

City of Aberdeen  
**Retreat Notes**  
Courtyard by Marriott Aberdeen  
January 26, 2008

**Present:** Mayor Bennett, Councilwoman Young, Councilmen Kupferman and Hiob

**Absent:** Council President Elliott

**Also Present:** Mr. Miller, Ms. Grover, Mr. Lapinsky, Chief Rudy, Mr. Jack, Ms. Hartman, and Ms. Correll, Doris Manner (recording secretary)

**Facilitator:** Ms. Jo Anne Ellison

**A. Welcome, Overview of Day, and Warm-Up Activity**

Mayor Bennett welcomed those in attendance.

Ms. Ellison reviewed the goals, expectations, and agenda.

The following officials reviewed their expectations for this Retreat:

Chief Rudy	Something exciting for the City
Mr. Miller	Guidance
Councilman Hiob	Accommodating Ideas
Mr. Lapinsky	Ca ching (money)
Mayor Bennett	Team Aberdeen working for the City
Ms. Grover	Team work
Councilwoman Young	Partners/Team work
Ms. Hartman	Clear Direction
Councilman Kupferman	Prioritization
Ms. Correll	Enlightenment
Mr. Jack	Learning something new

Ms. Ellison reviewed “ground rules” i.e., participation, respect, and humor for the group. Then each participant chose a picture that best described the challenge of leadership and explained why they had chosen the picture.

Mr. Lapinsky	An uphill climb when beginning his employment
Councilwoman Young	Becoming more comfortable in her new position
Mr. Jack	Dealing with difficult individuals and circumstances, keeping an eye on goals
Ms. Grover	Balancing residents needs and Council needs smartly
Councilman Hiob	Working through a maze, at times, for a solution
Mr. Miller	Balancing the load
Ms. Correll	Work and goals to get on top
Councilman Kupferman	Determining what is here and where to go
Ms. Hartman	Leadership changes and direction

Chief Rudy  
Mayor Bennett

Sometimes feels “like a hydrant”  
Took the position and wondered “what was I thinking” for new and uncharted territory, and accepting challenges

## **B. Department Presentations**

*The following presentations show the “big picture” and challenges of leadership.*

### 1. Department of Planning and Community Development – Ms. Phyllis Grover

Ms. Grover presented an overview of the Department which included the Director, Senior Planner, Housing and Community Development Coordinator, and Code Enforcement Officer/Planning Assistant.

The Functions of the Department include Assisting the Administration, Comprehensive Planning, Housing and Community Development, Grants Administration, Zoning Administration, Code Enforcement, and Economic Development.

The Planning Tools used are the Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Element and Major Thoroughfare Plan, Development Code, Sign Code, Subdivision Regulations, and Overlay District Regulations and Design Requirements.

The Overview of Smart Growth ensures that we grow wisely and efficiently. This is accomplished by using well planned development. Smart Growth Principles include: mixed land uses, compact building design, ranges of housing opportunities and choices, distinctive, attractive communities, preserving open space and critical environmental areas, and strengthening and direct development toward existing communities. It also includes a variety of transportation choices, cost effective and fair development decisions, cooperation in developing decisions. Smart Growth Principles should be incorporated in the Comprehensive Plan and Development Code.

BRAC has been described as *representing the most important economic event in Maryland since World War II*. BRAC will be a significant source of economic and demographic expansion for many areas in the State. The following will result from BRAC: a net increase in jobs at APG of 8,200; 7,500 – 10,000 “contractor tail” jobs; APG and BRAC will create 19,237 new jobs; APG and BRAC will attract 7,000 households; APG and BRAC will increase population to 19,059 by 2017. Office space will increase to 3.6 million sq. ft. and retail space by 1.1 million sq. ft. BRAC will impact population, housing, work force, real estate, public schools, public services, transportation, and amenities.

The City has to answer the following questions: should the City expand and grow, at what pace, what types of housing are needed, and what types of businesses should come to the area?

### 2. Department of Public Works – Mr. Matt Lapinsky

Mr. Lapinsky presented an overview of the Department which included the Director, City Engineers, and Shop Staff. He reviewed in detail the job requirements for each of these areas. The Department is responsible for providing the City of Aberdeen with high quality potable water and treating waste water in accordance with all environmental regulations. Progress is being made with water plant upgrades,

responsible and accountable procedures, and good manpower utilization. The following challenges exist: a sustainable water supply, ENR \$9.6 million for the City Share, a new water tower \$3 million, and other support resources.

