

Whitewater City Council Retreat – Council Goals May 13, 2025

Summary Notes

1. Motivation for Serving on Council

Council members shared a variety of personal and civic motivations for joining or continuing on the Council:

- **Advocating for Change:** *Majkrzak* emphasized a desire to drive forward inclusive housing policies and push back against narrow interests.
- **Civic Engagement:** *Hicks* and *M. Smith* expressed a strong commitment to representing the community, *Hicks* particularly for District 5, and fighting civic apathy.
- **Representation and Growth:** *O. Smith* sees their role as essential in representing a unique student population and fostering engagement and growth.
- **Learning and Evolution:** *Sahyun* entered with a desire to learn, while *Schanen* noted his role evolved from early expectations into meaningful governance.
- **Public Service Ethos:** *Singer* finds fulfillment in helping residents and values the forward-thinking atmosphere of City leadership.

2. Top Community Priorities and Metrics for Success

Each council member identified key focus areas and markers of success for their term:

- **Housing Development:** *Singer* and *Majkrzak* are focused on increasing housing options, especially affordable and alternative forms such as tiny houses, and reducing barriers to development.
- **Economic and Business Growth:** *M. Smith* and *Hicks* prioritized attracting manufacturing and commercial businesses. *Majkrzak* highlighted addressing Business Park stagnation.
- **Vibrancy and Engagement:** *Schanen* and *M. Smith* want to enhance quality of life through events like music at the bandshell and celebrations, while *O. Smith* emphasized student engagement.
- **Health and Accessibility:** *O. Smith* prioritized improving healthcare and substance abuse resources. *Sahyun* focused on transportation accessibility, extended compost site hours, and future-minded growth.
- **Public Safety:** *Hicks* placed strong emphasis on implementing School Resource Officers (SROs).
- **Infrastructure Planning:** *O. Smith* also noted the water tower and upcoming America 250 celebration as priority projects.

3. Anticipated Challenges

Council members foresee several structural and cultural hurdles in achieving their goals:

- **Financial Constraints:** *M. Smith* and *Schanen* flagged inflation and state budgeting as ongoing concerns.

- Community Resistance and Engagement: *Hicks* noted cultural resistance to housing alternatives (NIMBYism), and *O. Smith* expressed concern about low participation and engagement.
- Aging Infrastructure: *Singer* focused on the difficulties of revitalizing older housing stock while keeping costs and fees manageable.
- Service and Civic Decline: *Singer* also highlighted a broader decline in civic and volunteer engagement that must be addressed.
- Accessibility and Services: *Schanen* and *O. Smith* pointed to lack of urgent care and related transportation as specific service gaps.

4. Administration Support Needs

Council members emphasized the need for technological and organizational enhancements to support their work:

- Better Information Access: *Sahyun* and *Majkrzak* suggested developing an FAQ and searchable meeting minutes. *Singer* recommended a Legislative Management System.
- Outreach and Events: *Hicks* suggested hiring an Event Director. *Schanen* and *Singer* urged a continued focus on outreach and proactive communication with underserved parts of the community.
- Maintain Momentum: *Majkrzak* praised recent staff changes and encouraged continued progress.

5. Aspirational Goals for the City

Council members shared visionary ideas and long-term aspirations for the City of Whitewater:

- Infrastructure Expansion: Multiple members (*Singer*, *Schanen*, *M. Smith*) mentioned developing a four-lane highway, though *M. Smith* stressed business development should come first.
- Community-Wide Visioning: *Singer* proposed a community visioning session and public engagement activities like a survey or community fundraiser.
- Amenity and Cleanliness Improvements: *Sahyun* advocated benchmarking community amenities. *Hicks* and *Schanen* highlighted the need for consistent code enforcement to clean up public spaces.
- Collaboration and Engagement: *Hicks* called for deeper cooperation among the City, School District, and University. *O. Smith* urged institutionalizing community engagement as a core goal.
- Small Business Growth: *Majkrzak* emphasized supporting entrepreneurs, improving visibility of natural assets like the lakes, and focusing on meaningful engagement.

