



19 13th Avenue North
Waite Park, MN 56387

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION AGENDA

Upper Conference Room at Waite Park City Hall

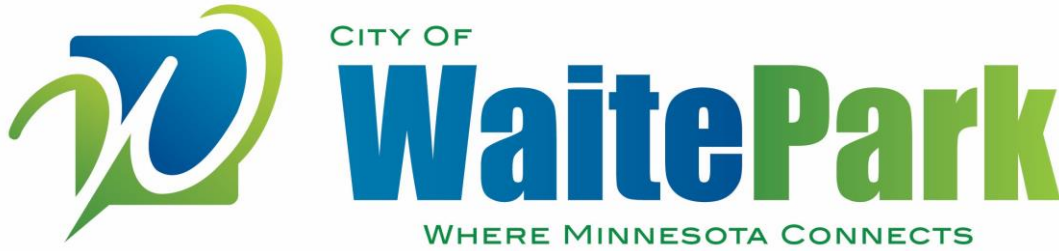
Monday, June 21st at 5 PM

1. 5:00 P.M. **Review Of Culture Assessment Work Plan**
The City has completed a Culture Assessment that has involved working with each department and individual staff over the course of the last year and a half. The purpose of this work was to really work on both positive and negative impacts affecting our workplace culture. The City has worked with Susan Herreid, an organizational consultant on this Culture Assessment. She will be present to discuss the final work plan of this work that has been completed. Attached is a copy of the final Culture Assessment Work Plan.

Documents:

[FINAL WORK PLAN TO COUNCIL 6.17.21.PDF](#)

2. 6:00 P.M. **The Ledge AMP Update**
Staff would like to update the City Council on the Ledge AMP and discuss some of the upcoming events that are planned for the venue.



Culture Assessment Work Plan

PURPOSE: To provide an organizational review of the perspectives and perceptions of staff and management who are employed by the City of Waite Park. A culture assessment is a process that offers all employees an opportunity to share their comments and feedback about both the current and desired culture of the city. The information collected is presented in themes along with recommendations on how to best align the culture of the organization with the mission, vision, and goals of the city. For this to have the most successful outcomes, all city personnel as well as city leadership need to recognize the impact, they have on forming and contributing to the culture. For positive and sustainable change to occur all involved must be committed to supporting and promoting the positive change efforts.

GOAL: We want to create an organizational culture that is engaging, connected, productive, and supportive of each other.

To accomplish this, it is important to seek input and address the concerns of personnel within all areas or departments of the organization.

Employees:

Summary of Employee Concerns:

Employee expressed the need for more communication and transparency. They are seeking more support and accessibility to their supervisors and management. Looking for consistent enforcement of policies and clear goals regarding objectives and accountability. They want additional support and in some areas that refers to staffing. They would also like to be given greater opportunity to provide input and offer suggestions, especially when decisions or changes impact their work. Employees, generally want to feel more empowered verses just having things delegated to them. They want to feel more like team members and expressed the need to encourage professional relationships and collaboration as appropriate with other departments.

Summary of Opportunities for Employee Improvement:

Employees also have a responsibility to contribute in a positive manner to the culture of the city as do the management personnel and city leadership.

Each employee contributes both positively or negatively to the culture depending on attitudes and willingness to be a team player. They have a choice to determine how they will contribute, and it is the supervisor's responsibility to work with employees to motivate and empower. It is also important that they provide necessary feedback in a timely manner and work with them to encourage positive efforts.



All employees must be responsible to do the job that they have been hired to do to the best of their ability and to meet identified expectations. When employees do this well, they may be recognized with promotional opportunities, interesting new assignments, and other career advancement possibilities. When employees do not meet expectations, their supervisors have a responsibility to hold those employees accountable and work with them through identified city performance management processes.

It is important to create an environment that allows for employees to have a way to express their ideas, feedback and/or concerns. Their concerns or comments need to be addressed to the appropriate person, starting with their supervisor, and then following the chain of command. When employees do not follow the proper chain of command, nor held accountable to the identified process it makes it difficult for issues to be addressed. If issues are not shared with the appropriate management personnel, then they do not have the opportunity to hear feedback and affect necessary change. When direct communication does not go through the appropriate chain of command it can erode trust and continues the ongoing challenges of promoting a functional and respectful work environment. To make long lasting change to the current culture everyone will need to take responsibility for their part in the process and demonstrate a shared responsibility.

