BREVARD CITY COUNCIL RETREAT NOTES

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Friday, March 7, 2025

GETTING STARTED

Introductions: Council & Key Staff	
What do you have to give to the success of today?	What do you hope to gain from today?
• Perspective, insights of community concerns; public context; Understanding/share perspective (4) • Help to the council; support (2) • Support for fulfilling the priorities (2) • Information (2) • Encouragement to stick to the priorities • Maintain focus • Open Listener • Employee perspective • Guidance • Knowledge/direction during departmental transition to new director • Experience and perspective from outside the organization • Knowledge/expertise	• Clear priorities/objectives for the year ahead; Guiding aims (4) • Direction (3) • Consensus for next year's efforts • Focus • Solid plan moving forward • Clear path in uncertain times • Areas to serve community • Insight into Council's priorities • Continued Council support • Understand both long and short-term goals • More about the city (I'm new) and how I can contribute • Great leadership and people • Understanding of retreat and budget prep process • Confidence

As you listen to the Mayor's Report and Review, think about two questions:
What may have enabled that success? What other successes, personal or professional, can you add or build on?
• Staff flexibility and adaptability; creativity; ability to respond and make changes (4) • Make hard decisions and explain them to the public (2) • Ongoing communication with the public • Transparency in how we do business • Utilizing outside grants (move towards self-sufficiency) • Dedicated partners and expanding partnerships • Intentional focus on housing—we've shifted what we're doing and realigned the organization to support that focus, e.g., establishment of the Housing Committee • Monthly Meet the Mayor and Manager offers opportunity to actively listen to residents and the structure to create a response/take action • Use of technology

UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT

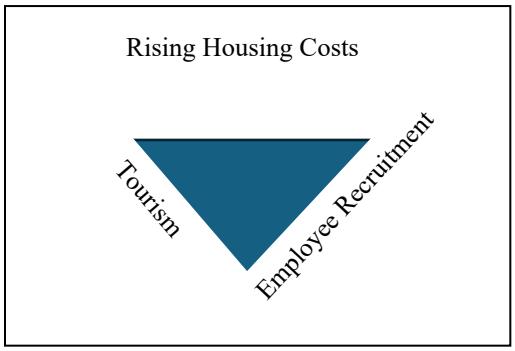
Issues with Potential Impact on City's Work		
From Council's 2024 retreat		**Updates or Additions for 2025**
Trends- Internal:	• Staffing needs • Cross training • Professionalizing • Lagging technology in our organization • Outgrowing out space • Equipment needs • Expanding scope of large projects impacting operations	• Increasing professionalism is Key! • Retention of staff • Staffing in Brevard Police and Fire Departments • Staff skilled at recruitment and retention • Increasing costs of fringe benefits • Cost of employee training and development • Hiring challenges to get staff on the streets • Lack of (affordable) workforce housing in general • Re-investment in city-owned infrastructure
Trends- External:	• Inflation/ Construction costs/ Cost of Living increasing • Grant funding available • Employee/workforce shortages • Infill and growth • Technology enhancements: changing, social media • Remote work increasing	• Inflation/ Construction costs/ Cost of Living increasing (still!) • Great uncertainty about grant funding in the future • Leveling off of 'Work from Home' practices • Wide proliferation of mis/disinformation (generated by AI?) generating mistrust in general • Increase in # visitors—increases in traffic, impact on infrastructure and services • Lack of appropriate housing (quantity and affordability) for our own City's workforce
Technology Factors	• Mismatched technology (City levels) • Teleworking opportunities are trending up • IT security issues / security threats	• City Council chambers enhanced AV set up • Emergency communications (2) • Planning ahead for infrastructure upgrades • Open vision for developing technology • City phone system • Backup communications for power disasters\Redundancy and resiliency of communications and critical infrastructure • Misinformation management • Enhanced IT structure citywide internal/external

