

NANASOTA!TM

So much, so close.

**Report
and
Strategic Plan**

**Adopted
April 26, 2021**

**Prepared and Facilitated
By
Ron Cox Consulting**



REPORT AND STRATEGIC PLAN COUNCIL/STAFF RETREAT

CITY OF NAVASOTA

February 12, 2021

Introduction

On February 12, 2021, the Mayor, City Council and staff of the City of Navasota met for a retreat planning session. The purpose of this meeting was twofold.

- Confirm and expand the governance philosophy for the City Council. Included in that is identifying key elements of the Council's vision for Navasota.
- Prepare a strategic plan for the city.

The Mayor, Council and staff freely worked together, and their work was exemplary in all respects. Ron Cox facilitated the process.

Governance

In their February 12, 2021 session the Council confirmed the governance policy they established in 2017 and expanded on it by further defining their governance philosophy. The Council participated in discussions about their role, together and their leadership responsibilities. The elements of a strong governance model are having and following clear vision and mission, establishing leadership and communications philosophies, and identifying the expectations of each other as City Council members, and the City staff, and of identifying and recognizing the expectations staff has of the City Council.

The key elements of the Governance Philosophy are leadership, communication and understanding and defining expectations. These define how the team will function together. Visioning and planning are the key elements that define what the strategies and goals are for the City of Navasota and what they will be to ensure the vision is ultimately attained.

Governance Model

The governance model first begins with leadership. Each member of the Council asked to provide input into how they will lead, communicate and a defining of expectations for themselves and staff.

The facilitator began the process by asking each of the members why they ran and serve on the City Council. They responded as follows:

The Mayor and Council reviewed and confirmed their Governance Policy and Rules of Engagement established in 2017. These are as follows.

Mayor and Council members ran for the office and serve ...

- Had already serviced on other boards and wanted to be active in the growth to come.
- To lead city in the right direction.
- Saw growth coming and saw weaknesses in various ordinances that needed strengthening – now growth is really here.
- To bring a different insight as a native of Navasota.
- To encourage business growth and economic development.
- Am able to serve.
- Originally to change the direction of the city (and have done that).
- Exciting to be a part of big decisions for the community.

The facilitator then asked the members to describe the attributes they have that will contribute to the work of the Council.

Mayor and Council have the following attributes ...

- Able to think outside the box on issues.
- Business experience in the private sector.
- Provides a technical background.
- Brings a different point of view, being from a different generation than others on the Council.
- Historical memory as a native of Navasota.
- Love the community.
- Committed to the community.
- Service to the community.
- Have the time to serve.

- Have a special needs child bringing different perspective to decision making.
- Raised seven children and now grandchildren all in Navasota community and schools.
- Different stages of our lives, bring different viewpoints.

The Mayor and Council of the City of Navasota will lead by ...

- Providing the facts.
- Seeking and gaining understanding of the problems.
- Listening, asking, seeking information and deciding.
- Coming together for the greater good – compromising and building consensus.
 - Toward a common goal – betterment of Navasota.
 - Finding a win/win for all.
 - Building consensus.
- Picking your wins carefully.
- Not being afraid to admit you are wrong and changing your mind.
- Being patient.
- Being humble – not prideful or egotistical.
- Being passionate about our city, but not dictatorial.
- Being brave for our city.
- Showing respect and being respectful of others.

The Mayor and Council of the City of Navasota will communicate ...

- Effectively with citizens, each other and staff...
 - Concisely.
 - Clearly.
 - Completely.
- Seek and allow responses.
- Seek to understand.
- Take the time to explain the issue and resolution to each other and to citizens.

The Mayor and Council of the City of Navasota expect the following of each other...

- Remember we all work for the citizens – Council and staff alike.
- Set the table for the citizens on agenda items – fill in the gaps of knowledge for them.
- Follow the process.
- Be willing to slow the process down.
- Respect each other and their opinions.
- Be honest.
- Be consistent.
- Do your homework.
- Be vulnerable – admit you do not know everything.
- Be willing to learn.
- Don't take the issue personally

The Mayor and Council of the City of Navasota expect the following of the staff ...

- Set the table to explain agenda items for Council and citizens.
- Be clear and timely in the information flow to Council – understanding and responding to individual council members in the way that communicates best to them.
- Don't take it personally.
- Provide the full picture – the good, the bad, and the ugly.
- Have patience.
- Know your lane and stay in it.
- Understand the chain-of-command.

