

City Council, city staff try new tacks

David Roy - Soapbox

The Coloradoan, Wednesday, May 4, 2005, www.coloradoan.com

As your District 6 representative for the Fort Collins City Council, I am writing this Soapbox article to provide information to you about the recent City Council retreat.

Our Friday session was facilitated by Dr. Jack A. Digliani. This day was centered on how City Council will work together, how we take public comments at our meetings, and how we give feedback to the public in these meetings. We discussed the need to monitor ourselves and to have the discipline to be concise and clear in our communication.

We spent time on how to conduct our study sessions and have designed a pilot program that will give residents the opportunity to become informed about City Council work sessions while giving this City Council more time to flesh out items during these work sessions. Channel 27 will air the subject matter from the Thursday before a Tuesday work session, and this information also will be available on the Web (www.fcgov.org).

Based on our needs and with buy-in from each City Council member, Fort Collins is beginning a new process for building the budget. There are many names for this effort. We have chosen to call it Budgeting for Outcomes. This new budget process does not rob Peter to pay Paul, will not borrow to keep us solvent, and will not sell assets to keep us float. This new process will put you, the residents, of Fort Collins, first..

We made a broad list of topics, each of which had a number of points to go along with the topic. These broad lists, in no particular order, were cultural, economic health, health and safety, neighborhood health, mobility; high performance city government and environmental health. There were various points under these listed subjects, such as air quality, affordable housing, an arts center, protection of the Poudre River corridor and transit.

What makes this Budgeting for Outcomes different is that our budget will be built from scratch, with no preceding year base for any department. Darin Atteberry, our city manager, deserves much applause and recognition to have the vision and intelligence to realize that doing things the same old way was going to hurt both the organization of the city of Fort Collins and the residents of Fort Collins.

Budgeting for Outcomes focuses on revenues first and not costs. It then allows for these revenue estimates to set the amount available for purchasing results. This is called the Price of Government, or POG, and the city of Fort Collins has one. On Saturday, we looked at several surveys that have been conducted about what residents value and hope for their governments to provide. We then brainstormed as a group and came up with the broad topics listed above.

This retreat was not business as usual, or an idle exercise in group activity, hoping that somehow we might jumpstart our relationships as City Council members. This was work focusing on the future of the city of Fort Collins. We are daring to commit to change and daring to dream of a better community.

Without our dedicated staff, beginning with Atteberry, this effort to create change would be impossible. In the coming months, many individuals in the city of Fort Collins organization will be working to make Budgeting for Outcomes a reality. We are not just changing how we conduct our budget process; we are literally reinventing it. Your City Council is onboard and supports Atteberry, the concept of performance accountability and the continual reform and improvement that Budgeting for Outcomes will allow this organization to achieve.