

EDEN STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMISSION
February 1, 2019

A regular meeting of the Eden Strategic Planning Commission was held on Friday, February 1, 2019, at 8:00 A.M. in the conference room at City Hall.

Members present: Dana Weston
JeSie Morris
Ed Wilson
Jen Nixon
Sarah Griffith Heston
Angela Fowler
Cindy Corcoran
Joy Toms
Merinda Easley

Members absent: Nick Freitag

Staff Present: Brad Corcoran, City Manager
Jim Burnette, Councilman
Kelly Stultz, Director of Planning & Inspections
Johnny Farmer, Director of Parks & Recreation
Mike Dougherty, Director of Economic Development
Cindy Adams, Coordinator of Tourism & Special Events
Randy Hunt, Eden Main Street Manager
Debra M. Madison, Local Codes Administrator/GIS Analyst

1. Meeting Called To Order

Dana Weston called the meeting to order.

2. Roll Call

Debra Madison made a record of everyone in attendance and established a quorum.

3. Set Meeting Agenda

Election of Officers was added to the Agenda. The amended Agenda was approved.

4. Election of Officers

Ed Wilson made a motion to keep the officers the same. Dana Weston as Chairman and Jen Nixon as Vice-Chairman. JeSie Morris seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

5. Approval of the minutes for the November 2, 2018, meeting

Jen Nixon made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 2, 2018, meeting. Joy Toms seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

6. Financial Report.

Kelly went over the Financial Report that had been included in the Agenda Package of all funding requests that had been approved by the Commission.

A copy of this report is attached to these minutes and incorporated herein by reference.

7. Old Business.

None

8. New Business.

A. Chairman Dana Weston – Discussion between Commission and Staff

Kelly Stultz explained to the Commission that they were appointed by the City Council and operate as a part of the City.

Dana Weston opened the floor for discussion on what is working and what needs to be done to fulfill the Strategic Plan.

Sarah Heston – People in the City see that things are being done and people that were involved in the Plan see that what they suggested is happening.

Johnny Farmer – The community is holding us accountable.

Cindy Corcoran – When you put together goals and objectives there need to be visual results.

Ed Wilson – We need to do something bold. We should recommend something bold to the City. If they say yes, that's good and if they say no . . .

Dana Weston – We need to think about the difference between bold and big. I think where the Commission went in the last meeting was that we don't like small projects. Some of the things that we need to do and like Cindy said some of the things that are visible and what we need to do might be small projects that are meaningful and new. The reason we did this plan was because doing the same old things over and over and over are obviously not working. We just talked about what the data shows.

It doesn't all have to be big. We need to balance finding what are some new/old ideas, what is the community expecting and trusting from us as a Commission. As a Commission, we need to be open to consider small dollar amounts.

Joy Toms – I want to go back to the population and people moving in and out. Part of my job at Morehead is to find out where students go when they leave our school. I am sure that are kids that are going to private schools but the majority of the students that come to Morehead and leave are moving out of state. Most of them move because of jobs. When I ask kids moving to Morehead what brought them here, their answer is usually real estate prices.

Dana Weston - Jim, as a member of City Council, knows the staff and is familiar with the Strategic Plan, what are you seeing? Both as to what we accomplished last year and the direction going forward.

Jim Burnette – I basically agree with everything that has been said. The thing I think we veered to at the last meeting was that we got hung up on the big/bold vs. the small projects. There seems to be a separation between what the City will do vs. what the Strategic Planning Commission will do. There should be no difference. It is a Strategic Plan. The Commission should support things that are strategic to the City, period. You determine the priority of those. They may be a higher priority or a lower priority. But whether the City would do them or not is not necessarily important. It's what the Commission thinks. If they are strategic, then that's what you need to be looking at and recommending. I do agree with Kelly. I would like to see the Commission bring in some ideas rather than just have the Staff present everything to you. Again, Kelly said this, you were chosen because of who you are in the community, your leadership, your ideas, your knowledge of the community and your knowledge of the people. It is not a rubber stamp commission.

Dana Weston – Who designed this Application Form?

Kelly – Debra Madison.

