

Taking a look ahead

City council, residents get together for goal setting

By James Wynn, Staff Writer, Lander Journal

For more than an hour Wednesday night, members of the Lander City Council and almost 50 members of the public met in an informal setting at City Hall to discuss the future of Lander.

Wednesday's gathering was not a scheduled city council meeting. Rather, it was a chance for members of the community to get together and see what the council believes are important strategic planning goals as well as offer a little input themselves.

"Strategic planning focuses the city's efforts by assessing the city's direction and aligning the city's goals throughout the organization," said Gary Michaud, community resource director for the city.

"The purpose of the strategic plan is to determine where an organization is going and how it is going to get there."

The public meeting was the next step in a strategic planning process that began almost eight months ago. Future planning also was the main focus of a June 5 work session in which council members focused their attention on setting up the primary goals the city wants to accomplish.

Those goals were:

- To be financially responsible and stable while aggressively pursuing additional sources of funding;
- To provide for future generations by promoting and managing sustainable growth;
- To strengthen the communication process by creating an atmosphere of trust which builds and maintains open communications among the council, mayor, staff and other governmental organizations, resulting in more effective working relationships;
- To provide guidance, support and planning that encourages future expansion essential to the community's economic stability and growth and to expand the current communication process that encourages interactive community involvement, that builds mutual respect between the City of Lander and its citizens.

By the end of the work session, the council had come up with a rough plan to achieve its goals.

To provide economic development, the city found it important to aggressively market the business park. For fiscal security, two important goals the city would like to achieve would be to explore additional funding options and establish reserve accounts to fund equipment purchases and street improvements. In order to reach community sustainability, the city would like to begin mapping a planning process for the expansion of water and sewer services.

In order to achieve internal organization, the city would like to be competitive in the areas of pay and benefits in order to maintain a quality work force.

Mayor Mick Wolfe welcomed citizens and reminded the public that the meeting was meant to be a positive step toward the city's future and not a gripe session.

"We are asking for your ideas and what you would like for the future of Lander," he said.

Michaud then asked those in attendance to look over the goals and add any concerns, questions or ideas on the space provided.

"I think it went very well," Michaud said during a later interview. "People were sticking around for quite some time and offering some great feedback."

The next step for the city is to compile the public information.

"We are going to take that information, organize it, and then it will be presented to the city council," he said.

According to Michaud, the council will take the public input into account before deciding the overall direction of the strategic plan.

"We will make some changes if the council sees fit," he said.

Michaud also plans to put both the council's goals, and those offered by the public on the city Web site. The next step, once the plan is adopted, will be to begin implementing the goals and reviewing the progress every couple of months.

"I'm really glad we did this," Michaud said. "We are looking forward to the community assessment in the spring."