



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: March 7, 2022

LOCATION: Southlake Town Hall
1400 Main Street, Room 4A
Southlake, Texas 76092

TIME: 6:00 P.M.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Place 1 – Sherry Berman, Chair
Place 3 – Eric Wang
Place 4 – Vamsi Alla
Place 5 – Roja Kasarla
Place 7 – Muhammad Iqbal

COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:

Place 2 – Vandana Tanneru
Place 6 – Vacant

STAFF PRESENT:

Melody Andersen, Operations Manager, Customer Relations
Madeline Oujesky, Assistant to the Director, Planning and Development

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor John Huffman

OTHERS PRESENT:

N/A

REGULAR AGENDA

1. **Call to order.** Meeting called to order at 6:02 by Sherry Berman, Chair.
2. **Approve February 7, 2022 CEC meeting minutes.** Vamsi Alla made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Eric Wang provided a second. Approved (4-0). Roja Kasarla arrived after the minutes were approved.

3. Staff Reports

- a. Annual Engagement Report 2020/21
 - Sherry will present the Annual Engagement Report at the April 5th City Council meeting
 - Melody – asked the committee to review the annual report and make note of any changes or additions
 - Melody – went through Sherry’s presentation for City Council
 - Summary of annual report
 - Mission / Purpose
 - Meeting frequency / accomplished items during fiscal years 2020 & 2021
 - Muhammad – add recycling initiative and feedback
 - Sherry – Water forum?
 - Muhammad – Citizen Satisfaction Survey (preparation, testing, promotion, receiving results, utilizing results, prepping for next survey; it’s a 360 process)
 - SPIN Meeting Activities
 - Muhammad – Can we note how many development cases are coming through?
 - Madeline – Absolutely, the number of development cases is highlighted in the report in the SPIN section. Would also recommend highlighting the amount of attendance through online views
 - Melody – We can add those numbers to the presentation slide
 - Sherry – Frank Bliss apartment complex development case: important to highlight that the citizens felt like they had a voice
 - Upcoming FY 2022 Activities – 3 categories (areas of focus)
 - Push information
 - Gather information
 - Technology & Research
 - Sherry – Council members have asked about residents interacting online during City Council meetings. Basically, holding public forums online.
 - Melody – Can ask Amy Shelley where CSO is at in the process.
 - Vamsi – Add SPIN forum: providing platform for residents to interact in the development process
 - Muhammad – Rename top of the slide to “Engagement Activities”

- Vamsi – questioning the turnover in the committee and why there is a need for alternatives
 - Sherry – trying to get new volunteers vs. recurring volunteers
 - Melody – this committee normally has positions open
 - Sherry – we’ve always had individuals leave, due to other life circumstances
- Muhammad – history behind the mission statement?
 - Melody – mission comes from the annual report
 - Sherry – when SPIN was getting political, there was a reorganization – the Mayor and City Council created the mission and vision to realign values and goals. When CEC came along, our committee focused on aligning with the City strategy map
 - Sherry – are you thinking we restructure the mission and vision?
 - Muhammad – when I first read it, it felt fluffy. It is well-written; however, as a member of this committee it does not inspire me. That means something.
 - Melody – I feel like we can collectively update the mission and vision
 - Vamsi – I think you mean, are we serving as an advisory committee to City Council?
 - Muhammad – meaningful work vs. non-meaningful work. According to the mission, I don’t think we are fulfilling it.
 - Melody – opportunity to rework the mission and vision because I believe this was created almost 10 years ago.
- Eric – appendix slides to show graphs for growth?
 - Sherry – depends how much time they have, honestly. Normally the presentation is short and sweet.

Melody to update the report after all discussions

4. CEC Strategy Update

- a. Discuss Transparency Update
 - Sherry – Did City Council bring this up? Or Shana?
 - Melody – Honestly all city governments are striving to be transparent with the community, specifically when it comes to finances. There is a goal to be transparent – how do we operate, how are decisions made, etc. Creating and utilizing an engagement tool can tie into the duties of this committee.
 - Sherry – Bond issue: individuals on social media sites depict it as not forthright or detailed. They say the bond is being used for City Council pet projects instead of open space projects. Would this be a topic that could be more transparent?