Debra Madison – We have an application for most everything, zoning map amendment, zoning text amendment and Board of Adjustment variance. We took those forms and adapted it for this Commission so that we could identify the things that you wanted.

Dana Weston – From Jim said, it's less of should the City being paying for this and more of this is what anybody would do. It sounded less like strategy. What this form does is it reminds us how it fits with what the community said they wanted. If you look at what we rejected last time, it was marketing. Marketing feels like a normal day to day operations that every business does. It does not feel strategic. When you look at what the community said they wanted, they wanted to know more about what was going on and they wanted more visibility. They wanted us to promote things. They wanted to feel proud of where they lived. I went back and read the

plan and, you know what, I thought Cindy should bring marketing back to the Commission. When we look at what those focus groups said and we read Volume 2, promotion and visibility was part of that. We need to have more dialog with the City Staff. If we reject something, you need to remind us where your project fits into the Plan.

Kelly Stultz – Just so long as you, as a group, agree that we can debate things with you, that's fine. But that is not the relationship that we have with the City Council.

Dana Weston – I think it needs to be a discussion. I don't know how it would work otherwise. What we said from the beginning is that we didn't want to hear that we've already tried that or we've done that before or that we used to look at that. But if we say no we don't think this fits with the Plan and you, as a staff, know that it does, you need to point out the Strategy number and ask us to reconsider. We may still say no but there needs to be a discussion. The Strategic Plan funding is part of the operational budget.

Kelly Stultz – Some of the things that have been brought to you are things that we hope once you fund them and take them on as a project, the City Council will continue them for future funding.

Debra Madison – All through the Plan it talks about the aesthetics of the City. We spend time in the Planning Department talking about how we educate the public, the citizens of our town that it's not the "City's" responsibility to mow their grass and clean the junk and trash in their yards. You have to have pride in your property and I'm not sure how you accomplish that. The properties don't look anything like they did when we were growing up. These were not extremely expensive houses but the owner took pride and kept their properties neat and clean. How do we get that back.

Angela Fowler – Do you think some of the problem is store fronts instead of yards?

Debra Madison – I think it's both.

Kelly Stultz – Some of you need to come to the office and sit with us as we answer the telephones. People are angry at their neighbors but they take it out on the City and want someone to be responsible for cleaning up.

Dana Weston – talked about Fire Festival on Netflix. There was a plan for an event. The philosophy of the group was that we are not problem oriented we are solution oriented. We could spend all of our time talking about what the problems are in the community but that continues with us being a problem oriented committee. We need to be more positive and be solution oriented.

B. Project Proposals from Commission Members.

Jen Nixon – I would like to suggest that we do ongoing projects specifically pertaining to EC-1, EV-4 and EC-2. Some type of programming that brings young people into the City. Not on a one-day basis and not a one-and-done but on an ongoing engagement, i.e. internship, one day a month or youth clinic.

Dana Weston – Please clarify what you mean when you say young people.

Jen Nixon – High school juniors and seniors. In Reidsville, we bring high school juniors into our place of work one day a month so they can get to know their community, so they can see how they can get involved and get their perspectives on what needs to be changed and help them find ways to help their community.

Dana Weston – Does Eden have something like Leadership Rockingham? Is there something specific for youth so they can learn what is in the community. They can spend a day with someone in a position that they are interested in learning.

Jim Burnette – We don't have anything like that for the youth. Brad did make a presentation at a meeting of the Youth Council but that was a one-time thing. The youth represent 8th grade through age 20. There are 22 youth on the council.

Cindy Corcoran – The City of Reidsville has partnered with the School District and RCC and they have submitted an application for a Golden Leaf Grant. One thing we hope happens is they will get the grant on the next round. At Reidsville High School, they are promoting a whole new machinist program. That is a partnership with Rockingham Community College, Rockingham County Schools and the City of Reidsville City Council. They are looking at what is going to happen after these kids leave school. Joy and I feel that this is something that we need to look at here and that might be the type of thing that Jen is referring to in her suggestion. The Health Sciences program here is a very strong program and we want to be sure that it stays here and we promote that.

Dana Weston – So Jen, how big do you think this program should be that you are suggesting?

Jen Nixon – I'm not sure at this point. We would have to look at the details. What we do in Reidsville involves about 25 students all day in one place.