(It was noted that the City Council and staff should all have and respond to the same expectations.)

The staff expects the following of the Mayor and Council of the City of Navasota (as defined by the City Council) ...

- Don't play the "gotcha" game with staff.
- Have an understanding of staff, their role.
- Ask questions and don't assume.
- Have patience.
- Be fair.
- Listen to staff.
- Be respectful to staff.
- Seek information on what council can do to help the staff succeed.
- Seriously consider their recommendations.
- Attempt to solve the problems that are presented.
- Give them clear direction.
- Remember that staff is working for the citizens, as well as the Council.
- Don't put undue pressure on staff.
- Follow the chain-of-command.

Vision and Mission

On February 6, the Council and senior staff discussed the elements vision they have for Navasota. Currently, there are is Vision Statement and Mission Statement for the City. After a review, the Mayor and Council identified and confirmed the key elements of the vision and mission for the City.

Vision Statement

Navasota 2027: What America wants to Be:

A beautiful, progressive, vibrant, service oriented, close-kinit community filled with historic charm and promise for people and business.

Vision Elements

These elements were discussed and are presented in no particular order of priority. It was noted that in reviewing the Vision Statement from the Comprehensive Plan, these key vision elements are consistent with and embodied in the Vision Statement.

- Navasota is a role model for other cities.
- Clean.
- Safe.
- Friendly and inviting.
- Historic.
- Beautiful and manicured.
- Successful.
- Sustainable.
- Full of opportunity.
- Innovative.
- Charming.

Mission Statement

To guide Navasota's growth in a way that maintains our heritage, culture and uniqueness while maximizing our economic and social development.

Mission Elements

These key mission elements are presented in no particular order of priority.

- Committed.
- Stay focused on the mission.
- Dedication and desire.
- Proper planning.
- To communicate the Vision.
- Provide great/exceptional customer service.
- Clear, consistent, defined responsibilities.
- Flexible.
- Understanding of your role and responsibilities.

Strategic Planning

The facilitator led the participants in a SWOT analysis, identifying and discussing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the City of Navasota, both organizationally and in the community. The weaknesses then were divided into common themes – Areas of Emphasis or Vision Elements. Within each of the Areas of Emphasis, opportunities – strategies and goals – were identified to overcome the weaknesses.

Finally, threats were identified that if not anticipated may get in the way of accomplishing the strategies and goals.

The participants were divided into three groups. Each group focused on strengths and weaknesses as follows.

Strengths

Group 1

- Qualified personnel.
- Close knit team/community.
- Has a can-do attitude.
- Pride in community and city organization.
- Friendly.
- Great leadership – Council, City Manager and staff.
- Caring.
- Small town charm.
- Service oriented.
- Open minded and welcoming.
- Knowledgeable about work, etc.
- Dedication.
- Good foundation upon which to build.
- Resilient.
- Organization is accountable to the community.
- Have integrity and honesty.
- Everyone is team player.
- Willing to admit to issues and problems.
- Self-aware.
- Transparent.
- Have community support.
- Have a multi-faceted community makeup.
- Visionaries.
- Excellent location.
- Diversity in the community.

Group 2

- Great staff.
- Buy-in from the community.
- A community feeling.
- Progressive.
- Safe.
- Leadership.
- Proactive Council.
- Beginning infrastructure design improvements.
- City services.
- Facilities.

- Partnerships.
- Potential for growth.
- Location.
- History.
- Industry.

Group 3

- Experience of Council and staff.
- New councilmembers bringing energy and new ideas.
- Leadership.
- Collaboration.
- Creativity.
- Openness/inviting community.
- Honesty/trust.
- Stability.
- Teamwork.
- Loyalty and pride.
- Service minded.
- Relationships/friendly/user friendly.
- Fun.
- Commitment and dedication.

Weaknesses

Group 1

- Lack of social and health services.
- Minimal retail services.
- Lack of transportation services.
- Lack of after 5 p.m. activities.
- Aging infrastructure.
- Difficulty in communication from the city to the citizens.
- Lack of finances for unfunded mandates.
- Outside negative perception of the community.
- Finding and retaining good staff.
- Lack of seasoned/experienced staff at all levels.
- Lack of citizen input/involvement.
- Uninformed criticism from citizens.
- Limited connectivity to high quality internet.
- Technologically inhibited/fear of technology

Group 2

- Fear of change.
- More work than staff can accomplish.
- Lack of job career diversity.

