

Lewes Board of Public Works
Special Meeting
October 7, 2024
4:00pm

1. WELCOME, CALL MEETING TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Panetta called the meeting to order at 4:02pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Board Members

Thomas Panetta
Barbara Curtis
D. Preston Lee, P.E.
Richard Nichols
Bob Heffernan

Ex-Officio Members

Andrew Williams, Mayor
Austin Calaman, General Manager
Robin Davis, Assistant General Manager
Max Walton, Legal Counsel- Zoom

Others

Sharon Sexton, BPW Special Project Coordinator
Patrick McCoy, Spotts Stevens and McCoy
Eileen Kaley, Spotts Stevens and McCoy

3. Open forum/general discussion on the updated Strategic Plan.

President Panetta stated that two items need to be incorporated into the strategic plan: PFAS and Lead and Copper because of regulations.

Eileen Kaley, Spotts Stevens and McCoy, reviewed the history of the strategic plan starting at 2019 and how the Board has got to this point. Previous plan, 2019, involved BPW staff, Board members, community leaders, and the city. Elements included:

- Multiple Workshops
- Focus Group
- Customer Survey

It was determined by the previous Board that the 2019 plan was to be a ten-year plan. The vision, mission and guiding principles were created during the development of the 2019 strategic plan.

To develop the five-year strategic plan update (2024), elements included:

- Customer Survey to use as a benchmark
- Board and key staff interviews
- Review objectives and focus areas
- Address changes to the plan
- Smaller participant group

Five-Year Strategic Plan Update (2024) Changes:

- Removed Growth as an objective
- Prioritized Environmental Stewardship to number two
- Acknowledged completed objectives

Path Forward:

- Changes were made to the format by separating actions and milestones
- Tracked progress of objectives, by including dates and check marks

Patrick McCoy, Spotts Stevens and McCoy, stated that from this point the Board needs to voice what needs to be addressed or done differently. Mr. McCoy reiterated that PFAS and lead and copper have risen in priority. Mr. McCoy also stated that finance was a common discussion in the interviews and should maybe have its own focus area. Mr. McCoy questioned whether the Board would like to change the vision, mission statement, or guiding principles, but is not sure that these items should change.

Mr. Lee stated that the first plan was invigorating, with the Board and key community members involved. Mr. Lee stated that it was a mistake to make the plan a ten-year plan in 2019 and should have only been a five-year plan. Mr. Lee would like to see more involvement from the community or key account holders for the update. The update that is presented feels more like a “check-off” of what was done and the creative process was not the same and would like to see more outreach.

Mr. McCoy stated that based on the customer surveys, there were some topics that rose in priority, but for the majority of topics, the big “buckets” did not change. However, the Board has changed.

Mr. Lee stated that “rusty pipes” were mentioned in customer responses and is a top priority, along with the ready to serve charge. Mr. Lee would like to educate people on these topics.

President Panetta stated that the first plan started from scratch and was validated by customer responses. President Panetta questioned the value of recreating the in-depth process. President Panetta stated that the Board is addressing the “rusty pipes” in the capital budget. Mr.

Lee would like to see more public education on the schedule of projects, depth of the issue, and finances.

Mr. Lee would like to revise a previous white paper on the ready-to-serve charge to maintain visibility and keep it top of mind for stakeholders.

Ms. Curtis stated that she agrees with Mr. Lee and wished that the process would start with a blank slate. Ms. Curtis struggled to recognize that the guiding principles and areas of focus were not going to change because some were obsolete. Ms. Curtis would like to remove what items were complete. Ms. Curtis would like to review the Board's priorities or strategic focus areas. Ms. Curtis is concerned with environmental aspects, including global warming, resiliency, demands on power, etc. Ms. Curtis is also concerned with cyber security.

Ms. Curtis stated that public engagement is difficult and may not be a focus area. Ms. Curtis feels that the Board is making progress on the financial areas.

Mr. Nichols questioned what happens with the strategic plan and if it is distributed to the public. Mr. McCoy stated that the strategic plan becomes a tool and is an operational plan for the Board and guide to self-asses. President Panetta stated that the plan is a public document and posted on the website. Mr. Nichols wants to craft the document so that it is clear to the public and holds the Board accountable. Mr. Nichols does not feel that the plan currently does this. Mr. Calaman stated that the plan is reviewed annually in an open session.

