

Grapevine Independent

Setting city priorities

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By KRIS MIDDAUGH, Editor | 0 comments

The Rancho Cordova City Council is getting its priorities in order...literally. At a joint work meeting with the city planning commission last week, council members worked to begin refining a list of projects to accomplish during the next fiscal year.

Fiscal Year 2010-11 begins on July 1.

As happens each year, the initial list of priority projects was put together by city staff members and then presented to council members during an annual evaluation of city departments conducted with the city manager.

During a council retreat late last year, council members grew the list of 40 items staff-induced items to include three others suggested by council.

The long list of possible priorities was refined and massaged during meetings between individual council members and city staff then finally presented once again to council members last week.

City Manager, Ted Gaebler asked council members during the work meeting to eliminate any items they felt no longer made sense to include as priorities.

Among those few items quickly dismissed were suggestions to pursue bringing an Indian Casino and a new Sacramento Kings arena to the Rancho Cordova area.

Council members also decided to eliminate from the list any projects in progress, assuming those items would be completed.

That move removed several projects from the list including finishing construction on the International Drive connection to Sunrise Boulevard and supporting efforts to re-apply for the All-America City Award, a process that is completed and has secured Rancho Cordova another finalist berth for the award.

Council members also changed the wording of some priorities including one that originally read, “Demolish a private sector building each year.”

“That makes it sound like we just want to destroy private properties,” said Councilmember David Sander. “We really need to be clearer about what we mean.”

Mayor Ken Cooley agreed and suggested changing the item’s wording to read, “Aggressively seek to replace blighted structures to promote community improvement.”

With that change made, the item was left on the list.

One item of some discussion and much interest among council members was priority FF, which read, “Draft a forward-thinking, one-of-a-kind, innovative city charter ready for public discussion by Nov. 1, 2010.”

California law recognizes two kinds of cities, charter cities and general law cities. Of the 475 incorporated cities in the state, 102 operate under their own charter. The other cities, general law cities, operate under the requirements of California statutory law.

Many cities charter because of potential financial benefits. Benefits that possibly can occur because of chartering include:

- Reduced cost of city government providing significant savings in the cost of public improvements
- More local taxpayers’ dollars remain in a chartered city for such things as police and fire protection services
- An ability to defend the chartered city against state-mandated programs that do not provide the necessary funding to implement those programs

“I can’t see putting too many resources toward this effort right now,” said Mayor Cooley, referencing the continuing economic slump.

Councilmember Sander had a different take on the situation.

“If it means saving us money or having more money stay in the city, it could be worth it,” he said.

The city charter item was left on the priority list.

Although Councilmember Linda Budge questioned a project on the list that mentioned conducting a “customer service” survey, Gaebler explained that such a survey would not be a citizen satisfaction survey—such as the thorough, and expensive, resident survey conducted in 2007—but an actual “customer” satisfaction survey.

“This would be a survey of folks who actually use city services. People who come to city hall to do one thing or another,” said Gaebler.

Councilmember Sander termed it an “end of use” survey, one that could be “easily included at the conclusion of any contact with the city.”

That item too remained on the proposed priority list.

In the end, city council members intend on whittling down the priority list to only 10 items. With a list that still includes more than three-dozen items, there is still much work to be done.

Council members agreed to again take up discussion of the priorities, pare them down and place in order of importance beginning next month.

The list of priorities presented to council last week was included as part of the meeting agenda and is available to the public via the city of Rancho Cordova website, www.cityofranhocordova.org. The next meeting of the Rancho Cordova City Council is Monday, May 3 at city hall.