The Safety and Environmental Department is focused on providing timely and quality curbside solid waste collection and recyclables for City residents, managing the municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) program and safety management for the City of Aberdeen and APG. The following progress has been made: increased safety awareness, continued recycling success, environmental program changes, and an MS4 video. The following challenges exist: continuing safety awareness momentum, and fleet replacement.

The APG Project Office executes the terms of the APG Water and Waste Water Utility Services Contract. The following progress has been made: focus on contract responsibilities, WWTP ENR upgrade nearing completion, and the Deer Creek Study. The following challenges exist: government controls, cost of services, manpower, and sustaining the demand.

Mr. Lapinsky closed with the following: Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it's not.

### 3. Department of Finance – Mr. Opiribo Jack

Mr. Jack presented an overview of the Department which included the following employees: Tax Clerk, Accounts Payable Clerk, Utility Billing Clerk, Administrative Clerk, Finance Assistant, Finance Supervisor, and the Director of Finance.

The Department Functions include: Budgeting, Mayoral priorities, necessary and needed expenditures, revenue estimates, establishment of a real estate tax rate, public hearing on the tax rate, preparing a balanced budget, and public hearings and adoption of a balanced budget. Financial Reporting includes: actual activities vs budgets, billing, collection and recording revenues, disbursements, payroll, and auditing. The main revenue sources for the General Fund include: locally controlled revenues, State shared revenue, and County shared revenue.

Currently, the Department needs include the reassignment of the receptionist function.

### 4. Police Department – Chief Randy Rudy

Chief Rudy presented an overview of the Department and the duties of all personnel. He stated that the Community Policing Plan derived from the 2000 MARCPI which was conducted by Johns Hopkins University presented the following: Core Virtues, Problem Solving Methodology, Areas of Responsibility, Law Enforcement Accountability, and BRAC Manpower Issues. He noted that the Police Department has drastically reduced crime and gangs in Aberdeen. The Rapid Response Team has received several awards for excellence.

### 5. Administration – Mr. Doug Miller

Mr. Miller stated that the Administration's General Areas of Service are: Human Resources, City Clerk, Elected Officials Support, and the City Manager.

Human Resources is responsible for: Employee Recruitment, Personnel Policy Administration, Compensation, Payroll, Benefits, Employee Incentives and Recognition, and Retirees. This department would like some additional "help" and could benefit from a Compensation Study.

The City Clerk is responsible for: Records and Management, Agendas/Minutes, Custodian of the City Records, PIA's, Codification, Duties as Assigned, Elections, and Ethics. This department would like to have time to establish needed policies, procedures, and filing systems, and some additional space.

The Elected Official Support includes: Meeting coordination, Conference registration, Ceremonial support, and Special projects.

The City Manager is responsible for managing the day-to-day operation of the City government and providing technical advice and support to the Elected Body. This position needs: Enhanced and centralized customer service, Enhanced community outreach, Enhanced IT, Enhanced web page, Enhanced Emergency Management /Disaster recovery, and Enhanced procurement. Mr. Miller is anxious for suggestions which would help the Elected Officials be more successful.

Base salaries for FY 2008 total \$7,595,037 for 168 Budgeted Employees (including the Mayor and Council).

### **C. Question and Answer Session**

*Following the presentations there was a question and answer session.*

Q. Mayor Bennett asked what the needs for growth and BRAC will be.

A. Ms. Grover said reviews of studies which had been done by and for the State will help with determining needs and indicate how growth will proceed for the City. Her department is waiting for these answers.

Mr. Miller recommends "smart growth" i.e., living, working, and shopping in the community where people live. He asked if Aberdeen could be the place where people will do these things. The question was raised on the required types of development and housing.

Q. Mr. Hiob indicated that the water source is a primary issue for the City to grow. He referred to zoning types, i.e. smart growth in the City.

A. Ms. Grover said these issues are not currently addressed, but can be in the Development Code and Comprehensive Plan for the City.

Q. Ms. Young would like to see some cost saving measures for City Government to work more efficiently.

A. Mr. Miller noted that all Departments are concerned with efficiency and are working toward making necessary changes.

- Q. Ms. Young asked if a Master List of changes which have been made was available.
- A. Mr. Lapinsky feels that manpower is the City's greatest expense. It's not "free". City employees need good resources to be efficient. He noted that this will be a "culture change" and a slow process.
- Q. Mr. Kupferman asked if there was a plan to have engineers available to review permit and project requests in a more timely manner.
- A. Mr. Lapinsky indicated that Harford County will do some reviews. However, the City could use another engineer who could also work with APG.