Mr. McCoy stated that it seems that the focus areas need to be re-prioritized and new tactics and specifics need to be added.

Mr. Calaman stated that completed items can be removed, as this plan can be a living document. The Board and staff consensus is that ten years is too long. Mr. Calaman stated that moving forward it seems as though the Board wants to step back and re-evaluate priorities. Mr. Calaman questioned the direction of the process, i.e. more workshops or two Board members actively participating in the update. Mr. Lee suggested contacting key accounts like the hospital and SPI.

President Panetta stated that the check marks show transparency for the public. Removing the completed items may cause the public to question Board actions. President Panetta suggested dropping off the first 5 years for the next strategic plan. Mr. Nichols would like to drop the first five years off the current plan and note the items that were completed or no longer relevant.

Mr. Heffernan stated that almost every item includes communication and feels that a communication strategy should be an individual focus area instead of across all items. Mr. Heffernan feels that this current plan confuses operational efficiency and finance, and those topics should be separate.

Mr. Heffernan agrees that the list of "awfuls" needs to be added and elevated in priority. This includes PFAS, lead and copper, and WWTF. Mr. Nichols questioned if MS4 should be added. Ms. Curtis feels that stormwater is going to be a big issue. Mr. Heffernan agrees. Mr. Heffernan added that electricity and storm recovery are other hot topics. President Panetta agrees that

electricity should be looked at from a redundancy and hardening standpoint. President Panetta is developing a group to discuss further after January.

Ms. Curtis would like to see past updates be removed and maybe keep the history as an appendix. Mr. McCoy stated that this can be achieved easily. The consensus is that re-prioritization is needed. Mr. McCoy and Ms. Kaley will develop a checklist and create a priority ranking for the Board to review.

Topics to address:

- PFAS
- Lead and Copper
- MS4
- Electrical Resiliency
- Storm recovery
- Separation of Financial Health and operational efficiency

Mr. Lee questioned Mr. Heffernan's vision of where communication fits into the plan. Mr. Heffernan stated that communication seems to be a frustration for everyone and the Board. President Panetta referred to page 19 of the plan, item five and stated that only part of the item is complete, and the Board is still considering hiring a PR person. The checkmark needs to be removed.

President Panetta stated that with the recent event of the canal crossing event allowed staff and the Board to make changes to communication efforts. Mr. Heffernan stated that the event was handled in an accurate and timely manner. President Panetta stated that the event helped strengthen the relationship with the city.

Mr. Nichols questioned if cyber security was included? Ms. Kaley stated that there is a current practice in place, so it was not expanded.

Mr. McCoy stated that the next steps will include developing a statement with finance focus area and update objectives related to finances. Mr. McCoy stated that some objectives under infrastructure may drop off. Mr. McCoy cautioned against having too many objectives and making them achievable.

Mr. McCoy stated he will separate the history and update the plan to become a new plan. Mr. Lee suggested a list of potential topics and that the Board could rank the topics. Ms. Kaley stated that a survey could be conducted by the Board that would allow a ranking of the priority of the topics. Mr. Lee asked that the comments from the public in the survey be listed as a priority as well. Ms. Kaley stated that comments were listed geographically. Mr. Lee stated it is not clear where the center is on the beach side of town.

The Board consensus is to develop a checklist and rank by priority and return to the Board.

Mr. Kaley questioned if the Board would like to review the vision and mission statement. Mr. Calaman stated that changing the vision and mission statement every five years may lead to losing the organization's identity. Mr. Heffernan stated that he agrees with Mr. Nichols that the

Board needs to define the limits of the Board's responsibility. President Panetta is hesitant to change the vision and mission statement.

Ms. Curtis questioned what are "value added services". Mr. Calaman stated that the is collection of hazardous waste, programs through Energize Delaware, and Efficiency Smart. Mr. Calaman stated that in the past there were discussions of bring natural gas, internet, and television to the city. Ms. Curtis is surprised that the leases for internet or television are with the city rather than the BPW.

Mr. McCoy and Ms. Kaley have a path forward.

4. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

None

5. CALL TO THE PRESS

None

6. ADJOURNMENT

ACTION: *Mr. Nichols motioned to motioned to adjourn. Mr. Lee seconded the motioned, which passed unanimously.*

President Panetta adjourned the meeting at 5:19 pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Sharon Sexton
Special Projects Coordinator

D. Preston Lee, P.E., Secretary

Date