- Melody – When something is going forward to vote, the City has to be impartial. The City cannot show that it is “for” or “against” an item or project. For a transparency side, other cities place a project online and open a comment section – we could use this for specific topics.
- Sherry – Transparency will need to come after the fact – here is the lingo of the bond; this is what it includes (water, infrastructure, open space, etc.)
 - Melody – All in all, we’re looking at taking a project and creating dialogue around it to create transparency. Other than finances, how are we promoting transparency?
- Sherry – Volunteers who serve the City do not always have the opportunity to sway one way or the other; so do we need to be transparent about volunteers being neutral when they serve the City?
- Vamsi – Follow-up: what is the goal of being transparent?
 - Melody – To share information and ensure that all information is out in the open
 - Vamsi – I understand the why, how do we achieve it? Placing it on the website? What are we trying to achieve?
 - Muhammad – Goal of transparency is to give insight on how decisions are made. Transparency is another form of engagement. Great initiative. We cannot build it all in one day, we must begin and build on it.
 - Vamsi – So what do we have today?
 - Melody – The financial piece is the only one we have
 - Sherry – Planning & Zoning is a great example – this process has been very transparent in how citizens can be involved from the beginning to the end
 - Vamsi – Do we need to identify what other areas need to be more transparent?
 - Melody – Place ideas on a whiteboard and stem from there
- Sherry – Police website: if someone is running away, they will not put lives at risk to be in pursuit
- Melody – How do you consolidate all the information to be transparent. What is the visibility? What is the risk?
 - Muhammad – Who is the end user and how does it impact them?
- Eric – What topics for transparency: can we see what search terms residents are typing into search boxes?
 - Vamsi – Some cities use trending links near the top of the website
 - Melody – Search bar will be moved to the top of the page and trending topics will be below it

- Muhammad – Social responsibility: does the City of Southlake have social responsibility? Is it worth being transparent about? EX: any sort of social work that the City helps with, funds anything. Other jurisdictions that the City of Southlake helps with?
 - Melody – Southlake Cares initiative: organizations and programs we partner with. To your point, how are we more transparent about it?
- Muhammad – Do you measure complaints?
 - Melody – We're not great at it, because we do not have a comprehensive tool for it now. Come Fix This Form
 - Muhammad – You can measure complaints to results
 - Melody – Dashboarding feature

5. Other Items

- a. New Resident Website Review
 - Sherry – Move topic to next meeting
 - Melody – Transparency and new resident webpage go hand-in-hand, so we can break this up into two meetings: one to target transparency initiatives and the next to review the website
- b. Emergency Response Feedback
 - Melody – As we move into the year, we can partner with Amanda about emergency topics, initiatives, and events.

6. Discuss Future Agenda Items

Mayor Huffman

- Refining the responsibilities of the CEC
- Forego the candidate forums for CISD and City Council elections
 - CISD – Difficult political climate where it places the committee in a tough position
 - City Council – Candidates are running uncontested, so no forum this cycle
 - We will discuss how to handle candidate forums going forward

Sherry

- Opportunity to add alternatives to CEC since we have a new vacancy on the committee
- Melody – spoke to Amy Shelley and we will need to update the CEC ordinance and bylaws to add alternates

Sherry

- Update mission and vision statement for the committee

- Candidate forums – Mayor called today and City Council wonders why we host forums for CISD because it is politically charged right now. There are four other CISD candidate forums. Pushed back on cancelling City Council candidate forums because I hear our forums are the most professional out of them all. Any thoughts?
 - Vamsi – Important to host because those other forums have specific audiences. The City remains neutral and the forums are not targeted to a certain influence.
 - Muhammad – I think it's great that the City hosts them, from a citizen perspective. Good opportunity to get to know the candidates. The City forums tend to be the most neutral and transparent.
 - Melody – Will check with Shana about the process and whether to draft a note, gather your thoughts, and send to Mayor Huffman.
 - Sherry – My fear is that the City has done these forums for a long time, so what happens if we immediately halt them immediately? If the candidate forums continue in the future, we should refine the process and pull in professionals to help us prepare unbiased questions.
 - Muhammad – CISD candidate forums – who hosts these?
 - Vamsi – I can send you links and names of organizations
 - Melody – The other candidate forums are not affiliated with the City
 - Sherry – Maybe Chamber of Commerce helped host a candidate forum with the City?
 - Muhammad – Would these same organizations host the City Council candidate forum?
 - Sherry – Yes

7. **Adjournment.** Sherry closed the meeting at 7:35 PM.

ATTEST:



 Vamsi Alla, Secretary