

Town of Camp Verde

Town Council Retreat Strategic Discussion Session

October 19, 2023
3 – 7 pm at the Jackpot Ranch

Summary Report and Next Steps

1. Welcome

Mayor Dee Jenkins called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees: Council Members Jackie Baker, Wendy Escoffier, Cris McPhail, Jessie Murdock, Vice Mayor Marie Moore, and Town Manager Ted Soltis, Town Attorney Trish Stuhan. Town Manager Ted Soltis introduced facilitator Evelyn Casuga with Arizona Town Hall who guided the evening's discussion.

2. Introductions/Expectations

During introductions, each Councilmember introduced themselves, described their path to and motivation for becoming a Council member, and their continuing involvement in the community. Town Manager Ted Soltis highlighted his career, as did facilitator Evelyn Casuga. Evelyn noted that this initial discussion would most likely lead to further strategic work for the Council to consider.

Expectations from participants for the evening's process included the following:

- Participation with open minds
- Goal setting
- Role clarity
- Achieving teamwork

3. Environmental Scan/Opportunities & Risks

Global, national, state challenges and opportunities which impact Camp Verde:

- Tension in the Middle East and global wars.
- Politicians not working together, starting at the Federal level and continuing at the State level, is creating divisiveness which also affects local governments.
- Arizona Legislature dictating to local governments what they can and cannot do, as well as currently and potentially continuing to negatively impact municipal budgets.
- Special interests at the State level having outsized influence over Legislative decisions with little or no regard to the interests of Arizonans overall.
- "The Great State of Maricopa" vs. the rest of the State is and has been a long-term perception and dilemma.

Regional and local challenges and opportunities:

The following will serve as the list of items for a separate Council session to delve deeper and provide guidance and prioritization to the Town Manager and his team:

- Water
 - Providing water security to residents and businesses.
 - Verde River impacts i.e., tourism, scenic waterway.
 - Relationship with Salt River Project (SRP).
- Streets and roads
 - State, County, local funding – inadequate

- Although the region currently has the Verde Valley Transportation Planning Organization, work is underway to establish a Municipal Planning Organization which may provide more opportunity for increased funding in the Verde Valley and its municipalities.
- Library
 - Need for additional exploration and scrutiny of Yavapai County's funding formula to libraries throughout the County, including in Camp Verde. Recent reductions to libraries and potential future reductions would be detrimental to County residents.
- Yavapai College
 - There is no physical facility to serve residents in Camp Verde.
- Healthcare
 - Although negotiations are in process with Northern Arizona Healthcare, recent limitations and lack of providers in Camp Verde have hampered access to quality healthcare to residents.
- Housing
 - Housing affordability and availability are issues throughout Arizona; however, specifics differ in each municipality. As an example, in Sedona, short term rentals are a critical issue, this is not so in Camp Verde. Lack of housing for first time homebuyers and working families rise to the top here.
 - A transient population who lives long-term in recreational vehicles impact local Infrastructure (e.g., streets) without the same tax investment as those who are more traditionally housed.
- Electricity
 - Due to unanticipated rapid growth in Camp Verde and surrounding areas, Arizona Public Service (APS) is playing catch-up to provide for the needs in the region, exacerbated by supply chain issues. This is a temporary situation.
- Evolving role of Mayor/Relationship with other elected officials
 - As noted previously regarding potential actions by the State Legislature that negatively impact municipalities, the Mayor plays an escalating role as a Voice of Local Governments. With background data, information, and tracking performed by the League of Arizona Cities and Towns, the Mayor's presence is increasingly required to advocate for cities and towns particularly during the Legislative session in Phoenix.
 - Strong support for Camp Verde was noted by Supervisor James Gregory at the County-level.
 - It was observed that State-level representatives have not been present in the community.
- Planning Foundations
 - Update of General Plan which will require voter approval.
 - Update of Zoning Code, which was not updated after approval of the current General Plan.
 - Exploration of establishing design review and landscape guidelines.
 - Development agreements - It was noted that past developments have not appeared to have adhered to what was promised (verbally or in writing) which may have resulted in projects that have not held up well over time. Newer development agreements will need to consider and outline with clear stipulations.
- Revenue generation considerations

- With increasing community needs driven by a greater increase in population and differing needs of a younger demographic than the rest of the County, exploration of potential revenue streams may be warranted.

4. Focus Areas

At this initial session with Council and Town Manager, the two focus areas are foundational to establish productive working relationships given new dynamics.

- Roles and Responsibilities

In keeping with policy and practice of municipalities throughout Arizona, there was strong consensus that the Town Council does and continues to adhere to the Council-Manager form of government. The Town Council is the policy-making body of the Town. The Town Council has oversight over three positions in the Town: Town Manager, Town Attorney, and Town Magistrate.

The Town Manager is charged with the day-to-day responsibility of Town administration, personnel, and operational functions; providing guidance and recommendations to Council regarding policies; and carrying out the decisions of the Council.

Councilmembers reminded one another to stay out of the day-to-day operations of the Town. In also raising awareness that the “elected” hat doesn’t come off, perceptions by residents and employees may have unintended impacts and consequences.

- Communications

In the past 18-24 months the Town has experienced several leadership transitions which may be leading to confusion, tension, and a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities. Discussion focused on the intent to build trust, respect, and teamwork among and between all involved: Council, Manager, Employees, and the Community. Improved communication, communication flow, and transparency will be foundational to furthering this intent.

With a long list of potential goals and strategies to be developed (see regional and local issues section), the value of different communication styles and incorporating varied perspectives on the Council will strengthen consensus on focus and direction to the Town Manager.

Works in progress and proposals were presented by the Town Manager for Council feedback (separate document distributed):

- Internal

- Internal newsletter to employees. Consider one newsletter vs a separate newsletter to community.
- Councilmembers will each receive the same updates from the Town Manager on a regular basis.

- External

- Community newsletter. Consider one newsletter vs a separate newsletter to employees.
- A new online complaint process was introduced.


5. Next Steps

- There was consensus that another strategic planning session was necessary to begin setting priorities, responsible parties, timelines, and budgets to the initial regional and local challenges and opportunities list.
- The Council will provide feedback regarding the internal and external newsletters.

6. Meeting adjourned at 7 pm



Mayor Dee Jenkins



Attest: Town Attorney Trish Stuhan

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing Minutes are a true and accurate accounting of the actions of the Mayor and Common Council of the Town of Camp Verde during the Regular Session of the Town Council of Camp Verde, Arizona, held on October 19, 2023. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held, and that a quorum was present.

Dated this 15th day of November, 2023.



Trish Stuhan, Town Attorney