Trend	2024	2025
Political Factors: Local, State and Federal policy	• Intergovernmental agencies: contracts and agreements • Changes in policy makers (federal and State) • Federal / State funding for directed projects	• These remain and are more pronounced: County conflicts, State limitations, Conflicting visions. Communication and compromise are needed. • Partisan v. nonpartisan boards • Funding uncertainties (fed and state) trickle down to local level • State urban-rural divide • Land use autonomy • Municipal elections (2) • Increased polarization of the community • Rapid changes in federal policies
Economic Climate: What's the financial picture?	• Pharm investments • Outdoor equipment manufacturing • Breweries • Architecture/arts • Retiree destination • Level off and visitor spending • Covid was a boom for the City financially • Baby boomers and new people transition impacting property availability • Short Term Rentals	• Pharm investments (continue) • Outdoor equipment manufacturing (continue) • Impact of Helene less than expected here in Brevard • State and Federal funding is questionable • Economic impact of Ecusta Trail already being felt • Tourism increasing • Small business growth • Reliance on tourism comes increasing costs and potential recession • FEMA reimbursements? • Cost of living increases

Trend	2024	2025
Uncertainties	• Funding • City/County relationships • National economic events and trends • Upcoming recessions • Reliance on tourism economy	• Funding • National *and international* economic events and trends • Increasing costs of running a city • Reliance on tourism – this is legit resource. Brevard is special • Staffing • Grants • Impact of possible federal workforce reductions locally • Weather uncertainties and impact on workload
Customer Needs: Changing Demographics? Changing requirements?	• Constituents' expectations are rising • Increased expectations of citizens overall • Affordable housing • Safety • Roads • Stormwater infrastructure • Water/Sewer • Generational families vs. transplants mismatch • Population demographics change • Communication and feeling heard • Intentional engagement • Volunteer engagements • Connect with residents and leverage partnerships • Provide more information for citizens	• Safety enforcement on roads • Learning need v. want • Constituents' expectations are rising, which continues to be a pressing need. Contributes to staffing issues. • Affordable housing (lack) is exacerbated and more pressing this year. • Loss of younger residents and career opportunities • More interactions with volunteers • Affordable housing plan needed • Aging demographics • Social net services in jeopardy

Most Critical Issues or Trends for 2025:

- Funding uncertainties and macro-economic pressures (3)
- Recruitment and retention difficulties, especially "boots on the ground" positions (3)
- Workforce housing (2)
- Big ticket infrastructure needs (2)
- Tourism is part of our economy (+/-)
- Changing demographics, especially loss of younger people
- Staffing and organizational ability to deliver on multiple fronts
- Managing misinformation (and fear) takes time
- Uncertainty regarding international events
- State of city-county relationships
- Inter-relatedness of trends



THREE WISHES

Taking the Long View--What needs to be in place to adequately respond to external or internal influences happening now or in the future?

1. Regardless of *how* it happens, what three wishes do you have to build a better Brevard?

Priority Area	Wishes
AFFORDABLE HOUSING	• Housing to support a diverse community • Brevard is a livable community with diverse, reasonably priced housing for everyone with an innovative, accessible transportation system.

HEALTHY AND DIVERSE ECONOMY
Facilitator's Note: Is this a new/emerging priority area? Otherwise, the wish is related to High-Quality Organization.
	• Support a healthy workforce:
	  ○ Creation of housing units
	  ○ Initiatives that support commerce
	  ○ Development engines
	• Workforce, commerce, and small business opportunities abound.

ECONOMIC INCENTIVES	• Achieve balance between economic development and preserving our natural environment

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS	• Wastewater Treatment Plan renovation underway
	• Investment to sustain Infrastructure:
	  ○ Finish what we're currently working on
	  ○ Be better about keeping up with maintenance (even the 'unsexy' stuff)
	• Balance action with maintenance

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS & ENGAGEMENT	• This is 'how we do our business.' It is foundational to our accomplishments

HIGH-QUALITY ORGANIZATION	• Realistic, adequate staffing
	  ○ What is 'ideal' staffing level?
	  ○ Inform Council even if it isn't attainable now
	• Five star efficient, effective, and sustainable government as it relates to staffing, infrastructure and services.
	• Efficient core services
	  ○ Effectively staffed departments. (Our behaviors reflect our capabilities.)
	  ○ Folks have positive opinions of us. Pride in hometown. (Community has confidence in us. We explain how issues are interconnected and not simple to solve. We offer why we're focused in these particular issues.)