Sarah Heston - I saw that in Greensboro they have a program once a month something like speed dating form of coaching their high school students in anything they might be interested in learning about. They have professionals on one side of the table. They have music playing in a fun and quick moving environment. The students pick a seat and they about 2 minutes to ask any questions about the community or the profession.

Dana Weston – They did it at UNCG for Triad Business Journal specifically for women. I served as a coach. They sit you at a table with coffee and when the bell

rings, people move. The people don't have to be interested in your profession. They can ask about anything.

Jen Nixon – We can work out the details later. I'm just suggesting the structure of partnering the City with the high school and RCC. You can do a data walk where businesses put data up on their walls. What I'm really talking about is the infrastructure for something in the future.

Dana Weston – How does staff proceed with an idea when we present something like this? How does it not fall through the cracks? Do we need to take the next step in developing this idea?

Brad Corcoran – The staff will meet, discuss it, throw out ideas and brainstorm. We meet as a staff regularly. The staff here today met after the last meeting for about an hour to discuss things that had been discussed. We can take your feedback, incorporate it and see what kind of ideas we can come up with. A lot of these end up being decisions of the City Council. This specific idea maybe not but we have to also consider resources. Like everywhere else, the budgets are tight and there are competing interests.

Sarah Heston – What if we had a form for us like you have with the staff so we can put down our ideas? (Kelly advised that a form would be sent to each commission member).

Jim Burnette – According to the Ordinance, you can have subcommittees if you need to bring in other people.

Ed Wilson – I've seen on programs that I watch on TV where joggers pick up trash as they are running.

Ed Wilson – Nothing says a dying downtown like an old building. I think the City should buy the old hotel, tear it down, put in grass, and put in a bandstand. Can you imagine people doing yoga out there in the grass? Having a running class meeting there. When was the last time someone used the building – the 1950's?

Dana Weston – What is the plan for the building?

Kelly Stultz – There is no plan for the building.

Ed Wilson – That's why you should buy it and tear it down.

Dana Weston – Does anybody have the numbers on what that would cost?

Ed Wilson – What do other cities do with buildings that are eyesores?

Mike Dougherty – I attended a seminar last week where these issues were discussed. One of the big questions was what to do with these negligent property owners. Warrenton has started this Vacant Property Registration where you have to maintain your property to certain regulations. If you don't, there are fines. I am presenting that to the City Council at the Budget Retreat. There is a gentleman in Mt. Airy that bought a lot of properties and brought Mt. Airy to where it is today with tax credits. This is a chronic issue.

Dana Weston – So if we were going to be a solutions oriented commission, what would we do next?

Kelly Stultz – You could decide that you want to spend every penny you get for two years to buy the building and take it down. We know it has asbestos and that would have to be removed. We would have to go through the court case, the City Council would have to be willing to take on the liability of what happens when it comes down and the impact on other buildings. We know what it took on 622 Washington Street.

Dana Weston – Can we find out what it would cost?

Ed Wilson – How do we get rid of it? This is a way. At least we would know how much it would take.

Dana Weston – This ties in to our earlier discussion on how do you get people want to take care of their property. They have to fill pride in what is around them.

Angela Fowler – Yanceyville in Caswell County took a blank space and made an outdoor ice skating rink. It's bringing in young people. That's what we want, something to bring people in. If there is another place for a grandstand, we could put in an ice skating rink in the winter time.

Randy Hunt – If we take a building down in our downtown, the City will lose its Main Street accreditation. We will be affiliated but we will lose our accreditation.

Dana Weston – Can another group take it down?

Randy Hunt – I don't know where that line is.

Dana Weston – What is the cost to rehab it versus the cost to take it down?

Ed Wilson – Is it a problem? Is it worth a solution? Then we need to figure out what the solution is.

Dana Weston – We need to know what the costs would be and it would require some type of grant funding and support.

Ed Wilson – Is there still a problem with getting easements to extend the Smith River Greenway north to the trestle? That is the most beautiful land.

Mike Dougherty – We had \$100,000 grant to help with that but there are 2 property owners that will not give easements.