Individual Questions

1. What motivated you to serve or continue to serve as a Council Member?

Majkrzak – Continue making change, pushing housing of all types and not let small interests control agenda

Sahyun – Was asked and it provided an opportunity to learn more

Hicks – To get involved and be a voice for District 5 by improving relations, getting more people involved from the district and changing stagnation in that area.

Schanen – It has changed from when ran, not spend as much time talking campers and more time doing the important work.

O. Smith – Motivation has also changed from when last ran, representation serves a unique population of the city and wants to work to make students want to stay, grow and be engaged.

M. Smith – To be a responsible community member, work against the apathy from people who don't want to get involved – need more people acting like leaders.

Singer – Enjoys the challenge and responding to citizens, especially problem-solving their concerns and helping the public. Staff, administration and Council are forward thinking and energetic which makes it easier to work in a forward direction.

2. What are your top priorities for our community during your term and how will you measure success?

Singer – Housing, finding responsible and responsive solutions. How do we differentiate ourselves as a community to attract residents and employers?

M. Smith – Not in favor of subsidizing rental properties, was a big reason why ran as well as area around the lakes, effectively and efficiently working on the downtown and attracting manufacturing. Finding a path to have a few more commercial businesses. See more quality of life things in town like music at the bandshell.

O. Smith – Increase health care opportunities in City particularly in field of substance abuse. Water tower plans and America 250 celebration are priorities.

Schanen – Responsible development and adding vibrancy. Working to get people to come out like at the 4th celebration, downtown and lakes.

Hicks – Has changed goal on Spring Splash and doesn't want to waste time and money. Priority will be to push as hard as can on School Resource Officers (SRO) and make sure that happens. Need more business – how to jump on board the expansions that are going on in other communities.

Sahyun – Compost site open earlier and later. Park improvements. Accessibility especially in transportation and for those that don't drive. Intelligent growth and how to extend that to the future.

Majkrzak – Business Park stagnation. Housing, people aren't moving here because there isn't any housing that is affordable and there are opportunities in rentals and tiny houses. Combat higher taxes through growth.

3. What ongoing or new challenges do you anticipate in achieving your objectives?

Singer – How to deal with aging housing stock without sacrificing existing housing. How to reduce barriers such as dropping our fees. How to make ourselves competitive with other communities.

Hicks – Hopefully SRO issue will resolve in the next months. How to deal with NIMBY and the hard core thought that things need to be a certain thing and not being open about smaller houses. Fees.

Schanen – Challenge will continue to be the State budget process. Maintaining positive City and University relations – talking more.

O. Smith – How to encourage community engagement especially getting people to leave their houses.

M. Smith – Combating inflation over the last 5 years – prices are so high. How to encourage community involvement – more people involved in the community.

Singer – Large shift in service involvement which has been on the decline, civic engagement will continue to be a problem. How to keep the community as an informed partner. How to diversify the community to support multiple avenues of growth. How to identify needs and make it happen within the budget.

Schanen – Urgent care

O. Smith – Transportation to urgent care

4. How can the city administration best support you in achieving your goals?

Majkrzak – Staff has shifted and progress is happening – keep doing what doing.

Sahyun – Develop an FAQ on the website for general questions that keep having to answer.

Majkrzak – Provide a way to search by word or topic in the meeting minutes.

Singer – Legislative Management System

Hicks – Event Director may be needed.

Schanen – Continue to emphasize getting information out

Singer – Responsive, professional and proactive. Continue efforts to reach out to those pockets in the community that don't know where to go.

5. The one thing I wish the City of Whitewater would do is ...?

Singer – Four-lane highway. Visioning session for whole community. (Survey of community). Softball game fundraiser between community members.

Sahyun – More stuff (Analysis of comparable community amenities)

Hicks – Clean up its act. Certain places look trashy with trash, weeds and nuisances. Really prioritize code enforcement. Continue to explore ways that the School District, City and University can work together.

Schanen – Consistently enforce code violations and develop a four-lane highway.

O. Smith – Community engagement, make community engagement a part of Communications goal or its own goal.

M. Smith – Go after business before getting a four-lane highway. Plan for long term in adding jobs.

Majkrzak – Find ways to attract and retain small businesses (How to set up shop) and highlight lakes. Engage in ways that are productive.