Mr. Miller said this request would need Council approval and cost approximately \$60,000 to \$70,000. This expenditure is not currently in the budget.

Mayor Bennett noted that the Transition Committee recommends hiring a Project Engineer and one additional engineer for future growth.

Mr. Kupferman said some people vent to the Council members.

Mr. Miller indicated that these are some "fixes" but more are needed for the future. Everyone should work on handling 2008 issues.

Mr. Lapinsky mentioned that the City has problems moving forward with solutions. The Staff needs to be made aware of problems in order to reach a solution. Currently, his department is working on engineering for the City, not the County and State. He feels that omissions on reviewing submitted plans should be the responsibility of developers and not the City. This must be changed.

Mr. Kupferman noted that "time is money".

*Additional comments during question and answer session:*

Mayor Bennett said the City officials do not have to be involved with the day-to-day operation of the City. But, they must give the Staff the "tools" to efficiently do their jobs.

Mr. Hiob is happy with the progress which is being made. There are processes and Staff problems which must be addressed. This is not a perfect world. The Council members are the "point" people for Citizens. Additional Bonding in the City is involved and needs the process reviewed and possibly changed. Can this be done?

Mr. Lapinsky will present the Bond requirements to the Council for possible action.

Mr. Hiob feels the City should have no liability.

Ms. Young said she is attending session for some processes as a learning tool. Money for development should be collected and not be a burden on the City. She agrees with concerns regarding City liability

and how this will be handled with individuals in the future. Ms. Young would like to see projects proceed with no City funding.

Mayor Bennett indicated that Aberdeen does Bonding that other municipalities do not require.

Mr. Hiob wants no over Bonding.

Ms. Young said the developers do not realize that the City is working with Harford County and other jurisdictions.

Mayor Bennett noted that the Budget Recommendations from the Transition Team asked if there were any other revenue sources available.

Mr. Jack said some Grants were possible.

Mr. Miller stated that most revenue is raised through the collection of taxes. Rates can be changed and an impact fee is possible.

Mr. Lapinsky hopes to “hire out” the new camera truck in the future. It will involve a fee schedule and operator.

Mr. Kupferman feels that hiring an additional engineer and a receptionist is a good idea. The leaf sweeper and bucket truck definitely should be replaced.

Mr. Lapinsky said the procurement of new equipment will be in the new budget. Fleet renewals are essential for the City.

Mr. Hiob said, previously, elected officials were told fleet equipment should last 7 years. However, some are being replaced after 4 years. He agrees with the City Manager’s needs and wonders if there is a Policy in place.

Mr. Jack noted that there is a Procurement Policy for the City.

Mayor Bennett said the DNR program requires an investment of 9.6 million dollars. He asked what the City was initially told the cost would be. Mr. Lapinsky said the City was told there would be no cost. Mayor Bennett asked since the State mandate has changed, would will result if there are no funds available. Mr. Lapinsky said construction permits are in place. As a result, the City may have to increase the Flush Tax. A meeting will be held with MDE on this issue.

Mayor Bennett indicated that elected officials will meet with State representatives because there is no money available. This will not include APG assistance. He noted that the possibility of different funding could be included to reduce the cost to the City. This is not unusual to government. Mr. Hiob asked if there could be any MML help. Mr. Miller said a representative will be at the Wednesday meeting.

Mr. Lapinsky feels that low interest loans should be on the priority list at this time.

## **D. Envisioning the City over the Next 5 Years**

*The elected officials brainstormed ideas to answer the question: How do you envision Aberdeen over the next five years?*

### **Brainstorming Our Vision for Public Safety**

1. Keep the level of crime reduction
2. Improve trust in police
3. Continue to grow the police department
4. Work toward LEOPS for funding
5. Growth constraints with the needs of the police department
6. Diminished gang activity
7. CALEA certified – National process
8. Additional funding to help eliminate gangs – 2.8 million dollars (Federal Government)
9. Expand Community Policing
10. Continue Community Policing programs and mentoring opportunities
11. Keep police fleet up to date