- Perception of the school district.
- Lack of rental/multifamily in the city.
- Retail leakage.
- Lack of amenities for social and family time.
- Train traffic.
- Animal control/fire department facilities need replacing.
- Lack of internet connectivity.

Group 3

- Communication/understanding of the message.
- People making assumptions without all the information.
- Aging infrastructure.
- Sometimes resistant to change.
- Dislike of others.
- Financial resources are limited.
- Retention of employees.
- Outside perception of Navasota.
- People have long memories.
- Lack of participation by the citizens.
- Being required to respond to circumstances beyond our control.
- Limited technology in the community in the city.

Areas of Emphasis

Reviewing the weaknesses presented resulted in the identification of five areas of emphasis.

- **Governance**
- **Economic Development**
- **Image/Communication**
- **Infrastructure**

Weaknesses Rearranged

The weaknesses identified above, were then summarized and arranged to be within one of the areas of emphasis.

- **Governance**
 - Resistance to change.
 - Responding to circumstances beyond city's control.
 - Unfunded mandates.
 - Lack of participation.
- **Economic Development**
 - Diversity in career jobs.
 - Sufficient revenue for infrastructure redevelopment.

- Retail leakage
- Lack of social and family recreation.
- Need for diversity in housing.
- Social and health services.
- **Image/Communication**
 - Negative perception of school district.
 - Negative perception of city.
 - Inability to provide information to all ages
 - Internally and externally.
 - Lack of understanding.
 - Criticism from the uninformed.
 - From city to citizens
- **Infrastructure**
 - Train traffic.
 - Again infrastructure
 - Transportation.
 - Facilities.
 - Poor quality of internet and technology, city and citywide.
- **Organizational Excellence**
 - Employee retention.

Opportunities – Strategies and Goals

The groups then brainstormed to identify opportunities to overcome the weaknesses. These opportunities are the basis for the strategies and goals prepared below.

Governance

- **Establish a program to encourage more participation in Navasota government.**
 - Establish and implement leadership academies.
 - Establish a citizens' academy.
 - Establish a citizens' police academy.
 - Establish a citizens' fire academy.
 - Improve communication and strategic alignment between Council and all committees.
- **Establish an employee retention strategy.**
 - Identify and promote the work culture, benefits of the city.
 - Promote the community and organizational culture.
 - Explore housing incentives to live and work in Navasota and attract new employees.
 - Cast a wider net for employees.

- Explore opportunities for providing employee benefits that incentivize employment and retention.
- **Explore opportunity for a full-time grant writer.**
- **Provide a clear sense of direction to all boards related to economic development.**
 - Establish an Economic Development Strategy with the NEDC

(Note: there were some communications initiatives in Governance. These have been moved to Image/Communication to avoid repetition.)

Economic Development

- **Establish a partnership with NISD, Blinn, TAMU and other institutions to enhance the economic development process.**
- **Seek out grant opportunities.**
 - Pursue grants from EDA.
- **Enhance the marketing of Navasota.**
 - Marketing to fulfill housing needs.
 - Marketing of lower utility costs compared to other areas.
 - Marketing location and proximity to major metro areas in the state.
- **Seek partners to improve local health and social service providers.**
 - Explore health authority with county.
 - Explore partnership with St. Joseph's healthcare system.
 - Recruit health provider specialists (optometrists and medical providers)
- **Enhance strategic retail recruitment.**
 - Continue to partner with Retail Coach.
 - Attend recruitment conferences (industry, retail, restaurants, etc.)

(Note: there were some infrastructure initiatives in Economic Development. These have been moved to Infrastructure to avoid repetition.)

Image/Communication

- **Improve the perception and image of Navasota.**
 - Establish a positive campaign to promote Navasota.
 - Prepare both an in-person and digital message.
 - Identify target audiences.
 - Attend realtor conferences to tell the Navasota story.
 - Utilize citizens' academies (see Governance).
 - Explore use of Town Hall meetings – in-person and virtual.
- **Establish a program to educate ISD students about local government.**
 - Sponsor a job shadowing program for students in the city.
- **Improve communication in general with the public. (Note: moved from Governance)**
 - Be deliberate about creating buy-in from citizens.
 - Inform, educate and cast the vision.
 - Prepare and implement a communication protocol.