Ed Wilson – The land next to the Smith River off Boone Road that now has a trailer park would be a great piece of land to buy and put in soccer fields.

Johnny Farmer – It is in a flood plain area and you couldn't put buildings on the land but you could put in soccer fields.

Ed Wilson – You could buy several properties in that area and it would be beautiful looking out over the river.

Dana Weston – Is there any other out of the box ways that we haven't tried or thought about to support these projects?

Johnny Farmer – When the City approaches people about buying property, they are more likely to say no. If a non-profit group or an individual approaches someone with an idea that would help the community, they are more likely to go along with it than if they are approached by the City.

Ed Wilson – I think we should fine people/businesses that let trash accumulate on their property. The gas station next to the greenway lets the trash blow on to the greenway and into the river. There are businesses like that everywhere and I think they should be fined.

Dana Weston – What is the challenge we face in holding people accountable? Is it a resource issue that it take a full-time person all day? Why aren't we doing it today?

Kelly Stultz – We are doing it just not quickly enough. You know the economic situation the City has been in for the last 25 years or longer. When Miller closed, the boss had no choice but come up with a plan with how we were going to reduce staff. We have been in survival mode for a long time. Last year the City Council went from giving us \$60,000 for code enforcement to \$160,000. We will spend every penny of it this year. Nobody more than our staff wants to make all those things happen but it is a financial issue. If the Council decides to increase our code enforcement that just means that someone else is not getting those funds. There are a lot of competing issues for the same money.

Dana Weston – So when Ed says that we should fine people and you say we're doing it but not fast enough today, is that because we don't have the people to get to it quickly and do it the way we need to or is it funding? Or is it that we don't have it as a priority?

Kelly Stultz – No, it's a priority with the Council.
If we want to up the amount more, maybe you need to offer some funds.

DW – How much does it take to clean up what everyone is talking about?

KS – I'll have to think about that.

Debra Madison – One thing that we haven't done is our Notice says that there is a \$100 a day fine for civil penalties that we have never enforced.

Dana Weston – Are other cities like ours enforcing that?

Kelly Stultz – Sometimes. It's pretty ineffective. The money goes to the school system.

Dana Weston – We want to be solution oriented and we're hearing what the problem is and we're saying it's important, that it's a priority. We're saying we don't need more people. We're saying we almost tripled the amount, does the amount need to be tripled again? I'm trying to look for the answers.

Kelly Stultz – I don't want to keep harping on the economics but the boss is going to let me present something at the Council Retreat that will help with the housing issues. We don't want to just demolish structures, this will help some of those people before their house gets in such bad shape. We are trying to approach it from both directions. Our citizens are unwilling to pay any more taxes and all of that is funded out of general fund. What I need from you right now until I have the answers to your questions, is for you to be supportive of the programs that we are going to present. I need to present it to the City Council and get approval before I give this commission all the information. That's what we need more than anything. Support for our programs.

Jim Burnette – This is something we are going to ask the Council to support for 3 years. Is there any way that this Commission could support with \$50,000 to show the support to the Council?

Kelly Stultz – It would help if you would commit some money that would go to those types of programs if the Council approves it. If they don't approve it, then the money would come back to this Commission.

Jim Burnette – A special meeting would have to be called to consider committing the money for this program after the Council makes a decision.

Ed Wilson – What we need is: Here's the problem, here's the solution and this is what it costs. We can do it, we cannot do it or we might be able to do it.

Ed Wilson – Hotel. Problem, solution, cost. We can enforce littering. Problem, solution, cost. We can have what we want if we're willing to pay for it. None of these are unsolvable problems. It just question of do we want to pay for it?

Dana Weston – What other ideas from the Commission that you have thought of?

Joy Toms – I would like to propose a low cost solution. Years ago at Morehead, they did a students in City Government Day. The high school could partner with the City one day each month and do a Students in City Government Day with the Civic and Economic classes. I would like to see this include some of our mid-level students that aren't already doing internships or shadowing. The City staff would decide how many students they want to shadow them. Joy and the High School teachers would coordinate students with the departments available. The kids can go back and educate their friends, their teachers and they families. This program should serve as a model with industries. The only costs would be transportation if the students were going to the water plants or public works facilities.

