

December 1, 2005

TO: The Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
FROM: John Szerlag, City Manager
SUBJECT: Results of Interviews with Individual Council Members

Attached are the aggregate responses to our individual sessions. I wish to thank you for your time and effort you all put into our meetings, and I look forward to having them discussed at our December 5, 2005 Council meeting.

As always, please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

COUNCIL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) What do you want the City of Troy to excel at 5, 10 and 20 years from now?

Five Years

- Balanced tax rate
- High level of service
- Quality schools
- High property values
- High quality of life

Ten Years

- Troy to become IT capitol of Oakland County as well as invention capitol
- DDA and SMART Zone projects heretofore reach fruition and enhance/sustain economic development

20 Years

- Troy's the Oakland County destination point to live, work, and play
- Outstanding infrastructure improvements and advances made toward a functional mass transit system

Five Years

- Big Beaver redevelopment with additional PUDs
- Maple and Stephenson redeveloped/rezoning
- Balanced budget/lower or maintain millage rate
- Master Land Use plan updated

Ten Years

- Troy IT leader in Oakland County
- DDA coming to a close with projects completed
- SMART Zone further developed with successful projects underway
- Continued redevelopment on Big Beaver (Kmart HQ), Maple and Stephenson

Twenty Years

- Troy viewed as a destination where families want to live, employees want to work, and people want to come and visit (ongoing efforts)

Along with these specific goals, always maintain a tax base that reflects the ability to operate our city efficiently without burdening the residents and business owners.

Continue holding the standard as one of the safest cities to live in. Maintain our volunteer fire department and entire community spirit of volunteerism. Improve ongoing infrastructure needs as development and redevelopment occurs.

Move forward as opportunity presents itself for privatization of certain services as well as provide our services to outlying communities (like Clawson).

We should be a "World Class City" (best city in Michigan to live, work and play) with the lowest tax rates for both business and residents in Oakland County. We need to follow through with our new Futures study and implementation.

To have a safe, livable and desirable community; one in which people aspire to live and work. Continue to have one of the lowest tax rates in the area. In addition, more involvement is needed along Maple Road for economic development reasons and we need to find ways to keep property values high throughout the entire community.

Improving alternate methods of transportation such as bike trails and sidewalks. Encourage public/private partnerships in this regard.

Producing highest level of service at most efficient cost. Management to operationally define efficiency. Privatization with public/private partnerships.

Maintain functional correlation with level of service offered to match changing demographics.

Ultimately, Troy is Oakland County's destination point to live, work, and play. There will be outstanding infrastructure improvements and advancements made toward a coordinated regional mass transit system.

In addition, we should be an enhanced employment center for high-tech jobs on the cutting edge of technology. This will provide for a good tax base, and high level of service for our residents.

We are currently a stellar community and should strive to maintain it in that fashion. Should also be known for adherence to master land use plan and need to be careful on issuing density bonuses. Also should be mindful to maintain quality preservation of open space, and economic vitality. We should strive for excellent infrastructure and be a safe city with a high standard of quality of life services. We should also have a strong property maintenance code, which keeps property values up, and strengthen ordinances to support this. This is essential to prevent blight.

2) How do you feel about continuing the transfer of debt service millage to operating millage, without increasing the overall rate of 9.45 mils?

OK to continue the transfer of debt services millage to operating millage, but we need to be mindful of future bonding capacity.

I would like to discuss this with John Szerlag to better understand the pros/cons of this action, but generally feel we should not reduce our debt service millage if this would jeopardize our bond rating or ability to repay debt. It's OK to transfer debt service millage.

Continuing transfer of debt service is OK as we should not have an increase in the overall tax rate. We also need to develop business cases to see if it's feasible and cost effective to bond for infrastructure projects. We also have to ensure that we do not ignore capital projects.

OK.

It's OK.

OK to continue transfer.

3) City Management believes that we should ideally maintain a fund balance of 17% but not drop below 10%. What is your opinion on this?

12% is preferable.

I think we have all felt that we need to maintain at least 10%, preferably more.

Again, I look forward to discussing the pros/cons of this action with John Szerlag, but generally feel we need to strive to maintain our historical level of fund balance average from the past 10 years, but not if doing so would require raising taxes. Should strive to maintain 15%.

10% of fund balance is OK, but should be put in budget stabilization fund. (Wants to meet with John L and myself to further discuss budget issues)

OK for 10%.

Should strive for 15 – 17% of fund balance.

Should not drop below 12%.

4) **Is it more important to:**

- a. **Maintain the same level of service, even if it means a tax increase within our authorized limit, or**
- b. **Reduce the level of service in order to maintain the overall rate of 9.45 mils?**
- c. **Does your response differ for essential and non-essential services? If yes, define.**

- b. Look to reducing the level of service in quality of life or non-essential services, i.e., shorter Library and Museum hours. Additionally, some high-cost special events such as Troy Daze should be looked at for possible cuts. So too, areas where we have an extremely high level of service could be reduced while still providing a good level of service, i.e., going from 24 hours to 48 hours to having our streets cleared of snow. We also need to examine discounts for our programs based on need as opposed to entitlements relating to age and/or disability.