For example, when an employee bypasses the identified chain of command and goes to others (e.g., City Council) rather than their supervisor, it is important for them to realize that one person's perception may not be reality or may be viewed through their own lens or experience. Being quick to judge and not recognizing that there may be more to the story or that what they are hearing is just one person's version should be taken into account and it has been recommended that they refer an issue back to their supervisor and that they use the appropriate change of command. City Leadership as well as Department heads can be supportive by first asking the question "have you talked to your supervisor and/or followed the chain of command"?

Most individuals have a tendency to react or make assumptions about information they hear yet, it is likely that we don't always have the full story. Employees and management personnel have been encouraged and coached throughout the consultation process to check of accuracy and be mindful not to participate in sharing information based on hearsay, assumptions, rumors, or gossip. As an organization we need to be focused on the facts.

City support staff are often the face of the organization. Therefore, critical to the success and reputation of the city. Management needs to encourage and be confident in their employees work abilities and trust and respect their professional integrity.



Supervisors:

Summary of Supervisor Concerns:

Supervisors need to have the support of management to make decisions., whether it be an operational decision or a personnel related matter. They also need to have the appropriate training and knowledge needed to address personnel issues. Furthermore, Supervisors need management trust and support as well as a willingness to empower them to handle work related matters and make appropriate business decisions. Managers should fully empower their Supervisors to make decisions and the Supervisors are expected to take on the responsibility of supervising staff which includes giving feedback, coaching and training and developing them in their professional roles. Assessment feedback stated employees shared that they do not always feel valued. Furthermore, they report that their on boarding experience was not a positive experience specifically, when they had limited interaction with their supervisors/trainers.

Supervisors also need to have employees that respect them in their role and provide the resources to handle issues that are brought forward to them by employees. Supervisors should have consistent expectations (not necessarily job related) for all city personnel and present a unified message to all staff. Supervisors should be informed so that they can have a better understanding of the goals and objectives of the City so that they can best support the goals going forward.

Summary of Opportunities for Supervisor Improvement:

Supervisors have a responsibility to contribute to a positive work culture just like all other members of the organization. Supervisors need to communicate to employees and be transparent in the decisions they make by providing rationale when possible. They need to be approachable and consider their style of delivery and how they come across to the staff they supervise and their colleagues. Supervisors should also consider how they can empower staff and create an environment where employees can bring up their ideas and offer suggestions. When employees share concerns, they need to be brought to management as appropriate and always keep the department head and/or Human Resources informed depending on the nature of the issue. They should also determine if there is a need for more oversight to provide the direction needed for employees is important.

Supervisors must address problems that arise in a timely manner. They need to recognize if that if work related issues or employee problems are not handled in a timely manner that issues will escalate and often become more difficult to address or resolve. Training and on boarding for newer employees is another area that needs improvement yet, time intensive training can put additional a strain on supervisors due to their current workloads.



Management:

Summary of Management Concerns:

Management reports often feeling overwhelmed with their current workload oversight, and staffing concerns (where to delegate and what to prioritize). The responsibility and demands placed on them has increased as the city has grown and issues have become more complex. There is currently a sense that some elected officials may not always recognize what their positions entail and how demands have changed.

Management personnel often find it difficult to have the time to effectively address the needs and expectations of the public, staff, and the elected officials. Additionally, there are administrative regulatory, compliance and training requirements that have increased which causes additional pressure.

During the assessment process and in other conversations city management have consistently shared their concerns and frustrations when the chain of command is not respected. They shared many examples of where they feel undermined and report frustrations when council members bring up concerns that have never been discussed by their employee(s). When these types of situations occur, it becomes very difficult to bring forward any recommendations because of preconceived perceptions that are being formed by confidential conversations from employees to council members. This has created some level of trust issues by management personnel for city leadership (e.g., members of the city council).

Summary of Opportunities for Management Improvement:

Management personnel/Department Head's also have a responsibility for their part in leading by example and creating a healthy and respectful workplace culture. Managers should be engaged with employees and communicate effectively to both supervisors, employees, their elected officials and the public.

Management personnel should not avoid to having the difficult conversations and they should encourage their supervisors to do the same. They should be approachable and accessible to staff and specifically their direct reports, colleagues and as appropriate, members of the council.

Clear direction needs to be provided and management personnel need to recognize how their actions affect their department as well as the workplace atmosphere. Managers/Department Heads should consider how they can be strong advocates for their departments' and ensure that they truly understand the issues and challenges that are a part of their respective departments.

