

# **City of Johnston, Iowa Goal Setting Report**

**January 24, 2008**

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**Mayor:**

**Paula Dierenfeld**

**City Council:**

**Gerd Clabaugh**

**Rick Tingley**

**Jim Hibbs**

**Bob Culbert**

**Jon Kallen**

**City Staff:**

**Jim Sanders, City Administrator**

**Stephanie Reynolds, Assistant City Administrator/City Clerk**



**Facilitated by:**

*Jeff Schott*

*Institute of Public Affairs*

*University of Iowa*

**CITY OF JOHNSTON, IOWA  
GOAL SETTING SESSION  
2008**

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# **CITY OF JOHNSTON, IOWA**

## **GOAL SETTING SESSION**

### **2008**

#### **Introduction**

The City of Johnston requested the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) to assist the city with goal setting. IPA agreed to organize and facilitate a process that involved the following steps:

1. Prepare a questionnaire to identify recent accomplishments, issues/trends/concerns, potential new initiatives/programs/policies and suggestions to improve organizational effectiveness.
2. Conduct a goal-setting session with the elected officials.
3. Preparation of this final report.

#### **Goal Setting Work Session**

City Council Members and the Mayor held a work session conducted by the IPA on January 24, 2008. In attendance and participating at this meeting were Mayor Paula Dierenfeld and Council Members Gerd Clabaugh, Rick Tingley, Bob Culbert, Jim Hibbs, and Jon Kallen.

Also in attendance and participating in this meeting were City Administrator Jim Sanders, Assistant City Administrator/City Clerk Stephanie Reynolds, Finance Director Teresa Rotschafer, Community Development Director David Wilwerding, Police Chief Doug Nichols, Fire Chief Jim Krohse, Library Director Willona Graham Goers, Public Works Director Dave Cubit, Management Analyst Lucas Casey, Deputy City Clerk Cyndee Rhames, Senior Planner Aaron Wolfe, Planner II Deb Schiel-Larson, and Park Superintendent Ron Ward.

## **Major Accomplishments**

The following were identified as major accomplishments during the past two years:

- NW 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue widening and trail project
- Merle Hay Road redevelopment study and market analysis
- Improved fire/emergency medical protection:
  - Full-time fire department staffing
  - Paramedic ambulance
  - Sleep-in program at Fire Station
- Entered into fire protection agreement with the City of Grimes
- Terra Lake reuse concept plan completed
- Park improvements
  - Playground equipment and increased signage at Lew Clarkson, Dewey, Pointe Vista, Adventure Ridge
  - Parking lot/restrooms at Lew Clarkson
- Web site improvements
  - Audio streaming of city council meetings
  - Redesign of website; more information available more easily
  - Increased usage
  - E-lert for police-specific information
- NW Beaver Drive sanitary sewer extension
- Central Basin storm and sanitary drainage improvements
- Consolidated garbage collection – single hauler; city negotiated rate
- Improvements to trail network – Trestle-to-Trestle trail
- Staff enhancements – increased numbers/professionalism to meet growing needs
  - Fire Department (added four full-time fire fighters and initiated a sleep-in program), added Financial Clerk, Police Officers, Street Department laborer, Water Department laborer, Parks Superintendent, reorganized administrative and financial positions
- Commercial development
- Initiated actions to deal with Emerald Ash Borer infestation

## **Major Accomplishments (continued)**

- Continued collaborative efforts with other local agencies/organizations – e.g. fiber optic expansion with Johnston Community School District
- NW 62<sup>nd</sup> Avenue reconstruction – NW 86<sup>th</sup> Street to NW 100<sup>th</sup> Street
- Establishment of express bus service to downtown Des Moines
- New financial/personnel/payroll software conversion
- Purchasing policy update
- City Code Update/Recodification
- Crown Point use analysis
- Closure pay program continued to improve competitiveness of administrative and non-union wages and salaries
  - New employee benefits: supplemental life insurance, flex spending debit card
- Updated TIF Policy
- Pioneer Parkway Trail Study
- Maintained property tax rate
- Utility collection procedure and utility meter reading timing updated
- New utility bills
- Upgraded police vehicles and equipment
- Library open two additional hours per week
- Maintained quality service overall with growing population
- Enhanced communication efforts with developers so that developers, staff, council members and citizens better understand issues/barriers/incentives in place to develop in Johnston
- NW 54<sup>th</sup> Avenue Roadway Reconstruction Project
- Removal of Greendale sewage pump system
- Overlay of NW 100<sup>th</sup> Street
- Neighborhood Improvement Grant Program funding increased to \$14K/year (\$2K per grant)

