also integrated into the section on “Strategic Priorities,” beginning on pages 8-12, below.

- Get to know people better as people...not just as “fellow council members”
- Need long term thinking on this council
- Goals for public affairs and grant writing role
- Strategic plan goals for next few years
- Drill down to action plans as well as goals
- How the town can work closer with the schools, the service organizations, the businesses
- Projected deficit at build out and what to do to compensate for this
- Ordinance change issues; zoning code changes
- Nursing home
- Fountain improvements
- Land annexation
- Signage
- Traffic control
- Recycling, garbage collection, environment issues
- Are commissions the best way to go?
- Attracting visitors

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Lessons Learned During the Past Few Years

In a facilitated discussion, participants were asked to review the past few years, and identify any lessons learned either from successes or from things that did not go well. Responses included:

- Christmas decorations fiasco two years ago
- Cut Commission interviews
 - Control schedule of Commission openings?
 - Combine Commissions?
- Timely communications are important
 - Get information to Council firsts
 - Misinformation (when it sometimes occurs): get to source
 - Dispel rumors at coffees with the Mayor
 - Distribute information through email
- Staff empowerment
 - Get more community involvement
 - Leverage community resources
- Quick decisions need analysis
 - So far, it's all worked out
 - Develop decision criteria
 - Get consensus; deal with key stakeholders
 - Make a decision
- Homework – pre-work – should be no surprises – tell Staff about issues
- Rules for public participation are good; hear public input first
- Council Members comment through the Mayor, rather than back and forth directly to each other
 - Always leave room for debate and response
 - Ask Mayor to call up staff

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Strategic Priorities, Fiscal Year 2006-2007

During the Town Council retreat, participants were asked to list all the issues they wanted to be “on the table,” or available for discussion. Issues raised during the interviews were already posted, sorted by the strategic priorities contained in the Town of Fountain Hills *Strategic Plan 2006-2010*. After listing all the issues, participants were given six stick-on dots to place on any issue, provided that no one could place more than three of his dots on any one issue. In the following section: bulleted points reflect the issue as raised by the participant; the number of dots awarded to each strategic priority or other issue is shown in parentheses. Three or more dots were required to develop an issue into a goal.

After some training with some templates on how to write goals and objectives, participants broke into small groups to develop goals and objectives for the issues raised. Each group then shared its proposed goals and objectives to the rest of the participants, and a facilitated discussion followed each goal. The Council Members considered that the objectives they wrote were intended as general guidance to the Town Staff.

Strategic Priorities, Years 1-2

Develop financial implementation plan for strategic priorities by June 30, 2006.

Resolve projected revenue shortfall by Dec. 31, 2007 (7 dots)

- How to compensate for projected shortfall

Goal 1. To identify and inform Fountain Hills residents of the projected long-term revenue gap.

Objective 1.1. To quantify the first draft (baseline) of the projected gap by June 1, 2006.

Objective 1.2. To review projected gap report by June 30, 2006.

Objective 1.3. To prepare a communications program for residents by August 1, 2006.

Objective 1.4. To deliver communications program between September and November 2006.

Objective 1.5. To decide on a ballot initiative by December 2006.

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Strategic Priorities, Years 1-2 (Cont.)

Integrate Town & schools more closely (5 dots)

- How can Town work closer with schools, service organizations, businesses

Goal 2. To establish and address common issues affecting the Town, schools and community by the end of the 2006-07 school year.

Objective 2.1. To meet with the School Board semi-annually at the beginning and end of the school year.

Objective 2.2. To establish areas where the two entities can cooperate by June 2007.

Objective 2.3. To publicly recognize student and teacher achievement yearly.

Objective 2.4. To cooperate with the School District in existing and established mentoring programs by June 2007

Objective 2.5. To foster apprenticeships by Fountain Hills businesses with school credit and pay.

Require low-water vegetation in new developments (3 dots)

Goal 3. To decrease potable water usage throughout Fountain Hills.

Objective 3.1. To inform all Fountain Hills water users about ways to reduce potable water consumption by December 31, 2006.

Objective 3.2. To enact low-water use landscape regulations for all commercial developments by December 31, 2006.

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Strategic Priorities, Years 1-2 (Cont.)

