

**City of Estherville, Iowa
Goal Setting Report
October 13, 2010**

Mayor:

Lyle Hevern

City Council:

Harold Sawyer

Ann Goebel

John Wittneben

Gene Haukoos

Sue Nelson

Dave Seylar

Larry Anderson

City Staff:

Penny Clayton, City Administrator

Vaughn Brua, City Clerk/Finance Director



Facilitated by:

Jeff Schott

Institute of Public Affairs

University of Iowa

**CITY OF ESTHERVILLE, IOWA
GOAL SETTING SESSION
2010**

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CITY OF ESTHERVILLE, IOWA

GOAL SETTING SESSION

2010

Introduction

The City of Estherville 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 the organization's five-year vision, recent accomplishments, issues/trends/concerns, potential new initiatives/programs/policies and suggestions to improve organizational effectiveness.
2. Conduct a preliminary session with department heads.
3. Conduct a goal-setting session with the elected officials.
4. Preparation of this final report.

Goal Setting Work Session

City Council Members and the Mayor held a work session conducted by the IPA on October 13, 2010. In attendance and participating at this meeting were Mayor Lyle Hevern, Council Members Harold Sawyer, Ann Goebel, John Wittneben, Gene Haukoos, Sue Nelson, Dave Seylar and Larry Anderson, City Clerk/Finance Director Vaughn Brua and City Administrator Penny Clayton.

A preliminary session with department heads was held on October 12, 2010. Attending that session were City Clerk/Finance Director Vaughn Brua, Community Development Director Barb Mack, Street Superintendent Geoff Schmaus, Wastewater Treatment Plant Superintendent Jeff Kautz, Water Superintendent Bruce Bruns, Parks and Recreation Director Dave Spurgin, Library Director Carolyn Walz, and City Administrator Penny Clayton.

Vision Statements

The participants were asked to describe their vision of the “ideal situation” in Estherville in the next five - eight years.

- Stabilized or growth in population; Increase to 7,000
- Fill all downtown retail space; Vibrant downtown
- New industry
 - New employer(s) with good paying jobs (blue collar) in empty commercial/industrial buildings
 - Employing 150 workers at \$15-\$20 per hour (Estherville could flourish)
 - Additional small business opportunity; Attract young individuals to Estherville
- Builder(s) fill our empty & development lots with affordable housing including new market rate rental apartments
 - Good mix of housing opportunities
- All parts of town look good /present positive impression with recreational choices & reasonable living expenses
- Continue work on trails for walking, biking, kayaking, skateboarding & other areas to enhance free activities for the general public
- Women & teen clothing retail
- Full line shoe store
- Attract smaller scale industry
- Safe living conditions; Removing all abandoned houses
- Instill pride of ownership in homeowners & landlords
- Completion of identified visioning projects (trail plan, downtown improvements, and other initiatives- efforts of council Excel! Estherville and chamber)
- Improve how people view Estherville (residents & others relocating)
- All maturing businesses find young successors
- Tax base has grown to an ample size to cut millage rate by half; Lower taxes
- Utilities operate efficiently enough to operate without increasing cost
- Completing Phase II at Demoney Elementary School
- Community Betterment Programs using grants & LOST funding
- More access to government electronically, i.e. forms, permits, payments, codes, etc.
- Continuation of beautifying the city
- Celebrate successes/accomplishments
- Relocate city offices
- Good public school system & ILCC
- Maintain street improvement program
- Major storm sewer upgrades at North 4th Street & 3rd Avenue North
- Replacing outlet starting at the river by power plant and going to Central Avenue & North 3rd Street
- Improving water pressure on the north end of the city
- City will help new/existing businesses start & grow without placing unreasonable expectations on them
- Maintain good relationship with the Iowa Great Lakes Corridor
- Maintain excellent city services