## **Major Accomplishments (continued)**

- Two rain gardens designed and installed at city hall as storm water retention demonstration projects by city staff; grant funding obtained
- Post-construction stormwater ordinance amendments approved
- NW 86<sup>th</sup> Street reconstruction north of NW 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- VIEW (Visual Investments to Enhance Watersheds) project completed in partnership with Trees Forever

## **Issues, Concerns, Trends and Opportunities**

The following were identified as issues, concerns, trends, and opportunities that may affect future city services, policies, finances or operations:

- Need for increased recreational opportunities including:
  - Community recreation and sports complex
  - Neighborhood parks
  - Trails
  - Recreation programs
  - Park project bond referendum
- Efforts to continue growth; commercial development
- Determining future of Crown Point facilities, including future pool uses
- MS4 compliance –ongoing costs and staff resources
- Emerald Ash Borer infestation – response planning needed
- Merle Hay Road redevelopment – where do we go from here; what is level of city, JEDCO involvement?
- John Deere Credit expansion
- Infrastructure improvement east of Merle Hay Road
- Negotiating annexation agreements with the cities of Granger, Grimes, Ankeny
- Establishing a fair roadway assessment policy
- Growing city debt/debt service levy
- Downturn in housing; slowing growth of tax base
- Growing demand for cost-effective cooperation between city/school – bus transportation, recreation, road development, fire

## **Issues, Concerns, Trends and Opportunities (continued)**

- City is proactively engaging residents in city government
- City services/infrastructure keeping up with population growth
  - Growing diverse population with different needs
  - Staff growth
- Overcrowding at city hall, police, and fire stations and outdated/aging facilities
- Hotel/Motel Tax – loss of a hotel
- Property tax rollback continues to erode tax base
- Possible reclassifications of apartments as residential structures for property tax purposes – decreasing taxable valuation
- Expanding commercial tax base
- Lack of affordable housing
- Comprehensive Plan update
- Stormwater utility
- Increasing delinquent utility accounts and shut-offs
- Increasing NSF checks – city does not charge
- Limited/low bandwidth serving city facilities
- Fiber optic project citywide – opportunity
- Lack of growth may require tax increase
- Intergovernmental funding issues, e.g. Polk County funding for library services
- Perception that Johnston is not developer friendly

## **On-Going Priorities**

The following were identified as on-going priorities for the upcoming 12 – 24 month period:

- Continue to proactively pursue effective partnerships, including service-sharing with other governments
- Continue efforts and policies to attract and retain staff, include development of employee wellness plan
- Continue to identify and maintain strategies, methods, practices and policies designed to ensure effective growth management, to include consideration of “Smart Growth” policies
  - Update Comprehensive Plan
- Support the implementation of the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Development Plan
  - Continue to connect and extend trails, including development of a long-range trail plan with time lines
  - Continue to provide funding for long-term trail maintenance
- Continue strategies to improve public information efforts
- Promote economic development in Johnston
- Space needs analysis and facilities planning – all departments
- Develop annexation agreements with the cities of Granger, Grimes, and Ankeny
- Merle Hay Road redevelopment – evaluate specific development incentives
- Establish Parks and Recreation Department
- Crown Point – determine best use
- Terra Lake Park redevelopment
- Pioneer Parkway trail
- MS4 compliance and funding
- Fiber optic network (in conjunction with Johnston Community School District)
- Continue to maintain quality services to growing community

## **Priority Projects, Programs, Policies and Initiatives**

The participants reviewed potential projects, programs, policies and initiatives for consideration and selected the following as priorities for the upcoming 12 – 24 month period (listed in priority order):

1. Develop utility and infrastructure master plans for areas lacking service
2. (Tie) Community Recreation and Sports Complex:
  - Acquisition
  - Bond referendum
2. (Tie) Management of Beaver Creek Natural Area – development of comprehensive management plan
4. Adopt policies to deal with Emerald Ash Borer infestation

A complete list of all programs and initiatives considered by the Mayor and City Council members is attached as **Exhibit A**.

### **Organizational Effectiveness**

The Mayor and City Council reviewed a variety of ideas relating to improving organizational effectiveness to accomplish the selected goals and priorities. After review and discussion, the Mayor and City Council selected the following steps to improve organizational effectiveness:

- Emphasize reporting of council liaisons to boards/commissions at council meetings
- Hold city department open houses for residents
- Hold joint meetings with adjacent communities and school district
- Provide “heads up” on media contacts and news items
- Conduct pilot project establishing council sub-committee to meet on department issues
- E-mail tentative council agendas to mayor/council members on Tuesdays

**Note:** The agenda for the Goal Setting Session and the Preliminary Questionnaire are attached to this report as **Exhibits B** and **C** respectively.

