



City Council Agenda Item Report

FROM: Ryan Cummins, City Manager

MEETING DATE: December 17, 2025

SUBJECT: Council Feedback on Strategic Planning Meeting for Fiscal Year 2026/2027

DESCRIPTION:

For the last several years, City Council has held a strategic planning meeting to identify goals and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. This has involved conducting a resident survey before the meeting, review of progress on prior year priorities, and a facilitator helping the Council establish and rank priorities.

Attached is the FY 25/26 report and priorities.

How to approach strategic planning for FY 26/27 was discussed at the November 19 workshop. The minutes summarize the discussion well:

The council discussed preparations for the upcoming strategic planning process for fiscal 2026- 2027. Council members debated whether to retain the same facilitator from previous years or bring in a new facilitator to provide a fresh perspective. There was discussion about conducting another community survey, noting the upcoming parking survey and possible “survey fatigue”. The Master Plan survey was extensive and had provided ample data. A substantial part of the conversation focused on the structure of the strategic plan—specifically, how to define and use strategic “pillars” or goal categories to guide and prioritize city projects. Some advocated keeping the current system for consistency and because staff is already working on all existing priorities; others suggested re-examining or refreshing the city’s framework, adding pillars like economic/community development (such as a DDA), and more clearly prioritizing existing and future projects.

The discussion concluded with the understanding that I would give the session some more thought and return with a recommendation. I recommend the following:

- Ask Marilyn Semonick to Facilitate Another Session
 - With no new Council Members and continuity in the Mayor's role, there is less need for team-building than in prior years. Marilyn is familiar with the current Council and the multi-year discussions that shaped the City's existing priorities, many of which will carry forward into the next fiscal year. Given the number of large, ongoing capital and policy initiatives and limited capacity to add new items, retaining Marilyn provides continuity and supports a FY 26/27 strategic planning session focused on refinement, sequencing, and prioritization rather than expansion.
- Request to use the Saugatuck Yacht Club space again.
- Proposed Agenda Items
 - Introductions and TBD Focus Question
 - Learning Opportunities
 - What Training and Guest Speakers Does Council Desire?
 - What We've Done
 - 2025 Successes and Progress Towards Current Priorities – City Manager and Department Head Presentations
 - What We've Heard
 - Review of Master Plan Survey Results
 - Review of Strategic Framework
 - Current Vision and Goal/Pillar Areas
 - Discuss Proposed Changes or Refinements
 - Carryover Priorities for FY 26/27
 - Identification of Additional FY 26/27 Priorities
 - Rank FY 26/27 Priorities
 - Next Steps and Closing

I am seeking feedback on my recommendation and Council's availability in January for the session.

LEGAL REVIEW:

Legal will be at your meeting if you have any questions.

SAMPLE MOTION:

N/A. Workshop item.