Additionally, take a look at core competencies. In other words, what is it that we do well, and what are we expected to do. We should also keep examining user fees for non-essential services, which essential are defined as leisure activities and marketing functions.

- a. **Maintain same level of service, even if it means a tax increase**

or

- b. **Reduce level of service even if it means a tax increase**

Leisure activities are non-essential services; consider fee increases.

- b. We should not ever consider raising taxes or negatively impacting essential services as either of these would have a direct impact on our quality of life. We must work for continuous improvement and become more efficient in all areas of city management. Suggest challenging every department director to present at least 5% cost reduction in his or her 2006 budget versus 2005, without considering an inflation factor. Can we obtain more grants for some departments? We need to think outside the box. Example: Only repair roads between 8:30 PM and 6:30 AM on weekdays, Monday through Thursday, and a different crew on Friday – Sunday between 8:30 PM and 9:30 AM, all at straight-time pay.

For non-essential/quality of life services, fees should be increased or perhaps a decrease in level of service. It may be okay to increase taxes for essential services. In any event, business case should be included justifying any increase in fees. We should also look at staffing levels and plan for future efficiencies. The Manager should examine the entire structure of the table of organization to assure the most efficient mode of operation. We should also look at regional services.

Leisure/marketing endeavors are non-essential services and we should look to increasing fees in those areas before raising taxes.

- b. It's more important to reduce the level of service in order to maintain the overall rate of 9.45 mils. But we also must prioritize services and be innovative.

Additionally, we should strive for cooperation with the school district to share services; and look at other partnership possibilities. We should also address advertising as a cost-cutting technique and look at fee-based entitlements.

We need to determine what makes Troy desirable; perhaps it's quality of life issues and fees should be continually examined for these quality of life services.

A tax increase should be considered only if the level of service would otherwise be negatively impacted. This of course assumes that we operate in the most efficient and effective fashion.

Non-essential services equate to the leisure functions, and we should look to fee increases before raising taxes.

OK to raise taxes to keep level of service high.

5) In a general sense, please prioritize capital expenditures in terms of:

- a. **Infrastructure**
- b. **IT improvements**
- c. **Park development**

- a. Infrastructure
- b. IT improvements
- c. Park development

Note that IT improvements are ahead of park development because of efficiencies it can provide.

- a. Infrastructure
- b. IT
- c. Parks

- a. Infrastructure – With new facilities, including some park environment component
- b. IT improvements – Only where we can demonstrate a return on investment and track results to hold ourselves accountable
- c. Park development – But take advantage of civic organization offers to develop and maintain specific areas for public use – encourage existing landowners to donate property for parks and recreation in their estate plan in return for naming recognition, etc.

- a. Infrastructure
- c. Parks
- b. IT

- a. Infrastructure
- c. Park development
- b. IT improvements

- a. Infrastructure
- b. Park development
- c. IT improvements

- a. Infrastructure
- c. Park development
- b. IT improvements

6) What's the one thing we do as an organization that you're most proud of?

Public safety (Police/Fire). We provide great leadership in the County and State and also a high degree of ancillary services like home inspections when residents are on vacation. We practice high customer service and invest in training.

Volunteer fire department, public safety, professionalism with upper management.

Police and Fire Departments (emergency response).

Service delivery, in particular the Fire Department.

Culture of professionalism with special emphasis on responsiveness, customer service and parks and recreation services.

All employees dedicated to doing a good job.

Service delivery of all departments.

7) What's one thing that you'd like to see us do better?

Be the IT leader in Oakland County. Achieve more financial independence from the State of Michigan. A portion of the hotel tax should stay in Oakland County/City. Troy should also look into having our State reps push for home rule cities keeping part of the sales tax. DDA wireless access?

Better use of web for good communication with citizens. Perhaps development of a speakers bureau would be in order to communicate the rationale for policy issues. Part of being the IT leader includes issuance of building permits on line.

Additionally, being part of Oakland County's pilot program for Wireless Oakland is taking us on the path to being the IT leader.

- Update, then follow, the Master Land Use plan
- More flexibility with incoming business ventures (Building Dept.)
- Work with the Planning Commission as a team
- Reduce fees that are linked to property improvements, thus encouraging property owners to move ahead with these improvements (Example: Permits for fences/decks/demolition)
- Focus more on industrial areas in Troy with rezoning recommendations that would encourage use
- Work harder on creating an environment where businesses want to come
- Improve training/professional development for staff throughout the organization, especially new employees
- Plan more joint meetings with various boards that serve Council (DDA, Planning Commission)
- Update present ordinances, and not make so cumbersome

We need to strive toward improving our mid- to long-range planning and master plan and better communicate this to our residents and business community. Plan our work and work our plan.

Long-range planning, in terms of a 5-year plan. The concept of blending in the Big Beaver corridor study, Maple Road corridor study, Futures process, revised land use plan, and capital improvements plan is a good one.