Major Accomplishments

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

- Downtown Enhancements: façade improvements/South 6th Street & alley work
- Replacing quality city administrator with quality administrator
- Lincoln Park & playground
- Passage of LOST & using 60% of LOST for city's share of Excel! projects
- Skate Park/trails at Sports Park & continued development of area
- All entities working together toward common goal equals success for Estherville & surrounding area
- Running/walking trail development
- Street/highway improvements (working with the State on South 9th Street)
- Cleaning up blighted areas; Housing improvements made with grant
 - Continuation of abandoned house removals
 - Housing improvements
- Continuing project of burying overhead electrical transmission lines
- Enlarging Water Treatment Plant – improvements
- Moving Parks & Rec office upstairs
- New WWTP superintendent
- Initiating rent code discussions
- Relationship/involvement Excel! Estherville
- Participation in Corridor
- Maintained infrastructure efforts despite difficult economic conditions and tight budgets
- Curb & gutter North 7th Street
- Sidewalk on North 13th Street -(heard favorable comments)
- New airport hangar
- Swimming pool painting/improvements
- Minimum housing code
- WWTP Disinfection Building (construction & start up)
- Implement Brick Manhole Rehab plan
- New & improved Estherville brand/logo
- New street lights
- Library automation system
- Agreements with other municipalities for water/sanitary sewer services
- Water main extension – Christensen Acres
- Rebuilding motors at Power Plant
- Continuing to provide quality essential services

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:

- Quality of Life
 - Attract new and keep current residents (bedroom town for the Lakes area); Aged population of city & county
 - Need for assisted living facilities
 - Need for reliable transportation for elderly
 - Parks & Rec needs to provide activities for aging population
 - Finding ways to support new businesses with good paying, skilled jobs to keep our educated youth in NW IA/Otherwise our tax base (Sales & Property) will decrease
 - Availability of services that are not over regulated & at a cost we can live with; Rising electric costs
 - Proposed rental housing code is good as a complaint-based system but don't penalize the majority to weed out the exceptions
 - Within next 10 years economy will turn; we need to be ready to take advantage
 - Inability to attract new industries/new housing due to rising property tax rates
 - Better marketing of Carrico Heights and other property the city has for sale
 - Review annexation
 - Excel! is a significant program; LOST dollars spent wisely to improve appearance & quality of life
 - Too few opportunities for our young people to find good employment after high school
- Looks of downtown district
 - Step up Estherville promotion efforts
 - Update facades in business district
 - Financing of the project
 - New use for old middle school
- City Services
 - Maintaining city services/infrastructure; Water/sanitary lines
 - More recycling opportunities/hazardous waste site
 - Green movement will continue and costs to the city will grow
 - Cut manpower to a minimum unless labor-intensive measures are adopted for Police & Street or mergers or service can cut labor
 - DNR regulations concerning TDS at the Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - Lower tax levy
 - New rules to be imposed in a few years will effect emission standard at power plant; how we meet them is a concern
 - Anticipated substantial electric rate increases due to # of factors
 - Branding
 - Large # of anticipated employee retirements
 - Loss of experience vs. opportunity for new ideas/concepts
 - Recession

Issues, Concerns, Trends and Opportunities, continued

- City Services, continued
 - The need for another mechanic
 - City should consider a floating employee who could assist in serving the Hispanic population

On-Going Priorities

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

- Wastewater Treatment Plant load center
- Water Plant expansion
- South 6th St. paving
- Alley reconstruction – City Hall
- Burying overhead electric lines
- 5-Year Street Repair Plan
- Implementing annual capital budget
- Acquiring/demolishing abandoned properties
- Periodically reviewing utility rates
- Pool evaluation and improvement study
- Improving city website
- Continuation of Excel! Projects process
- Development of Rental Housing Code ordinance for Council consideration

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 (Tie) Downtown storefront energy efficiency program
- 1 (Tie) Develop housing marketing plan
- 1 (Tie) Combine county and city law enforcement

- 4 (Tie) Beautify main corridors into town
- 4 (Tie) Trails project – Phase I of Master Plan
- 4 (Tie) Adopt Rental Housing Code
- 4 (Tie) Park/playground improvement plan