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS & ENGAGEMENT	This is 'how we do our business.' It is foundational to our accomplishments
CONNECTED TRANSPORTATION NETWORK	*Facilitator's Note: There were no wishes related to this Goal Area.*

STRATEGIC FILTER (designed in collaboration with the Council during 2024 Retreat)

The filter included the following criteria and was amended in 2025 (in red):

- ❑ Essential Services ~~(What keeps the lights on and is mandatory by law)~~
- ❑ What creates efficiencies
- ❑ Connected services
- ❑ Ongoing projects that are critical and priorities – what needs to happen for successful completion?
- ❑ What has been "hanging on the wall" and really needs to get done?
- ❑ "Big vs Small Impact" What has a big impact on the community and meets citizens' needs?
- ❑ Presents a safety issue or threat

Council was encouraged to keep this filter in mind during their current (and future) prioritization exercise.

PRIORITIES FOR FY 2025-26 BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

An initial list of priorities was compiled from outstanding items from last year, new potential items mentioned by internal committee(s) or community groups, and by council members on-site. After discussing each item, some items were moved to a new "Stay the Course" list until there was consensus on the final list for Council to prioritize.

Action	# Votes	Issue/Initiative	Comments
Include in FY 25-26 Budget Plans	4	Jordan St. bumpout reconfiguration (DMPC, cost approx. $50,000)	Safety concern.
	4	Explore how to increase funds for sidewalks to meet our expectations and address safety concerns on an ongoing [rather than piecemeal] basis	
	3	Complete Estatoe Trail easements	
	3	Create a city-wide parking and wayfinding sign plan	
	3	Encourages diverse housing options. Open to a variety of approaches, e.g., make template plans available, incentives, allowing different types and designs of housing, like cluster, duplex/triplex, etc.	
	3	Sports Complex site planning (PTR, cost TBD)	Immediate need. Add bathroom. Pave parking lot. Link with funding for ~~Eastatoe~~ Ecusta Trail (edited by Council 4/7/25).
	2	Seek funding for Downtown Master Plan	
	2	Add funds to accelerate street repaving	In addition to Powell Bill $$
	2	Complete space needs analysis and changes for all department	
	2	Engineering and design of picnic area and bathrooms for Silversteen Park.	Positions us for outside $$
	2	Solicit and select bond advisors and begin pre-planning activities for possible issuance (4/24/2025 - Added by City Clerk according to meeting notes)	

Action	# Votes	Issue/Initiative	Comments
Continue to seek grants, band-aid as needed, keep on list for upcoming years	0	Create economic development policy	Use most recent project as basis for policy
	0	Support for contract with an architectural firm to study space needs and begin planning for new/extensively renovated city hall (and BPD and BFD facilities).	Follow up with the county to see what about housing TOB offices in their new building.
	0	Repair wooden bridges	When safety concerns are identified
	0	Create an Emergency Action Plan that addresses vulnerabilities, builds redundancy where needed, and creates resiliency.	
	0	Become a funding partner with the County on transit system	
	0	Review of Fire Service agreement with County	Talk with the county for update
Moved to "Stay the Course"	X	Addl. traffic calming measures (PSC, cost TBD)	Speeding is safety concern and there is never enough dollars to fix all voiced concerns. Need to review process (edited by Council 4/7/25)
	X	Complete Tannery North section of trail	
	X	Implement the findings of the Berry Dunn BPD organizational health assessment and change management strategy.	
	X	Downtown parking study (DMPC, cost approx. $50,000)	Funds available already to do this.
	X	Staff focus on "trail-related" zoning actions (with corresponding Council workshop that was postponed because of Helene)	
Removed	X	Bicycle lanes, etc. on West Main (DMPC, cost TBD)	Delay beyond upcoming budget; HOB to seek funding partner.

