CITY COUNCIL RETREAT

The annual City Council Retreat was held on August 25, 2026, at 12 p.m. at the Seaboard Triumph Foods Expo Center, 550 Expo Center Drive. The following Council Members were present on call of the roll: roll: Berenstein, Bertrand, Schoenherr, and Scott. Absent: Rayford. **(Rayford entered the meeting at 8:35 a.m.)**

Staff members present: Michael Collett, City Manager; Nicole M. DuBois City Attorney; Heidi Farrens, City Clerk; Teresa Fitch, Assistant City Manager; Jill Wanderscheid, Neighborhood Services Manager; Renae Billings, Economic Development Manager; Jason Allen, Transit Director; Captain Ryan Bertrand, Police Department; Chief Rex Mueller, Police Department; Anne Westra, Communications and Public Engagement Specialist; Marty Dougherty, Economic and Community Development Director; Chris Madsen, Planning Manager.

Fitch presented the impacts of Senate File 2472 on the City's budget. The FY 2028 budget process must incorporate new revenue limitations, reserve limitations, notice, and replacement-payment rules. The general fund levy has a 2% cap.

Rayford entered the meeting at 8:35 a.m.

At this time, exemptions are unknown. Fitch noted that the City has been fortunate to not have a large amount of debt. Discussion was held regarding large purchases moving from operating costs to capital improvement. Fitch noted that the City should be cautious. While this process would help to balance the budget, it would also increase the debt service levy. Changes to TIF affect mature districts and future projects. In January 2027, the school foundation levies are excluded from what the City can capture. Fitch and Dougherty reviewed changes and challenges. Dougherty noted that not all changes were negative citing that the housing component improved. The City and County will be working together to make information easily accessible and transparent for the public.

Captain Bertrand and Chief Mueller provided an update on HART (Homeless Assistance Response Team) and services placement planning. Enforcement is the priority of the Police Department, but the department participates in bridging the gap with connecting individuals to services. Captain Bertrand introduced the Problem Oriented Policing Unit (POP). The focus of POP will be the downtown area. They strive to be proactive and highly visible and will be using bicycles when they can. Chief Mueller reviewed concerns and unexpected outcomes of increased assistance and services. Chief Mueller discussed the need for substance abuse initiatives and sustainable funding for mental health care from the state. Discussion was held regarding The Warming Shelter, its initial mission, current operations, and future funding.

Collett requested direction from the Council on centralized services. Captain Bertrand shared potential advantages including faster placement, clear and consistent rules for individuals seeking assistance, and lower costs to providers. Disadvantages discussed include the City becoming a "hub" for homeless individuals from outside the City and neighborhood impacts for the chosen location a centralized campus.

Collett discussed progress in meetings held with the County regarding a bus to the Law Enforcement Center. The proposal offered is a six-month trial route to test demand. The trial will offer a one-way route from Wal-Mart to the Law Enforcement in the morning, a midday round trip, and a one-way trip from the LEC to Wal-Mart at the end of the day. The $10,000 cost of the trial route will be split between the City and the County. Discussion was held regarding bus fare. The County will not be providing vouchers. Berenstein and Collett discussed that the demand for a route, as noted in previous statements by Chad Sheehan, Woodbury County Sheriff, is not just for inmate release, but also includes residents reporting for jury duty and paying fines. Allen and Collett shared that the bus will be equipped to collect fares.

Berenstein discussed the importance of City branding and views a potential refresh of branding and a new logo as an opportunity for a community outreach project. Berenstein noted that how the City promotes itself affects its ability to attract economic development and young professionals. Fitch reviewed the items and areas that would require updates and potential associated costs. Westra discussed the scale of the project and staff required. Westra encouraged the Council to consider the return on investment, implementation, and tracking of its successes or failures. Dougherty stated that individuals move because of jobs and housing but noted that the City could sell itself better.

Madsen discussed off-premise advertising signs. The billboard moratorium was placed with the intent of pausing the process while City Municipal Code was updated and modernized. Madsen will be bringing options to the Council for a vote soon. City staff met with sign companies and used comparison cities in their research. Madsen discussed proposed amendments which include increasing separation requirements, creating separation between on-premise and off-premise signs, changing setbacks to match zoning district, prohibiting off-premises signs where pole or pylon signs already exist, and exemptions along the Gordon Drive viaduct. Bertrand discussed potential revenue from signage. Discussion was held regarding static and digital billboards. Dougherty shared details of a cap and replace option used by other cities. Madsen reviewed alternatives proposed including City Council approved site plans for new signs.

Billings discussed the timeline for the downtown entrance site development. An architectural visual should be provided in early September. The visual will allow for additional feedback before presenting a final design plan. Staff will then begin building the Request for Quote. Berenstein would like to see the design incorporate an extension in phases across the street and moving to the Hard Rock. Bertrand shared his appreciation that the property will be privately owned but is concerned about interest in a parking ramp. Bertrand discussed rent supplements for retail and the type of retail the City could attract. Council members and staff discussed the cost of parking ramps.

At conclusion, Scott and Bertrand noted that data centers will need to be added to an agenda for discussion in the future.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:56 a.m., on motion by Scott, seconded by Schoenherr, all voting aye.

ATTEST: _____ _____

Heidi Farrens, City Clerk Robert E. Scott, Mayor