



CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Richfield, Minnesota

City Council Work Session Virtual Meeting held via WebEx

April 28, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Regan Gonzalez at 5:49 p.m. held via WebEx.

Council Members Present: Maria Regan Gonzalez, Mayor; Mary Supple; Simon Trautmann; and Ben Whalen.

Council Members Absent: Edwina Garcia

Staff Present: Katie Rodriguez, City Manager; Blanca Martinez Gavina, Executive Analyst; and Kelly Wynn, Senior Office Assistant

ITEM #1	STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE
----------------	----------------------------------

City Manager Rodriguez gave a brief update regarding Strategic Planning. A meeting will be set up in May to compile ideas for goal setting. Due to the pandemic, Strategic Planning itself will be postponed until 2021.

ITEM #2	REVIEW OF COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
----------------	---

City Manager Rodriguez provided background information on why the survey was conducted. The City was able to hear from residents, see benchmarking against peers, demographic differences and actionable data. She then discussed the methodology of the randomized survey that included a mailing of 2,500 surveys with 566 returned. There was also an online opt-in survey that had 107 residents respond. City Manager Rodriguez then provided results of how livability in Richfield compares well nationally. Overall, residents like living in Richfield. It is a desirable place to live with safety as a feature that contributes to quality of life. Residents applaud mobility in Richfield and are very pleased with the Parks and Recreation Department.

City Manager Rodriguez then presented results of areas in Richfield that compared well but received lower marks such as vibrancy of commercial areas; cost of living; availability of quality affordable housing and mental health care; opportunities for education, culture and the arts; residents connection and engagement with their community.

City Manager Rodriguez discussed a summary of Minnesota benchmark results by relative percent positive rating. Areas Richfield scored higher than MN peers were public transportation, ease

of bike travel, snow removal and drinking water. Two areas Richfield scored lower than MN peers were overall opportunities for education, culture and the arts and K-12 education. She also reported areas that ranked in the top third of MN benchmark by relative rank such as overall confidence in Richfield government, overall direction that Richfield is taking, treating all residents fairly, quality and vibrancy of businesses, employment opportunities and more.

City Manager Rodriguez presented demographic analysis regarding livability and governance. Results showed people of color (POC) ranked positive image and reputation slightly higher while homeowners and residents in detached homes were more likely to stay in Richfield. However, POC gave lower marks to customer service. Also, older residents reported having more confidence in government while younger residents like the direction of the City better. As well as customer service ratings for POC were sixteen points lower than white residents and males felt most respected.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez stated it is concerning to see and is problematic. She spoke of how more research needs to be done around affordable housing and action needs to come out of the research.

Council Member Supple spoke of how sixteen points regarding customer service is a significant spread.

City Manager Rodriguez explained how equity is a major priority. The work is slow but action is being taken to diversify the work force. Several steps have been taken including joining multiple groups to promote equity and the City will continue its work to improve.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez spoke of the customer service aspect and how everyone should look at how the City can do better as a whole to provide for all residents in being helpful and respectful.

City Manager Rodriguez explained how all department directors have the information regarding the survey as well. She went on to state that customer service ratings are high but there is a discrepancy.

Council Member Trautmann asked for clarification on what POC rating positive image and reputation slightly higher meant.

City Manager Rodriguez explained how the information is compiled and broken down by demographic sub groups and will show if a certain community demographic is rating something higher. POC rated Richfield's positive image and reputation slightly higher than white people.

Council Member Trautmann echoed the thoughts of other council members in that equity is urgent and perpetual. He appreciates how staff is making great strides.

Council Member Supple asked about the result of residents more likely to stay. City Manager Rodriguez clarified the question in the survey regarded living in Richfield in the next five years.

City Manager Rodriguez then spoke of results regarding economy; mobility; community design; utilities; safety; natural environment and parks/recreation; health/wellness; education, arts and culture; inclusivity and engagement.

Council Member Whalen explained how some information is not surprising. As a white person, it may not be known how other groups are not made welcome. There is definitely more work to do to become equitable. He spoke of how important it is to hear from the groups that are not feeling included and welcomed in order to determine solutions.

City Manager Rodriguez agreed with Council Member Whalen and spoke of how it has become a very important goal of City board and commissions to help. She then went on to discuss demographic analysis of participation and online engagement and preference for sources of information.

Council Member Supple was curious to the result of residents 55 years and older as well as POC were more likely to campaign. City Manager Rodriguez explained it was to campaign for an issue or candidate.

City Manager Rodriguez continued on to touch on demographic analysis concerning community focus area and the customized questions. The customized questions resulted in supporting what employees have already heard from residents. She briefly spoke of the online survey results even though they were not statistically valid. Unfortunately, the responses were generally less positive. City Manager Rodriguez then summarized some key takeaways from the survey in that Richfield does well compared to peers; the strengths line up well with values and areas of improvement correspond with priorities; residents want a focus on safety, economic health, parks and recreation along with the natural environment; and demographic differences demonstrate a need for more equitable service delivery.

Council Member Whalen commented on the need to name things during the goal setting meeting that came out of the survey. He asked to have clear action steps bulleted in response to the needs of the survey.

City Manager Rodriguez said staff can absolutely make that happen. She also stated how this survey provided a lot of good news for the City. There is something for each department to be proud of regarding the results. She also gave praise to Communications and Engagement Manager, Neil Ruhland, in all his efforts. She then stated how Council should be very proud of their work. There is data to be used and department directors will be able to utilize this survey as one more tool.

Council Member Supple commented on how people don't always know what they don't know and to pay attention to results and fix things such as customer service

Mayor Regan Gonzalez thanked City Manager Rodriguez for sharing all the information and commended her on the positive results. She spoke of being able to share these results with business, non-profit organizations, and education partners to become a more robust City. She commented on how people are happy and the City should build on that aspect. Mayor Regan Gonzalez also stated how equity is their work and everyone should push to grow abilities and deliver core services in a variety of ways.

Council Member Whalen thanked all staff involved. He pointed out how there is a lot of positives to take away from the survey. He then gave a special call out to the Public Works Department.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez described how fortunate the residents of Richfield are to have such great leadership. Especially in a time of crisis, all people and groups are coming together.

Council Member Trautmann asked about a frequency of the survey and if it will be an annual item. City Manager Rodriguez explained it is an expensive undertaking so most likely it will be done every two to three years.

Council Member Supple asked about the results of the COVID-19 survey that was distributed. City Manager Rodriguez spoke of the great response rate. The results are being compiled now and should be ready in the next couple weeks.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:35 p.m.

Date Approved: May 12, 2020



Kelly Wynn
Senior Office Assistant



Maria Regan Gonzalez
Mayor



Katie Rodriguez
City Manager