More focused on long-term planning; determining a preferred future for the City and staying with it; responsibility of the Manager and veteran Council Members to assist new Council Members will buy-in for future vision.

Streamline rules and procedures regarding time allowed for speaking at microphone and limit number of items a person can address.

This will make the business portion of our agenda more efficient, and give more respect to residents/individuals who took the opportunity to be placed on the agenda. In addition, staff should look to continuing to streamline the building permit process to enable businesses to engage in their development/redevelopment activities more quickly.

Better communication city-wide, and shorter response times for resident inquiries.

8) What's one thing we're not doing that you'd like to see us be known for?

*Combined questions 8) and 9).

- Look at the possibility of creating a regional marketing plan aimed at both business and residents
- Explore successful approaches with public/private partnerships
- Develop a plan to pull away from dependence on state funding (revenue sharing)

We need to make Troy a more business-friendly environment and determine why so many businesses are leaving Troy and going to Auburn Hills, etc. This may require changing our zoning policy to allow for different uses of industrial areas. We should make City Hall a more receptive, friendly service environment for both business and residents. We need to create an environment with less restrictions and red tape for businesses and residents.

Regional approach to service delivery.

Innovative approaches to public/private partnerships with emphasis in the areas of land use and transportation.

Innovative in delivery of information over the Internet; on-line registration for all programming.

Development of an ongoing City business marketing plan in order to balance our tax base to 50% residential and 50% commercial/industrial.

Enhanced quality of life services.

9) What else would you like to discuss that pertains to the City of Troy as an organization, City Council, or the Council/Manager partnership?

Use of the democratic governance model to augment citizen background information that will be given to Council to facilitate policy issues.

Incorporate the futuring process. In addition, we should categorize our boards and committees within the task force structure of the futuring process so we can always be examining preferred outcomes and working toward that endeavor.

I would like to see the revenue that is generated by fees for decks, sheds, tearing buildings; with the goal of seeing if the fees can be cut in half, thus encouraging property improvements/resale value. The City will capture taxes through improved property.

We are building so many condos; what is the ratio to single-family structures?

Where are we with our plan to put together an ethics policy for Council?

I would really like us to make sure we follow the final recommendations of studies that we authorize (Big Beaver corridor study, Futures process).

We need to improve overall relations between the City Council, City Management, and Planning Commission, etc. and streamline our decision-making. City Council needs to stop trying to re-engineer plans at the Council meetings and rely on the City Management team recommendations. John Szerlag and I need to spend more time discussing this to help me better understand the issues before I can make more definitive recommendations.

Perform more business case analyses on any increases in costs relative to service delivery. Also, have staff have more of an advocate for decisions made by Council. In addition, take a look at the table of organization to see if some departments should be combined.

Joint meetings with school board and chamber. Manager and assistant managers to attend NLC conference and MML conferences.

Continued professional development of Manager.

Proper relationship of Mayor/Council to Manager.

Address major policy issues in 2005 relative to ethics; and the relationship of open space preservation/development/redevelopment.

In addition to last year's answer, look to incorporate work force or affordable housing in future developments. Perhaps this could be incorporated along our major corridors, i.e., Maple Road in particular.

More long-term planning by Council as we are the policy makers of the City. In addition, as we make use of our futuring process results, Council needs to think in terms of policy and long-term planning.

Strengthen Council-Manager partnership.

10) Should Troy invest in alternative modes of transit? Would you be willing to allocate funding?

Troy should invest in alternative modes of transit and we should be willing to allocate funding.

Troy should invest in alternative modes of transit and be willing to allocate funding. However, a business case justifying the expenditure must first be performed.

Transit alternatives should be based on a business case analysis beginning first with determining if Troy should opt out of SMART.

We should look to invest in alternative modes of transit, but first examine our existing modes to see if they could be more efficient, i.e., smart routes.

We should also look to other forms of public transit, as well as construction of sidewalks and bike trails.

Further, we should look at some services like MediGo to see if they could be performed more efficiently in-house, and of course take an entire look at the whole public transit issue.

We should first look to a business case before investing in any regional alternative modes of transit.

Should invest in alternative modes of transit and allocate funding, but first develop a business case to justify the cost.

11) Please review ICMA survey results. How important is it that the City maintains its above-the-norm ratings?

Very important that the City strive to maintain its above-the-norm ratings relative to the ICMA survey results.

Combined Responses

This is a critical role for City Council and we are all ambassadors for the City, but the real work is carried out by City Management staff, civic organizations, private enterprise, and residents. We need to strive through our futuring process to listen to the business leaders and resident surveys and respond accordingly. We need to create a downtown: walking/shopping/entertainment area to draw not only our residents, but also those from surrounding areas. A minor league ball park may be a good idea, but we need to find the right location, which is not the Civic Center property.

It's very important that the City maintain it's above-the-norm rating.

It's always better to be above average as long as the benefit justifies the cost.

It's important, but not essential to be above-the-norm relative to ICMA ratings. However, we need to address areas where we are at or below the norm.

Yes, above-the-norm rating is what makes Troy a place to aspire to live and work.