Dana Weston – ask that Joy and City Staff go ahead and work on this project immediately to make it a reality.

Dana Weston – Who was the sponsor for the outdoor farm to table event? I heard nothing but great things about it and now that we know that it works, are we doing that more and how are we spreading the word? How do we continue doing that? What do you need? Do we need to provide funds for a couple of years until it is able to cover itself? We need to do more marketing for the Grown and Gathered event so that people know about it and there is a wait list.

Cindy Adams – There probably will be a wait list this year.

Dana Weston – When is the second one?

Cindy Adams – August 15.

Dana Weston – No, the second one in the year. What do you need to make the farmer's market and 2 Grown and Gathered events a reality.

Cindy Adams – The five (5) of us that do these events, we want to do everything. But we have to prioritize.

Kelly Stultz – When you get ready to put these events together you need to ask this group to help.

Dana Weston – I haven't been ask to help. The 5 of you doing the work like we've always done it doesn't allow for something bold and something new. So that means we need to look at how we support those things. Is it a subcommittee? Is it volunteers?

Kelly Stultz – I think it would fascinate all of you if we had time to meet more than once a quarter to hear about all of the events that happen. All of the ball tournaments that happen and all of the people that come to our community because of them. What happens when we meet so infrequently is that it is frantic when we are here. Perhaps we need a subcommittee to hear about all these things.

Dana Weston – I think that if we meet once a quarter and don't know, it is a good chance that the people in Eden don't know.

Mike Dougherty – One of the reasons that Cindy holds the Grown and Gathered in August is because that is when the crops are coming in. Is it possible to do a second one in the Spring?

Cindy Adams – Yes, we could do one in the Spring.

Mike Dougherty – If we do one in the Spring, all of you will be on that committee and we appreciate you volunteering to help.

Dana Weston – We all know people that would help, and students that need community service hours that could help set up and people that are looking to serve in the community but are not being asked. A majority of people would like to serve but not being ask to help. The Commission will help get volunteers.

Ed Wilson – In Yanceyville, the farmers come to town the second Wednesday of the month to serve soup and sell their produce.

Dana Weston – We need to be sure that our signature programs are targeting different markets.

Cindy Adams – informed the Commission it would cost approximately \$7,000 to sponsor a Spring Grown and Gathered event.

C. Recommendation by the Commission for Members:

Dana Weston – Read a letter of resignation from Nick Freitag that she received in November of 2018. He retired from Gildan and moved to Surry County.

We need recommendations from the Commission for 3 vacant seats. Several names were thrown out and considered.

Karen Baker - Gildan

Stephanie Merritt

Chip Sherron - Loparex

Hope Gilley

Ryan Moody – MHS Principal

Casey Pulliam

Chris Fisher – JCR Recycling

Tom Stevens

Darrin Quesinberry – Karastan

Jorge Flores – Santana's

D. Project Proposals from Staff:

Cindy Adams gave an update on the projects that Commission had approved for funding.

Wire Animal Sculptures – They have been delivered and will be revealed on February 25, 2019, at 11 a.m.

Mosaic Art – The supplies have been delivered and the contract with the artist has been signed. There will be 2 opportunities for employees of Karastan and people from the community to participate. The reception will probably be in May.

Our State Magazine It has been postponed twice due to weather but we are hoping that the filing will take place in May.

Matrimony Creek and Smith River Amenity Package We hope to have bids in 2 to 3 weeks so that we can move that forward. It will be installed by summer.

Did You Know? The newest 2 videos were shown.

Cindy Adams – Requested funding for WGSR-TV and CTT Productions LLC which includes videos, infomercials, and the Mayor once per month segment for \$25,500.00. Which is very similar to last year’s budget.

Cindy Adams – Requested funding to plant wildflowers at the Smith River Greenway in the amount of \$4,250. The Youth Council and Community Appearance Commission will partner on this project. We want to offer horse and carriage ridges down the greenway so that people that aren’t physically able to walk the greenway can see how it is being developed.

Randy Hunt – We contacted a local artist, Brandon Hardison, about the Washington Street Mural. Randy shared a lithograph of Spray Water Power and Land Co facilities which is the inspiration of what is being proposed. The request is for \$20,000 for the complete job. The title will be: Eden Textile Heritage.