### **Brainstorming Our Vision for Infrastructure**

1. Utilize LEED principles regarding water use and waste water use
2. Develop short, medium, and long range water needs and sources
3. Implement water and sewer transmission replacement
4. Hone procedures for curbs, gutters, and sidewalks for funding
5. Waste water treatment plant should be brought up to date at no cost
6. Plan for future growth, i.e., annexation
7. Eliminate City ownership of sidewalks and aprons of new construction
8. Put garbage trucks and leaf vacuums into the Enterprise Funds
9. Roads and intersections to meet new use demands
10. Water and sewer rates to reflect cost to provide services to customers with no subsidization
11. Adopt input fees to address needs for roads, water, and sewer
12. Special taxing research for specific districts be implemented

### **Brainstorming Our Vision for Amenities**

1. Marketing the City – PR work is needed
2. Parks and recreation complex needed, i.e., football and multi-purpose fields, by Beards Hill Road and I-95 and more opportunities for adults, i.e. biking trails and sports leagues.
3. Attention to City parks maintenance and upkeep
4. Place Ripken Stadium in the Enterprise Fund
5. Encourage restaurants and entertainment into the downtown area
6. The swim center pool needs cosmetic and infrastructure work for year round use
7. Sell the swim center pool 1 ½ acres were bought for \$270,000 and can be used for recreation project
8. Hotel-Motel Tax money for tourism in City
9. Use 50% of the tax for tourism and 50% for Department of Recreation project

## Brainstorming Our Vision for City Services

1. Poll tax and tower fee increase to supplement the General Fund
2. Streamline the permit/bonding process
3. Method to eliminate trash stickers
4. Retain the trash stickers
5. Comprehensive Planning document needs to be more user friendly
6. Elected officials responding to telephone calls (contained in the Transition Team report)
7. Service oriented form of government for resident accommodation

## Brainstorming Our Vision for Housing

1. Housing of all types should be market driven to fit smart growth requirements
2. Proposed Annexation Policy puts an excellent procedure in place. Look at all elements for future requests.
3. Rental registration to require landlords to register the dwelling for livability and identify renters
4. Themed type of housing for additional interest in the City
5. Townhouses should be 26 ft. wide or wider

## E. Priority Results

*Following the brainstorm activity, elected officials consolidated some ideas on each brainstorm chart and then prioritized each brainstorm list. The bolded items below indicate items that received 3 or 4 priority votes from the Council and all items are listed in order of importance as determined by the elected officials' priorities. The numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of votes received.*

## PUBLIC SAFETY

- 1. Work toward LEOPS for retirement and use funding for it** (3)
- 2. Continue to grow the Police Department as the population increases** (3)
- 3. Keep the police fleet up to date** (3)
4. Expand community policing including mentoring opportunities (2)
5. CALEA certification (2)
6. Maintain level of excellence (keep a lid on crime) (1)
7. Improve trust of the police in the community (1)
8. Greatly diminished gang activity (1)
9. Grow compensation with needs (0)

## INFRASTRUCTURE

- 1. Plan for future growth, i.e. annexation** (3)
- 2. Develop short, medium, and long range plans for water sources** (3)
3. Establish/implement orderly plan for water, and sewer transition/replacement (2)
4. Ensure that roads and intersections are able to meet demands (2)
5. Special taxing districts implementation (2)
6. Need to adopt an impact fee to address roads, water, and sewer needs (1)
7. Utilize LEED principals regarding water use and waste water (1)

- 8. Establish a procedure to address curbs, sidewalks, gutters, and roads (1)
- 9. Eliminate City ownership of new sidewalks/aprons on new construction (1)
- 10. Develop a way to bring waste water treatment up to date with no additional costs (0)
- 11. Place garbage trucks and leaf vacuum trucks into the Enterprise Fund (0)
- 12. Water and sewer rates must continue to reflect the cost of service to customers (0)

**AMENITIES**

- 1. Expand and improve downtown Aberdeen to become a destination point (4)**
- 2. Find a way to make the stadium part of the Enterprise Fund (4)**
- 3. Develop a parks/recreation complex to include a multi-purpose field (2)
- 4. Market the City – PR work (1)
- 5. Pay attention to City Parks - more maintenance and upkeep needed (1)
- 6. Infrastructure work on pool (1)
- 7. Sell the pool and use the property for an open space program/project (1)
- 8. Initiate a hotel/motel tax and use proceeds for tourism (1)

**CITY SERVICES (Including trash, recycling, permits, etc.)**

- 1. Streamline permit/bonding process (4)**
- 2. Comprehensive Planning document needs to be more user friendly (3)**
- 3. Do what is necessary to make the City more friendly to residents (3)**
- 4. Increase poll tax and tower fees (2)
- 5. Respond to telephone calls (2)
- 6. Find a method to do away with trash stickers (1)
- 7. Retain trash stickers (1)