Management personnel need to foster relationships with other departments and provide opportunities for employees to more effectively engage and collaborate with both other city personnel, across departments and external partners. Additionally, they need to provide clear



direction to the elected officials and make sure that they are engaging them appropriately in the decision-making process. It is important that elected officials have the appropriate information to make decisions and be aware of their roles and professional boundaries.

Mayor and City Council:

Summary of Mayor and City Council Concerns:

The Mayor and Council have stated that they need more consistent communication and more detailed information to make informed decisions. They have asked that their management team be more engaged with them and involve them in the decision-making process. They also want to be assured that staff are being heard and concerns expressed are being taken seriously and addressed in a timely manner. There should also be a clearly defined process established for staff to address complaints or concerns. Furthermore, management personnel needs to feel confident that staff are handling issues brought forward by the public and responding in a timely manner.

Summary of Opportunities for Mayor and City Council Improvement:

The Mayor and the City Council also have a role in the city's goal of improved culture of the organization. The decisions they make or how they handle situations has an impact on everyone within the city. Therefore, the Mayor and City Council need to be consistent with the direction they provide and remain at a "big picture" focus. When the Mayor and City Council are not on the same page with one another, it makes it difficult for the Administrator and ultimately the Department Heads need to have clear direction about city priorities and work-related expectations. Once again, this also confirms the importance of recognizing, respecting, and following the chain of command.

Conversations with employees on work related issues is not appropriate, especially if they have not addressed the issue or concern with their supervisor or manager. It is important to recognize that department expectations are not always realistic to manage without investments in staffing or changes to the services provided. Understanding the role of the elected officials as policy makers and staff as policy implementers is important.

When role confusion occurs and staff and/or council do not recognize this, this can be come problematic. Recognize that not all decisions that are made can be communicated given the confidentiality of issues and the pure need to get work completed. We need to foster a trust in staff to do the work you have hired them to do and create an environment where they feel supported and recognized for a job well done.

Action Plan:

Actions Already Initiated:

- Monthly Department Updates will be provided to the City Council and City Staff that provides a summary of activities going on throughout all city departments.
- Quarterly updates at work session on Goals & Objectives where management staff will provide a written and oral update on work that is being performed
- Council work session agendas for discussion. Administrative staff reach out prior to every council work session to determine what items are of interest. Items are then included on the agenda for discussion. The timing of these items is dependent upon the number of items needed for discussion.
- Monthly meetings with all supervisors and management staff to discuss relevant issues related to managing staff. These meetings are set up to ensure consistency among all staff on how to address and handle any personnel related matter. Topics are set by the group.
- Supervisors meet monthly with Human Resources to discuss personnel policies and regulations. Human Resources provides one-on-one time with supervisors to ensure they understand our personnel policies and procedures that we are required to follow for a variety of things.
- Management staff and supervisors meet monthly to discuss items going within the organization. Some meetings include training opportunities and others become a great way to communicate amongst departments or cross functions about issues facing the department as it relates to personnel. Discussion has been good and meetings have ensured that consistency on how things are handled are consistent amongst departments. Plans are in play to incorporate the Fire Department supervisors and management staff in on these meetings on a quarterly basis.
- Weekly management staff meetings include meetings to discuss items going on in the community that require discussion amongst all departments and additionally another meeting held weekly to discuss bigger picture discussions.
- Supervisors and Management staff meet weekly with all employees to discuss relevant work items for the department. Each department handles this a little differently given work schedules, but employees do have at least weekly interaction with their supervisors.



