



To: Interim City Administrator Takiyah Douse

From: Wesley L. Meares, Ph.D.

Date: June 21, 2023

Re: City of Augusta Budget Retreat

Summary of City of Augusta Budget Retreat

Interim Administrator Douse:

Thank you for extending an invitation to be a part of the City of Augusta's Annual Budget Retreat. I enjoyed hosting you, your staff, and the commissioners at Augusta University. In addition to hosting, it was a pleasure to serve as the facilitator for the afternoon session. During the session, the commissioners noted that they enjoyed speaking with department heads and they requested more time talking with them next year. I recommend that next year you build in additional time to allow for these interactions. Following the conversation, the commissioners developed a list of priority areas they would like to consider as a focus for the upcoming fiscal year. I asked the commissioners to individually rank the areas. I combined the scores to create an aggregate ranking of the priority areas. I have taken those areas of focus and developed two groupings. First, are areas of focus in which to consider to include in the budget and the second are areas that will not require the same level of monetary investment. As noted in the retreat by your team, this list is not binding but serves as a starting point for consideration. I recommend that you and your staff continue to explore these areas as priorities as you prepare for the next fiscal year.

The first group areas are ranked in order as follows:

1. Investments in Quality of Life.
 - a. Access to neighborhood greenspaces.
 - b. Housing [discussion surrounded attracting new development].
 - c. Neighborhood Amenities.
 - d. Walkable neighborhoods [discussion did not indicate rather the focus should be on infrastructure improvements or accessibility of a variety of land uses].

Department of Social Sciences



2. Attracting and Retaining Talent.
 - a. Cost of Living Adjustments for employees.
 - b. Expanding Incentive Programs for employees.
3. Attracting New Residents.
 - a. Focus on Quality of Life improvements noted above.
4. Infrastructure.
 - a. More investment in the road repair/resurfacing program.
5. Homeless.
 - a. Creation of a Day Center
 - b. Find creative ways to partner with community organizations for services
6. Increase RCCI Crews.
 - a. Increase the number of trained officers/staff needed

The second group areas are ranked in order as follows:

1. Planning and Development Approvals
2. Increase Efficiency in the Approval Processes
3. Increasing Efficiency in the Procurement Process [including raising the limits needed for additional authorizations].
4. Cultivating greater inter-departmental collaboration between human resources professionals housed within various departments and the Department of Human Resources. With a particular emphasis on recruiting interns and talent.
5. Explore an Increase in the Hotel/Motel Tax.

Additionally, it should be noted that at the end of the session, there were two items that were brought up but not discussed or ranked by the group. Those were a Disparity Study and an Efficiency Plan. Furthermore, while not directly noted, public safety topics and issues were discussed in throughout the day. Public safety should also be considered when developing your priorities for the year.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to host you all and serve as your facilitator. If there is anything else that you need, please do contact me.

Best Regards,

Wesley Meares

Wesley L. Meares, Ph.D.

Email: wmeares@augusta.edu

Department of Social Sciences