Infrastructure

- **Prepare a plan for construction of an elevated grade crossing over the railroad tracks.**
 - Identify location and right of way needs for the crossing.
 - Establish costs to city to accommodate the crossing.
 - Identify land for a substation for fire and animal control.
 - Establish contact and conversation with the railroad.
- **Prepare a capital improvements plan and program for needed city infrastructure.**
 - Improve aging infrastructure.
 - Improve aging and inadequate facilities.
 - Expand parks, trails and bike paths.
 - Identify funding sources – bonds, grants, etc.
- **Create additional opportunity for social and family amenities.**
 - Create additional sports facilities.
 - Make park improvements – trails, bike paths, etc.
- **Identify and plan for needed improvements to the community's internet system.**
 - Identify and review the existing systems available to the City
 - BVCOG Fiber Loop
 - Midsouth Synergies
 - Other

Organizational Excellence

- **Establish an employee retention strategy.**
 - Identify and promote the work culture, benefits of the city.
 - Promote the community and organizational culture.
 - Explore housing incentives to live and work in Navasota and attract new employees.
 - Cast a wider net for employees.
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Threats

Finally, Council and staff identified threats to accomplishing the goals and strategies that have been identified.

- Fear – lack of understanding of the issues and the unknown.
- Money.
- Economic downturn.
- Federal and state unfunded mandates and restrictions to local government.
- Social media.
- Uncommitted leadership.
- Politization of local government.
- Suffering the unintended consequences of outside mandates.

- Encroaching crime.
- Another pandemic – COVID.
- Adverse weather.
- No response to the failing infrastructure.
- The “cancel culture” – just turning off or destroying what one disagrees with – refusal to dialogue.
- Not adapting to the change in the ideology of the culture.

City Staff Implementation Sessions

April 5 and 14, 2021

On April 5, 2021 the facilitator met with the City Manager and staff to review the outcomes of the planning session and to determine next steps for the development of the implementation plan.

Implementation Plan Process. The staff reviewed a template to be used to develop the implementation portion of the planning process. During the discussions, a staff member was assigned as the team facilitator for the development of the implementation plan for each areas of emphasis. Further they began the process of developing action steps, with proposed timelines, and budget implications (if they were known at the time).

On April 14, 2021 staff again met with the facilitator to review and complete a draft implementation plan. The implementation plan is included in this document. It should be noted the staff realized that one or more of the Governance initiatives were more about the organization. As a result, staff created a new area of emphasis called Organizational Excellence. There are now five Areas of Emphasis. In addition, the staff added depth and rearranged some of the goals and action steps for better alignment.

Reporting

Finally, staff established reporting protocols. These protocols serve the purpose of keeping the staff on schedule with the implementation of strategies, keeping the City Manager informed, and providing regular reports to the Mayor and City Council on the status of the implementation of the adopted strategies. This provides for long term accountability toward the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Reporting Protocols

- **Council**

- Receives updates at least monthly from staff at Council meetings regarding various projects related to the strategic plan.
- Receives formal status reports, including a semi-annual and annual report from staff to the City Council.
- **City Manager**
 - City Manager receives regular – both formal and informal - updates from staff at regular staff meetings on progress of assignments.

City Council Approval

April 26, 2021

On April 26, 2021, the City Council reviewed their work as well as the work of the staff since the planning session in January. After a thorough discussion the Report was approved as amended unanimously.

Conclusion

The Mayor, Council and staff of the City of Navasota worked through a governance and planning process that allowed the Council to create a governance model and identify and expand strategies for moving the city forward. The process brought the staff leadership and Council closer together as a team and developed an implementation process to ensure the strategies are addressed and accomplished over time.



Strategic Plan 2021

**Council/Staff Planning Retreat
February 12, 2021**

**Adopted
April 26, 2021**

**Prepared and Facilitated
By
Ron Cox Consulting**

Vision Statement (Adopted 2017)

**Navasota 2027: What America wants to Be:
A beautiful, progressive, vibrant, service oriented,
close-kinit community filled with historic charm
and promise for people and business.**

Key Vision Elements 2021

- **Navasota is a role model for other cities.**
- **Clean.**
- **Safe.**
- **Friendly and inviting.**
- **Historic.**
- **Beautiful and manicured.**
- **Successful.**
- **Sustainable.**
- **Full of opportunity.**
- **Innovative.**
- **Charming.**

Mission Statement (Adopted 2017)

To guide Navasota's growth in a way that maintains our heritage, culture and uniqueness while maximizing our economic and social development.