Commission members suggested that the final product be more colorful and bright.

Johnny Farmer – I would like to pave the parking lot at the Leaksville Landing. The cost would be \$20,000. This is part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. It would provide more parking and access to the landing. The paving will begin in April.

Dana Weston – We have been asked to fund the following projects:

\$25,500	WGSR-TV and CTT Productions, LLC
\$ 4,250	Wildflower field at Smith River Greenway
\$20,000	Washington Street Mural

\$20,000	Leaksville Landing Parking Lot
<u>\$ 7,000</u>	Spring Grown and Gathered
\$76,750	Total

Staff, is there anything else that you need that you haven't brought to us today? We have almost \$90,000 and my concern is that our next meeting is scheduled for May 3 and the fiscal year ends June 30. That leaves \$90,000 with a very limited amount of time to spend. If we are going to make the most out of this meeting and this year's budget, maybe there needs to be additional requests.

Cindy Corcoran – If the City does the Students in City Government, there may need to be a meal for lunch or some other expense that we could cover. There will be 7 classes with 7 or 8 students from each class.

Dana Weston – What did we scare you out of asking?

Cindy Adams – I would like to revisit the request for the Eden Brochure. We want to do 2 separate brochures. One for the rivers and trails and one just on Eden. That would cost about \$6,300.

Ed Wilson – I think we should do something big.

Dana Weston – I'm not suggesting that we spend the \$90,000 just to be spending it but if there is something big or bold that we want to do, we might not be able to get it done after our next meeting before the end of the fiscal year.

Kelly Stultz – Would you be open to have a short special meeting?

Ed Wilson – If there is something big to be done, then meetings and fiscal years shouldn't matter.

Dana Weston – Do we have to spend the money in this fiscal year?

Johnny Farmer – If there is a project that the Commission knows that they want to work on then they can ask that the funds be held over to the next fiscal year.

Randy Hunt – Jim, Mike and myself have been working with RCC to create a program called the Rockingham County Entrepreneurship Assistance Program based out the Economic Development building in Wentworth. It is training to grow entrepreneurs and specifically tied in to Eden as a beta program to see if it will work. We have to be very specific in order to measure the program. So we have programmed it to see how many businesses we can get to open on Washington Street. I hope to have something to bring to you at the next meeting to as for \$25,000 for advertising and marketing for this program. The Town of Marion has done this same thing. They use the money to supplement rent and utilities for the first year.

Dana Weston – What would a ball park figure be to rehab the hotel?

Kelly Stultz - \$6 to \$10 million. It is multiple story, there is a spring running under it, it full of asbestos.

Sarah Heston – Could private investors rehab this building?

Kelly Stultz – We do have people that are looking at the building. Kelly explained how grants funds are spent and projects eligible for funding in North Carolina versus Virginia.

Angela Fowler – What is the feasibility of allotting more money for Brandon Hardison so that he can do another mural that just says Eden?

Jim Burnette – suggested that when the Commission makes a request for the next budget year include a request to hold over the \$90,000 balance from this year.

We have received requests for \$83,050 which includes \$6,300 for brochures.

Sarah Heston – I think Eden or some color needs to be added to the mural. This will be a landmark that people will want to see and have pictures made.

Randy Hunt – I will talk to him about these ideas.

A motion was made by Joy Toms and seconded by Jen Nixon to approve the request for \$83,050.

Sarah Heston – ask if the videos could be put on Social media. You can boost your videos for a small fee of about \$5.

Dana Weston – Can we add \$450 to our requests to boost for marketing for a total of \$83,500.

Joy Toms amended her motion to add \$450. Jen seconded the amended motion. The motion passed.

Dana Weston and Jim Burnette will make a report to the City Council at the February meeting and made a request for next year's budget.

E. Future Meetings.

The next meetings will be on Friday, February 1, 2019, May 3, 2019, August 2, 2019, and November 1, 2019.

8. Items From Staff.

None.

9. Items from the Commission.

None

10. Adjournment.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly K. Stultz, Administrative Assistant to
the Strategic Planning Commission

Attest:

Dana Weston, Chairman