

CLEARFIELD CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
6:00 P.M. WORK SESSION  
July 28, 2020

City Building  
55 South State Street  
Clearfield City, Utah

*The meeting was held electronically via Zoom Meeting address:*

Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81125311314>  
Meeting ID: 811 2531 1314

PRESIDING VIA  
ZOOM MEETING:

Mark Shepherd

Mayor

PRESENT VIA  
ZOOM MEETING:

Nike Peterson

Councilmember

Vern Phipps

Councilmember

Tim Roper

Councilmember

Karece Thompson

Councilmember

EXCUSED:

Kent Bush

Councilmember

STAFF PRESENT  
VIA ZOOM MEETING:

JJ Allen

City Manager

Summer Palmer

Assistant City Manager

Stuart Williams

City Attorney

Kelly Bennett

Police Chief

Adam Favero

Public Works Director

Braden Felix

City Engineer / Deputy PW Director

Eric Howes

Community Services Director

Curtis Dickson

Community Services Deputy Dir.

Spencer Brimley

Community Development Director

Trevor Cahoon

Communications Coordinator

Nancy Dean

City Recorder

Wendy Page

Deputy Recorder

Mayor Shepherd called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RETREAT DISCUSSIONS

JJ Allen, City Manager, reviewed some of the fundamental concepts discussed in past retreats. He acknowledged in 2018 Bill Holestrum had spoken about levels of government and understanding the respective roles in a demonstration illustrated by circles with A, B and C focuses. Mr. Allen asked how the group felt it was doing in regards to governmental roles. There

was a discussion about the topics shared during the 2018 retreat. Mr. Allen shared his notes from the meeting about the Council having collective authority not individual authority; the need to build a process that could be trusted and trusting the process; when in conflict always step out to the point of agreement; dissidence being the gap between vision and reality plus the need to keep raising the vision to make the gap uncomfortable; and staff learning when to ask the Council for its opinion rather than a vote.

Councilmember Peterson commented the COVID-19 pandemic tossed everything on its head and gave cause to look at the processes. She continued there were vibrations among the roles when things were in flux. She pointed out there were moments when things felt unsteady. She expressed her opinion that over the past few months there were policy discussions she wished would have happened before actions were taken. She noted her concern that discussions early on with policy could have helped drive and been a new framework so the adaptations would still feel like they were within the roles or circles of responsibility.

Mr. Allen asked if there had been any frustration with the limits of roles. The following frustrations or examples were mentioned:

- Disconnection with the team due to new meeting styles
- Communication methods during a pandemic created various challenges
- Perception of lack of trust with critical timing matters due to constant changes
- Speed in moving forward rather than engaging others in the process

Summer Palmer, Assistant City Manager, stated it was good to have a functioning team and processes in place before the pandemic because it could have been worse. Mr. Allen pointed out months ago the team may have been confident processes were in place, but when challenged during the pandemic it may have caused the process to be questioned.

Councilmember Peterson stated it was not so much the processes that were in question. She suggested it would be important to recognize at the beginning of a crisis the need to make shifts to provide flexibility with the defined roles. She commented there might need to be creativity used to carve out boundaries so adaptability could take place and touch points created throughout the process so there was better understanding along the way. She explained during the past few months, when normally she would have been included in the process, she felt as if the Council had been left out.

Mayor Shepherd mentioned the employee furloughs was one example of a recent decision made where the Council had not been included in the decision making process. He acknowledged it was a decision which normally the Council would have discussed because it affected the budget and employees, but under the circumstances things needed to happen quickly. He stated it was sometimes hard to stay within the role boundaries. Mayor Shepherd acknowledged his involvement with the developer of the Clearfield Junction project sometimes created difficulty for staff and the processes in place. Mr. Allen appreciated the examples shared which were helpful and demonstrated instances of when it had proven difficult to stay within the boundaries of each prospective role.

Councilmember Phipps pointed out communication was a significant part of any process. He stated the COVID-19 pandemic had changed communication and not having interpersonal communication could be a detriment or impediment to any group where there was emotional distancing. He suggested perhaps things could go better if processes could be mimicked under the current communication constraints while recognizing the need for immediate reaction time. He noted administration did not always have leisure time for communication and it would be important to learn how best to communicate with the group and the public during similar circumstances. There was a discussion about the constant changes and shifts during the pandemic which caused communication to suffer and other related impacts.