### **Final Comments**

It was a pleasure to assist the City of Johnston with this goal setting process. I was extremely impressed with the level of cooperation and positive attitudes of the elected officials and city staff.

It is important to note that the prioritization of projects and initiatives is not “cast in stone.” They can be modified as new circumstances may occur.

It is recommended that city staff prepare an “action plan” for accomplishing the planning goals. The action plan would define the steps that would be needed to accomplish each goal, identify who is responsible for implementation, and establish a timeline for accomplishment. The action plan should then be presented to the Mayor and City Council for review and approval. It is also recommended that staff review with the Mayor and City Council the status of implementing the goals on a quarterly basis.

Jeff Schott  
Institute of Public Affairs  
University of Iowa  
January 28, 2008

Exhibit A

City of Johnston  
Goal Setting Session – 2008

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**SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES OR PROGRAMS CONSIDERED**

- Management of Beaver Creek Natural Area – development of comprehensive management plan
- Storm water utility
- Make Johnston smoke-free; eliminate smoking in restaurants, bars, extend smoking restrictions outside public buildings on city property
- Adopt “green” policies
- Adopt policies to deal with Emerald Ash Borer infestation
- Expansion of library services to make Johnston a city of learners
- Develop utility and infrastructure master plans for areas lacking service
- Fund annual street maintenance program
- Create and fund Equipment Replacement Fund
- Control debt service levy
- Consistently enforce assessment policy
- Marketing/branding initiative
- Analyze cost/benefits of city information technology staff rather than outside provider
- Land acquisition for city facilities
- Community Recreation and Sports Complex:
  - Acquisition
  - Bond referendum
- Public arts program

**Exhibit B**

**AGENDA**

**CITY OF JOHNSTON  
GOAL SETTING SESSION - 2008**

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**THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 2008  
4:30 PM – 8:30 PM  
City Hall Council Chambers**

1. Introductions and Opening Comments
  - a. Name, Tenure, and Background
2. General Overview of the Meeting and the Goal Setting Process
  - a. The Ground Rules for this session
3. Progress Report and Update –2007 Goal Setting Report
4. Review Recent City Accomplishments (2006 - 07)
5. Review Issues, Concerns, Opportunities, and Trends
6. Identify On-Going Priorities
7. Programs, Policies, Projects and Initiatives
  - a. Review Results of Questionnaire
  - b. Explanations, clarifications, revisions, deletions, additions of Programs, Policies, Projects, and Initiatives
  - c. Ranking of Priorities
8. Capital Improvements Program Priorities
  - a. Review Results of Questionnaire
  - b. Explanations, clarifications, revisions, deletions, additions of Projects
  - c. Ranking of Priorities
9. Organizational Effectiveness
  1. Review Results of Questionnaire
10. IPA Report to the Mayor and City Council – 2008 Goal Setting Process
  - a. Development of Action Plan
  - b. Importance of Quarterly Updates
11. Questions, comments, and suggestions
12. Adjourn

Exhibit C

**CITY OF JOHNSTON  
GOAL SETTING SESSION – 2008**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The City of Johnston’s Goal Setting Session will be held on Thursday January 24, 2008, at City Hall. The purpose of the session will be to identify and prioritize the City’s overall goals and objectives for the next two years.

In order to prepare for this session, you are requested to identify key issues and potential objectives that will be reviewed and discussed at the session. Please complete all sections of this questionnaire. If you need additional space, please feel free to attach additional page(s).

**Major Accomplishments**

Please list the major city accomplishments over the past two years. These accomplishments could be as large as a street project or as simple as a newly adopted city policy. The items do not need to be in any particular order.

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**Issues, Concerns, Trends, and Opportunities**

Please list specific issues, concerns, trends and opportunities that affect future city services, policies, finances or operations (for example, loss of population, major new economic development success, employer or resolving a policy question). You do not need to identify potential solutions to your concerns.

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**Significant Initiatives or Programs**

Please list any initiatives, programs or policies that you think the City should consider in the next two years (for example, downtown revitalization, updating employee job descriptions, adopting a policy on open burning, conducting an annexation study, reviewing water and sewer rates, etc.)

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**Capital Projects**

Please list the capital projects or equipment purchases that you think the City should consider over the next two years. These capital projects could include such things as street construction, public works equipment, public safety equipment, etc. If you have an estimate on the cost of such projects, please note it. Please list only those projects with a total cost of \$10,000 or more.

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**Organizational Effectiveness**

Please list several things that the Mayor/City Council and/or staff could do in the future to improve organizational effectiveness, decision-making process, teamwork and the ability to accomplish the City's stated goals and objectives.

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**RETURN OF QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please return this questionnaire to Stephanie Reynolds by **Friday, January 11, 2008.**