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:

- Find ways to involve more residents in process of teamwork so they have more ownership
- Work toward gender equity Boards/Commissions
- Regular performance evaluation of staff with specific goals; review job descriptions
- City business should be electronic
- Department Heads to meet at least once per year to report to Council on activities, needs, answer questions
- Renew discussion with County
- Recognize and evaluate progress being made
- Implement 5-Year capital improvement planning process
- Succession planning
- Delineation of roles and responsibilities between Parks & Rec and Regional Wellness Center

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 Estherville with this goal setting process. I was very impressed with the level of commitment and cooperation exhibited by 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
October 15, 2010

Exhibit A

City of Estherville Goal Setting Session – 2010

SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES OR PROGRAMS CONSIDERED

- Further development of Library Square
- Street lighting improvements downtown – N. 6th St, N. & S. 7th St, N. & S. 5th St.
- Downtown entrance signage
- Beautify main corridors into town
- Develop in-house economic development initiative
- Underground installation of electric lines on West Central w/new light poles
- Revise zoning to create an R-2 Zone for attached single family housing
- Downtown storefront energy efficiency program
- Develop housing marketing plan
- Market property city owns own or are partners with
- Housing spec building program
- Expand recycling program
- Turn on traffic signal on North 6th Street
- 4-Way Stop sign on South 6th Street and 1st Avenue South
- Consider city cable and internet –competition
- Trails project – Phase I of Master Plan
- Future commitment to the pool
- Development of river as an attraction
- Conduct an annexation study; Aggressively pursue annexation to increase tax base (starting with all our voluntary applicants for water
- Electric cost incentive for reduction usage
- Some sort of incentive for water usage
- Partner with other governmental agencies for cost-sharing/efficiencies – joint purchasing
- Combine county & city law enforcement
- Improve water pressure on east side of city
- Adjust sewer rates to cover cost of upgrading aging WWTP
- Review incentive programs to fill existing subdivisions
- Campground located along the river within city limits & walking distance to downtown
- Investigate traffic monitoring cameras for law enforcement - use those dollars to lower property taxes
- Move city hall to a newer, more modern facility
- Review codes to determine if city rules/zoning ordinances are stifling growth, remodeling and renovation of commercial and residential
- Conduct hydraulic study to analyze water pressure issues on east and north sides

- Storm sewer upgrades – N. 4th and 3rd Ave N
- Replace/upgrade storm sewer outlet by Power Plant
- Adopt Rental Housing Code
- Establish task force to look at diversity issue
- RV waste dump station in city
- 3rd Ave S. sidewalk
- Park/playground improvement plan
- Improve 3rd Ave S. “jog”

Exhibit B

AGENDA

**CITY OF ESTHERVILLE
GOAL SETTING SESSION - 2010**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 13

**2:00 PM – 6:00 PM
Library Community Room**

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. Review Vision for the City
4. Review Recent City Accomplishments (2008-09)
5. Review Issues, Concerns, Opportunities, and Trends
6. Identify On-Going Priorities
7. Programs, Policies, Projects and Initiatives
 - a. Explanations, clarifications, revisions, deletions, additions of Programs, Policies, Projects, and Initiatives
 - b. Ranking of Priorities
8. Organizational Effectiveness
 1. Review Results of Questionnaire
9. IPA Report to the Mayor and City Council – 2010 Goal Setting Process
 - a. Development of Action Plan
 - b. Importance of Quarterly Updates
10. Adjourn

Exhibit C

**CITY OF ESTHERVILLE
GOAL SETTING SESSION – 2010**

QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

The City of Estherville’s Goal Setting Session will be held on October 13, 2010, at the Community Room in the Library. 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).

Vision

Using a few words, describe your vision of the “ideal situation” in Estherville in the next five - eight years.

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.

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.

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.)

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.

RETURN OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Please return this questionnaire to Penny Clayton by **September 21**.