Mr. Allen stated the retreat in 2019 was held at G4CE and it kicked off a year of studying the book “Five Dysfunctions Of A Team.” He reviewed the pyramid of dysfunctions and symptoms that resulted from them. There was a discussion about the dysfunctions and the following ideas were mentioned:

- Trust was tested at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic between the team members and everyone did not always agree and gave some push back.
- Perception was not always the reality; consequently, it might have seemed from the distancing there was not openness.
- Interpretation of trust varied individually and between teams. Councilmember Thompson expressed feeling a lack of trust from others and experiencing constant internal conflicts with many of the dysfunctions as well as struggling to find cohesiveness within the group.
- Honing all the team skills and figuring out how to be better.
- Finding balance between choosing a stance and contributing to a dysfunction.
- Sharing information was helpful for the group, contributed to the decisions, and provided insight that may not otherwise be considered.
- Being cautious of using talents, ideals, or diatribes that could undermine the team.

Mr. Allen shared the results from the Five Dysfunctions of a Team Assessment survey recently taken in comparison to the results from a year ago. He pointed out it was not surprising each dysfunction received a lower rating now because things had been disrupted the past few months. Mayor Shepherd wondered how much of the survey’s reduction in rating was related to the changes that were made due to the COVID-19 pandemic both internally and externally or how much communication impacted it. There was a discussion about how the recent results of the survey reflected the test and adversity experienced by the team; as well as, the pandemic had not only provided experiences but shown some weaknesses and areas which could be improved. Councilmember Phipps pointed out the delta of the survey results was proportionality the same in each category except for the area of commitment which reflected a greater change.

Mr. Allen acknowledged during the discussion the team had identified struggles affecting the team without finger pointing. He voiced his concern there seemed to be less trust from the Council towards staff than before and hoped to recover it. He asked what could be done to get to a better place. Councilmember Roper suggested the councilmembers needed to reach out and improve communications with each other.

Councilmember Peterson voiced her frustration with decisions that had been made by staff which in her mind were clearly policy decisions. She commented the current circumstances did not allow for having the typical vetting processes, which led to unusual or different communication efforts in the absence of having traditional forums. Mayor Shepherd stated he had struggled with whether or not some decisions were policy decisions or administrative decisions requiring immediate action. Mr. Allen recognized there was a lot of grey area and staff had done what seemed best at the time when part-time employees were furloughed. He noted it was a big decision and understood how the Council considered it to be a policy decision; however, felt it could be argued on either side.

Ms. Palmer wondered if there was one incident or a pattern of things that had impacted the team. Mayor Shepherd pointed out regular meetings or social events provided a forum for communication among the group and those had been altered; thus, impacting the sharing of information and increasing the feeling of being disconnected from the process. There was a discussion about the differences and effectiveness of Zoom meetings versus face to face meetings.

Councilmember Phipps pointed out communications and trust had been the focus of the discussion. He acknowledged the team had suffered because of the lack of having routine informal discussions between councilmembers as well as staff. He did not feel a violation of trust had occurred; rather, the concerns being expressed were related to a lack of engagement or understanding which might have implied there was a lack of trust. He acknowledged one of the communication avenues often overlooked was that between the Council and the community. He mentioned the tackle football discussion was an example of how coming together and being involved with the process had helped the Council be better prepared to communicate with residents about the decision that was made.

Mayor Shepherd mentioned he forgot to discuss the football program during his weekly broadcast from a local restaurant earlier and felt it would be a key message to get out quickly as well as information about the upcoming truth in taxation hearing.

Mr. Allen asked if there were any other concerns or patterns that should be identified before addressing how to get better at communication. There was a discussion about the dysfunctions of lack of trust and artificial harmony.

Mayor Shepherd reiterated the question of whether or not the Council felt there was one underlying problem or a pattern that was concerning.

Councilmember Phipps shared the example of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) funding budget discussion and how it was initially presented for the Council to divide the funding into three areas and staff would oversee how the funds were spent. He felt the elected officials should have a voice in the policy of how to spend it and so he became engaged in the discussion. Mr. Allen asked if he was more comfortable with where things were now that there had been additional discussions. Councilmember Phipps responded yes, having a policy in place was important. He continued after having had the opportunity to review the criteria, he felt the prepared documents were well done now and could show support

of the policy if residents ever presented the Council with questions or concerns about the program.

Councilmember Peterson expressed her opinion that the problem had not been one single incident but a growing pattern. She indicated the positive thing was when she brought a list of things to the city manager there was an ability to work through it and recover, so overall she felt better about where things were now. She shared the following list of things she had recognized as a pattern which had been a result of the issues identified specific to the communication challenges:

- Employee furloughs
- Wasatch Front Football League (WFFL) initial approach of communications until meetings were scheduled with the Council to discuss and find consensus regarding the 2020 season
- Staff's response to the Council regarding plans for the Fourth of July
- Navigating meetings with Utah Transit Authority (UTA)
- Public meeting format during the pandemic and the Council's lack of involvement in determining the desired process

She pointed out the decisions might not have been different; but without holding discussions it was difficult to feel a part of what was happening. She voiced her concern many of the items mentioned were policy decisions and it was difficult to defend actions on such matters to residents when the Council was not part of the decision making process.