	STAY THE COURSE: Continue the following projects, initiatives[1]
A.	Complete Estatoe Trail Easements
B.	Maintain staff focus on "trail related" zoning actions
C.	Implement findings/continue support of Berry Dunn BPD organizational health assessment and change management strategy. Action: Manager to evaluate and distinguish (1) administrative changes from (2) policy or (3) budgetary implications. Numbers 2 and 3 come to council and maybe Public Safety Committee.
D.	Contract with architectural firm (from Professional Services funds) to study space needs for City Hall, BPD, BFD
E.	Undertake Downtown Parking Study (from currently budgeted funds)
F.	After action evaluation/debrief of recent downtown efforts. Use this to inform and revisit the Downtown Master Plan. o What went well? What would we do differently? What have we learned?
G.	Staff to create a policy that identifies conditions necessary for installing traffic calming measures. Council to revisit this issue once policy is ready and decide how to allocate funds and issue guidance to residents.
H.	Complete Tannery North section of trail
I.	Consider options, including Municipal Services District, when contract with Heart of Brevard expires (summer 2025). The whole council will review options for how to conduct this work going forward, including potential organizational changes/reforms.
J.	Housing Trust Fund
K.	WTP

[1] Involves no additional funding but is an investment of staff time and effort. And/or this continues as a Council-identified priority (sacrosanct).

EXTERNAL REQUESTS FOR INVOLVEMENT (Manager's Report)	
Request	**Comments**
Staff involvement in Age-Friendly Community work.	Not a council priority for spending staff time.
Energy efficiency/carbon reduction work and advisory committee.	If this work overlaps with existing job responsibilities and work plans and Council priorities, fine to be involved.
Enhanced public outreach, particularly on matters related to downtown.	Undertake the after-action review (see "F" above). Consider those results in how we communicate about our downtown work.
Staff involvement in community "Long-Term Recovery Group" work.	The manager is likely to continue being involved with this going forward.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC PURSUITS	
Question	**Comments**
Under what circumstances should we begin transition to FT fire dept?	Express TOB needs to County. Get information about the County' decision in this regard. (May 2025) Revisit with council.
MSD approach at expiration of Heart of Brevard contract?	See "I" under "Continue the following projects, initiatives"
Revisit Downtown Master Plan?	Revisit Plan to understand what's changed since it was first adopted and what remains relevant to today. Consider other relevant reports, including after-action review on Downtown work , Parking, and Wayfinding. Guage the support of the community and downtown businesses. Prioritize pieces and strategies considering today's context.
Tap the brakes on housing until all players can get on same page?	Do not stop. Continue to engage Transylvania County and offer them the opportunity to be part of the success of willing partners. Offer them advance notices of meetings. Provide lots of information.

Question	Comments
TIF district at Broad/French Broad to induce development?	Project the rise in property value and use that amount to fund infrastructure improvements (which are usually the responsibility of the developer). This is common practice but not necessarily in smaller towns like Brevard. Relates to Downtown Plan
Offer our levers to efforts re: DRV/old Ecusta site?	Are we set up to respond when we get an ask? ○ Develop economic development policy ○ Limited ability to use closed sessions to consider requests Current ability includes: ○ Zoning changes to support ○ Offering economic development incentives to the 'right' development ○ Extend infrastructure ○ Underwrite studies, like environmental assessment, to lower the risk to potential developers Limited ability (until 2027) to do much at all without property owner's permission.
Get in the game regarding healthcare?	Not discussed. May resurface again in closed session.

NEXT STEPS

1. SOG facilitators offer retreat notes to the Manager no later than March 28 (by March 17, if possible).
2. Manager will develop a proposed budget reflecting Council's priorities; budget to include a listing of FEMA reimbursements.
3. Federal Grants: BPD and DOJ (equipment)

EVALUATION

What Worked Well	What to Do Differently
Enjoyed having more time to discuss (2) decisions and make meaning of the prioritization exercise.	Consider bringing in more input from the department directors
Kept on schedule	Room configuration limited department director's ability to hear discussions.
Balanced long term vision with practical decisions for upcoming year	Need bigger screens to read slides
Appreciate concerns being considered and documented.	
We got through the entire agenda.	
We were civil to each other throughout.	