Strictly enforce General Plan & zoning ordinances (3 dots)

- Ordinance changes; zoning code changes

Goal 4. To strictly enforce the General Plan and Town ordinances

Objective 4.1. To restrict height variances to protect existing view corridors, effective March 2006.

Objective 4.2. To inventory vacant land to project population for use in land use and infrastructure decisions, by September 2006.

Objective 4.3. To maintain the integrity of existing land use regulatory systems effective March 2006.

Control commercial architectural compatibility (4 dots)

Goal 5. To regulate architectural physical appearance for commercial properties.

Objective 5.1. To obtain a legal opinion by March 17, 2006.

Objective 5.2. To research five existing ordinances by April 2006.

Objective 5.3. To draft standards and guidelines by _____ (date to be established).

Objective 5.4. To draft an ordinance by _____ (date to be established).

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Strategic Priorities, Years 1-2 (Cont.)

Annex State Trust Land (4 dots)

- Land annexation: Deal is done?

Goal 6. To annex the State Trust Land into Fountain Hills.

Objective 6.1. To conduct public hearings by April 20, 2006, and accept public input.

Objective 6.2. To adopt rezoning and General Plan Amendment by Council by April 20, 2006.

Objective 6.3. To oversee planning of State Trust Land through December 31, 2006 and beyond.

Objective 6.4. To develop a positive relationship with the successful bidder by December 31, 2006 and beyond.

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Strategic Priorities, Years 3-5

Add amenities to Parks & Recreation system (1 dot)

Strengthen community's small town identity (1 dot)

Increase pedestrian safety (4 dots)

Goal 7. To create a plan for pedestrian safety in Fountain Hills.

Objective 7.1. To identify short- and long-term needs for pedestrian connectivity and safety by December 2006.

Ensure all streets are maintained and smooth (1 dot)

- Speed bumps

Create lifelong learning opportunities (0 dots)

Enhance stewardship of natural environment (0 dots)

- Environment issues

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Other

The following issues were raised, either by any participant in the interviews with Town Council Members and the Town Manager, or in the Town Council's discussions at the retreat. They do not fit into the structure of the Strategic Priorities in the Town's *Strategic Plan 2006-2010*.

Business relations: integration with the Town and economic development (5 dots)

- Goal 8. To improve relations between the business community and the Town.
 - Objective 8.1. To identify an ombudsman by June 1, 2007.
 - Objective 8.2. To reduce "red tape" in applications, plan reviews and procedures by June 1, 2007.
 - Objective 8.3. To review signage complaints by June 1, 2007
 - Objective 8.4. To publish a map of businesses for visitors by _____ (date to be established).
 - Objective 8.5. To promote and facilitate special events to attract visitors by _____ (date to be established).
 - Objective 8.6. To publish a Fountain Hills business handbook by _____ (date to be established).
 - Objective 8.7. To attract a movie theater by December 31, 2006.
- Goal 9. Avenue of the Fountains improvements (1 dot)
- Goal 10. Signage (1 dot)
- Goal 11. Traffic control (1 dot)
- Goal 12. Long-term parking solutions (1 dot)
- Goal 13. Need long term thinking
- Goal 14. Goals for public information, grant writing roles
- Goal 15. Fountain management
- Goal 16. Are commissions the best way to go?
- Goal 17. Recycling, garbage collection
- Goal 18. Attracting visitors
- Goal 19. Move elections to Fall: have a workshop on election scheduling
- Goal 20. Drill down to action plans as well as goals
- Goal 21. Get to know people better as people... not just as "fellow Council Members"

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Process Review

After the retreat, participants were asked to identify what went well during the retreat (plusses), and what should be changed for the next retreat (deltas). Responses included:

| Plusses Things that went well | Deltas Things that should change |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic Plan framework; did not have to work in a vacuum.• Lunch was good• Setting was good• Laughs were good• Tim did not have to say, "We need money for that."• Pre-work was good• Worksheets for writing goals and objectives were useful• Report | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would like to have advice from the Strategic Planning Advisory Commission (SPAC) before next year's session.• Have a summer retreat, to include SPAC members• Tim should serenade the group during lunch• More dots |