Mayor Shepherd confessed he had not communicated with the Council about conversations held with staff and other community leaders about the topic of public meeting formats. There was a discussion about the various perspectives related to holding public meetings and being able to accommodate concerns for health risks, safety, and perceptions, plus trying to follow the guidelines and directives from health and state leaders as well as being cautious about sending mixed messages.

Councilmember Thompson voiced his concern that holding the truth in taxation hearing virtually might make residents feel detached by not coming in person. There was a discussion about the advantages and concerns on the methods of holding the truth in taxation hearing in person versus virtually. Mayor Shepherd commented the decision to wait until after the truth in taxation hearing to resume in person meetings was not made lightly and he should have conveyed the concerns and decision better to the Council. He pointed out waiting to resume in person meetings until after the truth in taxation hearing would allow the City to continue with the process established by State leaders that allowed for electronic meeting to better ensure safety for residents in case the crowds were similar to past truth in taxation hearings.

Councilmember Phipps expressed his opinion the communication difficulties with staff had not represented a lack of trust but perhaps a lack of understanding of the Council's role in the community. He pointed out the Council's role might not always require involvement in decisions; however, there would always be a need to answer to the public for decisions and be responsive to questions.

Mr. Allen expressed appreciation for the feedback. Ms. Palmer noted it would be difficult to keep the Council apprised of every decision staff made in a day; however, staff would always be willing to have calls directed their way or help the Council stay informed when possible or do better at providing understanding of decisions that were made.

Mr. Allen pointed out times had been stressful and many complicated decisions seemed to hit all at once. He stated he hoped to learn from the examples discussed and do better. He acknowledged his heart was in the Clearfield community and he was trying to do what was best for it.

Mayor Shepherd requested to hold a second “Morning with the Mayor” during the coming week to explain the WFFL decision and provide residents information about the upcoming truth in taxation hearing.

Mr. Allen shared the graphic design of a face mask that had been ordered and would be distributed to employees once they arrived. He asked if the Council had any specific needs or collective ideas on ways to fix the problems discussed.

Mayor Shepherd voiced his opinion that collectively the team had been on board. He expressed his love for the direction things were headed. He acknowledged communication might need some improvement but felt it would get better as restrictions were eased.

Councilmember Roper stated he needed to do better personally at expressing his feelings. He agreed with the Mayor that things were going in the right direction. He requested staff keep the Council in the loop with communications.

Councilmember Phipps indicated staff should use its best judgement in decision making and if decisions would be made that might create a collective reaction by the community or team then the Council ought to be engaged in a discussion on the matter.

Councilmember Thompson felt a majority of the things had been hashed out already. He pointed out it would not always be possible to interpret what was going to be the flash point; thus, keeping communication lines open would be important.

Councilmember Peterson requested if the public meeting structure was an administrative decision then staff not restrict the Council’s ability to discuss things as a group. She pointed out for the current team there was strength in meeting as a group. Councilmember Phipps attributed the ability of the Council to work together so well with each other and staff was because of these types of meetings or discussions. Mayor Shepherd agreed it set Clearfield apart from other cities. He commented sometimes it was necessary not to discuss policy but reserve time for building trust and visioning.

Mayor Shepherd stated the City had a lot of development projects which were exciting. He mentioned the tour of the new hotel at Falcon Hill was great and he was excited to tell people it was in the City.

Ms. Palmer requested the Council not mistake the decisions being made as a lack of commitment. She stated the administrative decisions were made with the intention of protecting the safety and health of the Council and staff, as well as protecting all the employees and their families. She pointed out despite the COVID-19 challenges staff was committed to helping the Council and ultimately being able to get the best outcome and best decisions.

Mr. Allen announced the next retreat type discussion was scheduled for August 18, 2020. He expressed his appreciation for the open and honest discussion.

**Councilmember Peterson moved to adjourn at 8:32 p.m., seconded by Councilmember Thompson. The motion carried upon the following vote: Voting AYE – Councilmember Bush, Peterson, Phipps, Roper, and Thompson. Voting NO – None.**

**APPROVED AND ADOPTED  
This 25<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2020**

**/s/Mark R. Shepherd, Mayor**

**ATTEST:**

**/s/Nancy R. Dean, City Recorder**

I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Clearfield City Council meeting held Tuesday, July 28, 2020.

/s/Nancy R. Dean, City Recorder