



MEETING DATE: 5/24/06

COUNCIL RETREAT REPORT

DATE: May 22, 2006
TO: MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL
FROM: DEBRA J. FIGONE, TOWN MANAGER
SUBJECT: TOWN COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION RETREAT-MAY 24, 2006

Attached are the agenda materials for the Town Council/Planning Commission retreat scheduled for May 24, 2006. The retreat will be facilitated by Shawn Spano. The retreat agenda and materials were developed based upon a discussion with Mayor Diane McNutt and Planning Commission Chair Phil Micciche. The overall focus will be to discuss and reach consensus on practices that contribute to excellent Council and Commission performance.

To facilitate discussion, the attached draft Best Practices for Excellent Performance document was prepared. These "best practices" are derived from statements and policies contained in the Council Code of Conduct and the Planning Commissioner's Handbook. The "best practices" identified at the retreat could also serve as a reference guide for future Council members and Planning Commissioners.

Attachments:

- 1. Memorandum from Bud Lortz dated May 17, 2006
2. Retreat Agenda
3. Draft Best Practices for Excellent Performance

Distribution:

Shawn Spano, Public Dialogue Consortium

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PREPARED BY: Bud N. Lortz, Community Development Director

Reviewed by: Assistant Town Manager Town Attorney Clerk Administrator
Finance Community Development Revised: 5/22/06 11:15 am



MEMORANDUM

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

To: Planning Commissioners
BLL

From: Bud Lortz, Community Development Director

Subject: Town Council/Planning Commission Retreat

Date: May 17, 2006

In planning for the upcoming May 24th Town Council/Planning Commission Retreat, staff met with Mayor Diane McNutt and Planning Commission Chair Phil Micciche to discuss possible agenda topics and meeting logistics. The retreat discussion will be facilitated by Shawn Spano. The meeting will be two hours and will start at 7:00 PM. We plan to meet in the Council Chambers but if for some reason there is a change of venue we will let you know.

Given the limited time available and the need to make this meeting as meaningful and productive as possible, it was agreed that it would be beneficial to discuss how the Town Council and Planning Commission carry out or perform their duties as part of our ongoing goal of creating a culture of excellence in the way the Town conducts the public's business. For example, how would you expect the Town Council and Planning Commission to act if you were an applicant, watched them on television or were in attendance at a meeting? What are your expectations of these two critically important bodies in terms of how they perform their duties?

Attached is the agenda for the retreat. To help stimulate discussion, we developed the attached draft Best Practices for Excellent Performance as a Town Council Member/Planning Commissioner. These "best practices" are derived from many of the statements and policies that are set forth in the Council Code of Conduct and the Planning Commissioner's Handbook. As previously mentioned, this set of "best practices" is intended to stimulate discussion but it could also eventually serve as a reference guide for future Council members and Planning Commissioners as they evolve in their respective roles. Please review the "best practices" and edit or add to them as you see fit. Then be prepared to discuss your edits and additional "best practices" and to interject your thoughts and opinions.

If you have any questions about the upcoming retreat, please call me.

**Town of Los Gatos
Council - Planning Commission Retreat
May 24, 2006**

Purposes

- To explore the practices that contribute to excellent Council and Commission performance.
- To develop a common understanding between Council and Commission about the practices that contribute to excellent performance.
- To provide Council and Commission members an opportunity to assess and develop their own practices and performance.

Overarching Goal

- This retreat, and specific purposes listed above, is designed to contribute to the larger, ongoing goal of creating a culture of excellence in the way the Town performs its functions and conducts the public's business.

Working Agenda

Setting the Context

- Preview agenda and purposes.
- Establish ground rules for good communication:
 - Be concise
 - Respect differences (respect does not mean agreement)
 - Each member helps the group achieve the overarching goal.
- Establish format:
 - Preview the six categories of best practices: (1) Professional, (2) Customer Service Oriented, (3) Good Judgment, (4) Objective, (5) Efficient and (6) Persuasive.
 - Open group discussion around each of the category scenarios. Begin by having members share their individual perspectives and experiences. Conclude each scenario by noting areas of consensus and agreement with the practices that contribute to excellence (should be enacted) and the practices that do not contribute to excellence (should be avoided).
 - Determine if any actions should be taken in light of group discussion outcomes.

Draft
**Best Practices for Excellent Performance
as a Town Council/Planning Commission Member**

As you consider this element of excellent performance, imagine a project that conflicts with adopted policies and guidelines, you don't respect the applicant, and the project challenges your personal values.

1. PROFESSIONAL

<i>In practice, this means...</i>	<i>And avoiding...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the roles of standards, guidelines and the General Plan in decision-making • Comments should be professional and respectful • Respecting the role of the Mayor/Chair in running the meeting • Respecting staff and the Town's consultant's recommendation and comments • Being careful of your comments since they can be taken out of context, misinterpreted and lead to litigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarcastic or condescending remarks • Comments that force the Mayor/Chair to have to cut you off • Discrediting the Town or its consultants/staff • Comments that are inappropriate or that can be taken out of context

As you consider this element of excellent performance, imagine an applicant that has a fair project that is clearly very important to their family, but conflicts with a specific standard.

2. CUSTOMER SERVICE ORIENTED

<i>In practice, this means...</i>	<i>And avoiding...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respecting the rights of residents, businesses and property owners to pursue their goals and dreams• Asking questions of applicants during the presentation and rebuttal• Recognizing that the words and decisions used by the PC and TC have tremendous emotional impact on the applicants and their quality of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bringing up objections or questions after public hearing is closed• The temptations to redesign from the dais• Trying to convince a colleague or applicant• Lecturing a colleague or applicant

As you consider this element of excellent performance, imagine a complex project that is generally a very good project but does not comply with a specific policy or guideline.

3. USE GOOD JUDGMENT

<i>In practice, this means...</i>	<i>And avoiding...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feeling confident to make decisions by reading the General Plan in context• Granting an exception if the situation warrants it• Taking issues that are not addressed by guidelines off-line from the project being considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being overly literal when interpreting policy• Not looking for a way to deny a project just because it is challenging• Being arbitrary• Continuing a project when a condition of approval will suffice• Holding up a project for an issue that is not specifically addressed by policies and standards

As you consider this element of excellent performance, imagine a complex project that strongly conflicts with your personal values but generally complies with the Town's policies and standards.

4. OBJECTIVE

<i>In practice, this means...</i>	<i>And avoiding...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performing your duties and serving in a quasi-judicial manner• Demonstrating fairness• Listening to all evidence and considering all information• Setting aside personal bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personalizing your decision (i.e., I have a small house...)

As you consider this element of excellent performance, imagine a complex project that causes you to have many questions that remain unanswered, but the applicant is under severe time constraints and is requesting an expedited decision.

5. EFFICIENT

<i>In practice, this means...</i>	<i>And avoiding...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asking questions of staff prior to the meeting• Identifying ahead of time primary issues or concerns and stay focused on them• Outlining evidence supporting findings as the hearing progresses• Identifying and prioritizing your primary concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waiting to asking questions at the meeting• Delving into minutia• Waiting to create findings after the close of the hearing• Having so many concerns that you start to dominate the meeting

As you consider this element of excellent performance, imagine a project that has raised conflicting points of view among your colleagues and everyone feels passionately about their point of view.

6. PERSUASIVE

<i>In practice, this means...</i>	<i>And avoiding...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respecting other points of view• Making your case using logic and specific examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dismissing other points of view or trying to convince someone that your point of view is correct• Terms like “I feel” rather than citing codes and policies