Mission Elements

- **Committed.**
- **Stay focused on the mission.**
- **Dedication and desire.**
- **Proper planning.**
- **To communicate the Vision.**
- **Provide great/exceptional customer service.**
- **Clear, consistent, defined responsibilities.**
- **Flexible.**
- **Understanding of your role and responsibilities.**

City of Navasota

City Council

Leadership Philosophy

The City Council of the City of Navasota will lead by...

- Providing the facts.
- Seeking and gaining understanding of the problems.
- Listening, asking, seeking information and deciding.
- Coming together for the greater good – compromising and building consensus.
 - Toward a common goal – betterment of Navasota.
 - Finding a win/win for all.
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- Picking your wins carefully.
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- Being patient.
- Being humble – not prideful or egotistical.
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- Showing respect and being respectful of others.

City of Navasota

City Council

Communication Philosophy

The City Council of the City of Navasota will communicate by...

- Effectively with citizens, each other and staff...
 - Concisely.
 - Clearly.
 - Completely.
- Seek and allow responses.
- Seek to understand.
- Take the time to explain the issue and resolution to each other and to citizens.

City of Navasota
City Council and Staff
Expectations

Council expects the following of each other...

- Remember we all work for the citizens – Council and staff alike.
- Set the table for the citizens on agenda items – fill in the gaps of knowledge for them.
- Follow the process.
- Be willing to slow the process down.
- Respect each other and their opinions.
- Be honest.
- Be consistent.
- Do your homework.
- Be vulnerable – admit you do not know everything.
- Be willing to learn.
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City of Navasota

City Council and Staff

Expectations

Council expects the following of staff...

- Set the table to explain agenda items for Council and citizens.
- Be clear and timely in the information flow to Council – understanding and responding to individual council members in the way that communicates best to them.
- Don't take it personally.
- Provide the full picture – the good, the bad, and the ugly.
- Have patience.
- Know your lane and stay in it.
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(It was noted that the City Council and staff should all have and respond to the same expectations.)

Staff expects Council to (as defined by Council members themselves) ...

- Don't play the "gotcha" game with staff.
- Have an understanding of staff, their role.
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- Listen to staff.
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City of Navasota

Strategic

Areas of Emphasis

- **Governance**
 - **Guiding Principle:** *The City of Navasota follows established rules of governance that promote civil discourse, consistent and predictable deliberation and exemplary action.*

- **Economic Development**
 - **Guiding Principle:** *The City of Navasota will promote a strong and diverse economy that strengthens the local sales tax and property tax base while also contributing to a high quality of life.*

- **Image/Communication**
 - **Guiding Principle:** *The City of Navasota will proactively work to provide accurate, timely communications to the citizens and improve the image of the community.*

- **Infrastructure**
 - **Guiding Principle:** *The City of Navasota will provide excellent infrastructure and facilities that meets the needs of the citizens and businesses, and staff.*

- **Organizational Excellence**
 - **Guiding Principle:** *The City of Navasota will operate in a transparent, efficient, accountable and responsive manner by preparing the organization and the staff for the future, focusing on core services, attracting and retaining the best employees and wise stewardship of financial resources.*

Area of Emphasis

Governance

Guiding Principle: *The City of Navasota follows established rules of governance that promote civil discourse, consistent and predictable deliberation and exemplary action.*

Initiatives:

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 - Continue to partner with Retail Coach.
 - Attend recruitment conferences (industry, retail, restaurants, etc.)

Area of Emphasis

Image/Communications

Guiding Principle: *The City of Navasota will proactively work to provide accurate, timely communications to the citizens and improve the image of the community.*

Initiatives

- **Improve the perception and image of Navasota.**
 - Establish a positive campaign to promote Navasota.
 - Prepare both an in-person and digital message.
 - Identify target audiences.
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- **Improve communication in general with the public (Note: moved from Governance)**
 - Be deliberate about creating buy-in from citizens.
 - Inform, educate and cast the vision
 - Prepare and implement a communication protocol.

Area of Emphasis

Infrastructure

Guiding Principle: *The City of Navasota will provide excellent infrastructure and facilities that meets the needs of the citizens and businesses, and staff.*

Initiatives

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Guiding Principle: *The City of Navasota will operate in a transparent, efficient, accountable and responsive manner by preparing the organization and the staff for the future, focusing on core services, attracting and retaining the best employees and wise stewardship of financial resources.*

Initiatives

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