- New employee training is being established allowing for opportunities for each department to meet with new staff to discuss relevant topics related to what each department is responsible for and who to contact when items come up and need to be addressed and staff from other departments needs to be contacted.
- Payroll/HR Clerk is looking into finding a way to post all employee pictures and job responsibilities on miPay (our timesheet software) potentially or another online method that is easily accessible to all employees. This will give employees the opportunity to access this information when needed to determine who from each department is needed to address an issue.
- Management staff are working on developing a leadership academy for all employees to complete. The leadership academy will either be 6-12 months long program and would incorporate a few from each department at a time. The purpose is to allow employees to learn more about each department and to build a relationship with other staff from other departments.
- Annual evaluations conducted on all employees on anniversary dates. Evaluations are reviewed by Human Resources for consistency and to ensure feedback to employees is meaningful.
- In addition, employees have an opportunity to provide their feedback at the time of their evaluation as well. There is a comment section that included for them to provide this feedback if they choose.
- Stay interviews will also be conducted annually by Human Resources on all full-time employees. The purpose of this is to ensure that we are giving our employees an opportunity to share their work experiences with someone that is not their supervisor. This information is then shared generally with the City Administrator and the Department Heads ensuring for confidentiality of employees as well.
- Exit interviews are also conducted on all employees that leave work with the City of Waite Park. These are conducted by the Human Resources Director to ensure that we are giving our employees an opportunity to share their work experiences with the City of Waite Park. This information is then shared more generally with the City Administrator and the Department Heads ensuring specific comments of the employees who have provided constructive feedback.
- One-on-one sessions have been completed with a number of staff in the various departments to address issues or concerns that have been expressed by employees. Some sessions involved other staff where conflicts have arisen. The purpose was really to



address staff's ability to handle their own conflicts with others in a professional and productive manner. Many times, we find that people will complain about a situation but are not willing to take it upon themselves to address. The last 9 months have been spent with an effort of management's encouragement and efforts to empower staff to address these issues to handle these situations on their own.

- Supervisors and management staff have also had one-on-one discussions to discuss their role in addressing conflict. There are times when it seems easier to ignore situations but, in all reality, it is important for leadership to address these issues before they become problems. Employees have been empowered with the assistance of Susan Herreid to address and manage differences and/or other work-related issues on their own before bringing it up the chain of command. Supervisors have also been encouraged to assist and facilitate as needed and/or requested. There are times when a supervisor may need to bring the parties together to address an ongoing issue and this will be done using a coaching approach.
- Additional training has been established for Supervisors to provide them the tools to address conflicts with personnel. Meetings have also been set up monthly with Payroll/HR to discuss these issues as they arise.
- The City has added the HR Clerk Module to our website that will streamline the hiring process considerably. The software will also automatically score applications which will assist in removing the perceived subjectivity of the hiring process.
- Some challenges that still exist include the desire of staff to have more involvement in the hiring process verses the desire of some members of the Civil Service Board that try to limit this involvement. This becomes a balancing act and creates some conflict at times between staff and the Civil Service Board.
- Follow up work group session were conducted in each department. These were facilitated by Dr. Herreid to check in with staff to determine positive changes to date and to discuss ongoing work-related issues and/or other areas for improvement. These discussions were completed in May and June of 2021. Supervisors and Management staff joined the conversation at the end, and each department was able to focus on issues facing their department and how best to handle them positively and effectively. Additional follow up with Dr. Herreid may be considered in the future on an as needed if facilitation is determined to be needed to resolve issues positively and effectively.

Actions Recommended for Consideration:

- Prioritization of workload has been something that Department Heads continue to work on with their peers and personnel. They report that they are dealing with workload and capacity issues which have been previously shared in a work session with the City Council. These ongoing challenges play a role in the ability of each department to prioritize, and at times, fully meet expectations of identified special projects as well as keep up on their regular work duties and tasks. There have been discussions about the current challenges with delegation and capacity which are due in great part to the lack staffing. Going forward, it will be important for the city council to work with the Department Heads to make decisions about the level of services that City wants to provide, and the appropriate staff needed to accomplish these projects (in conjunction to their regular duties and responsibilities). This should be discussed in greater detail with the City Council at a future work session(s).
- The importance of the City Council support is a critical aspect of management's success going forward. They have requested their support and willingness to empower them in their roles and to demonstrate healthy boundaries. As previously discussed in a work session, council members should refer concerns or comments from citizens to the appropriate department head. It will be the responsibility of the department head to address the issues in a timely manner and communicate about follow up as appropriate. There is a recommended process documented for the City Council's review that will create clarity of expectations going forward. This Chain on Command and Rules of Decorum policy adoption and implementation will clarify the process and importance of the chain of command.
- Recommended policies to put in place include Chain of Command and "Rules of Decorum" that provide some direction on how city matters are handled and by whom.
- An organizational chart has been drafted and will need to be adopted by City Council.
- A Strategic Plan was presented to the City Council for consideration. This could assist in addressing many of the ongoing challenges and opportunities the City has in front of them. It could assist with laying out a clear plan that could include input from staff and mayor and city council giving the City a clear focus for moving forward that is proactive verses reactive in nature.