**HOUSING**

- 1. Rental registration that asks landlord to identify renters (4)**
- 2. All types of rentals primarily determined by market and to fit with smart growth requirements (2)
- 3. Annexation – where, when, how to address future (1)
- 4. Townhomes need a width of 26 ft or wider (1)
- 5. “Theme” type housing

**F. MAKING IT HAPPEN**

*All retreat participants, staff and elected officials, worked together in a carousel brainstorm activity. Working in small groups, they identified possible actions that might need to occur in order to make the priority vision happen. The lists of ideas were not prioritized.*

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Possible Actions for Working Toward LEOPS**

- 1. Funding (large & continuous)
- 2. Work with plans – Attorney

3. Temporary staffing in Human Resources
4. Educate Council on this benefit and cost
5. Long term repercussions are money (benefits)
6. Short term repercussions are money (benefits)
7. Sustainability of resources needed to fund overtime
8. Ensure passage of new formula for property tax off-set at the County level

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Possible Actions for Growth and Annexation Plan**

1. Infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, police/fire, etc.)
2. Euclidian vs Mixed Use
3. Optimum areas to annex (to whom)
4. Community input and support
5. Increase tax base/reduce burden on Residents
6. Sustainability of development
7. Focus on Opportunities (between Aberdeen and Havre deGrace)
8. Develop a water source for future growth
9. Adopt planning for smart growth principles in the future

## **AMENITIES**

### **Possible Actions for Downtown as a Destination:**

1. Restaurants (quality/fine dining)
2. New Post Office (relocation)
3. Festival Park Events (i.e. Movie Night)
4. More downtown parking
5. Shopping (retail, crafts)
6. Encourage downtown employment
7. Nite Life (Pubs, etc.)
8. Parking utilization (Main Street businesses now park there)
9. Parking deck downtown and at the train station
10. Handicapped parking
11. Metered parking
12. Downtown security presence
13. Get rid of hookers
14. Aesthetics (money for planters and streetscape)
15. Marketing
16. Façade improvements
17. Group enticements (conferences)
18. Streets cleaned by street sweeper
19. Rest room availability

## **CITY SERVICES**

### **Possible Actions for Streamlining Permit/Bonding Processes**

1. Process analysis combined with plan review
2. Permit facilitator
3. Set minimum limits to protect City interests
4. Simplify Permit calculations
5. Place application process in the proper segment (i.e., after the plans are approved a critical path element)
6. Ensure City's customers are kept from fiscal liability
7. Don't focus on minutia/K.I.S.S.
8. Develop and adopt uniform similar bonding/construction procedures as Harford County. Eliminate duplicating bonding.

## **HOUSING**

### **Possible Actions for Rental Registration**

1. Specific requirements for home rental to follow livability
2. Fee for registration and inspection
3. Inspection process
4. Penalties/fines for enforcement
5. Complaint resolution
6. Occupancy constraints, i.e., no of people per unit
7. Community awareness provided to aid in enforcement
8. Safety
9. Community Policing Aid
10. Hire a certified inspector
11. Outreach to landlords

## **G. CLOSING ACTIVITY**

*The facilitator asked the group to respond to the question: What I learned about this group today was.....*

Ms. Grover – There is a creative and dedicated vision for the City.

Mayor Bennett – People are dedicated to the processes and are enthusiastic. They are interested in making Aberdeen a better place.

Ms. Young – The group was focused and stayed on the task at hand.

Chief Rudy – The group worked together as a team.

Mr. Kupferman – The group wants definite priorities established. The following should be some of the priorities: ensure the City water supply, ensure growth, address infrastructure, i.e. water and sewer, have sufficient Budget money for these needs. Aberdeen should not be like Bel Air which receives no remuneration for those living outside the City using their facilities and infrastructure. The City needs money and growth will provide this.

Ms. Young – The City should investigate the LEEDS process, i.e. green growth. She has information on this. The water process to be used on the COPT project could possible reduce water requirements by 70% to 75%. Ms. Young will research this process for future informational purposes.

Mr.Hiob – The group was thanked for a good Retreat. He agrees with Ms. Young on the COPT water usage. This will be a prime location for this process. The Special Taxing District should be considered.

Mayor Bennett – Everyone was thanked for attending the Retreat which was very informative. The ideas and suggestions were a foundation which can be built on.