Call To Order: 9:00 a.m.
Roll Call:  West, Martinez, Hamilton, Irish, Stadtherr

SCHEDULED MATTER

Mayor Stadtherr welcomed everyone to the special meeting of the Porterville City Council, Strategic Planning Session. The Mayor then turned the meeting over to City Manager John Longley.

City Manager recapped last year’s sessions, providing a copy of the staff report that went to Council of the five defined issues from last year’s group. He stated that the five issues the Council settled on were from a different time/different set of policy makers and today’s group may settle on a different set of issues altogether. City Manager further explained the goal of the sessions, a total of three, and why they are important, i.e., to engage in dialog to define the core, essential issues facing the community. This way, he said, we can utilize the resources most effectively. He added the process isn’t a miracle cure as such, but it is highly useful. It gets everyone down the road much faster, builds consensus into the process, and gives a sense of direction we otherwise don’t have.

City Manager at this point introduced professor, Dr. Cary Simon, of the Naval Post Graduate School. Dr. Simon works through the Defense Department and spreads his methodology around the world to assist others toward utilizing American-style democracy. He has worked with governments of Peru and Colombia, among others. He has also been working fairly extensively with local governments and, the City Manager added, we are privileged that he is willing to work with us.

Everyone in attendance introduced themselves and Dr. Simon thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He stated this is where government really begins to manifest itself, saying this is how government really works. The people, citizens, of government come into contact with those they have elected to govern and to make decisions and choices about the future, about the City. Dr. Simon further explained the process that he recommends that the group is to follow. He explains that it’s a 50/50 process. He will do his share, 50%, to get something that’s productive for Porterville. The group will have their duties/responsibilities for the remaining share. Everyone attending the meeting was encouraged to participate.

At this point he presented a scenario to the group where the group was asked to make a choice in the scenario that was given. He explained that the planners/decision makers do not have enough resources to fix all the problems/solving everything. Choices have to be made among a group of people about where to put resources, i.e., energy, time, money, and expertise. He also explained, that going hand-in-hand with choices, the group will also be making a value distinction. He added that this is all about decision making as it relates to strategy/decisions/direction for the City.
Discussion followed among the group regarding relationships between operations/administration vs. the logic to public/private sector. Dr. Simon said the majority of the time is typically spent on the operations/administration stage. He mentions Gresham’s Law which he explained: entities are so busy they don’t have time to try to make the maneuvers to position themselves to the future. Which means, he said, these businesses are reacting, i.e., answer the phones, the mail, whatever occurs each day. He added this approach may not be the best way to give businesses the most value or leverage. Dr. Simon stated that about 5% of the time the group will be discussing Porterville’s future, which he termed “Strategic Issues.” The problem with Planning, he said, some organizations have a plan, with no action. The plan in and of itself does nothing. Strategic management a.k.a. change/implementation takes action on issues.

Dr. Simon said the first thing is the “assessment” of the situation and the group must diagnose the current state of affairs, then proceed to make the changes upon consensus. The second piece is “setting direction.” One way to set direction is to have goals/objectives, i.e., rules/regulations. You can set a direction using vision, a mission. Aspects of the City’s mission were discussed. An “issue” is neutral, something that’s important/relevant to Porterville. Some issues may become emotional and may turn into a disagreement. Dr. Simon explained there is no right or wrong way to discuss any issue. He recommended talking about the important issues facing Porterville. The heart of the matter is to get to the issues as fast we can and also realizing the choices that are involved. He explained the terms: “content” (Porterville’s issues) vs. “process” (action plan). In dealing with strategy, the group will go back and forth between content and process. Process is how we will identify the issues, how are we going to develop an action plan. The length of the process was discussed, i.e., when should it happen - days, months, and/or years. Dr. Simon recommended to look at issues no longer than three years out, changing as the political process changes. In his experience, anything longer than three years will be too long. Transformation of New York City mentioned which took decades/vision. Discussion followed. The term consensus was defined by Dr. Simon, “the people in this room should be able to come together around the important/relevant things in Porterville.”

Dr. Simon stated that last year’s group created a list of the City’s perceived strengths and weaknesses. From this list, issues were starting to emerge. Dr. Simon explained the City’s internal Stakeholders putting ourselves in the position of the elected officials, who have hired the staff to govern Porterville. Other stakeholders are its citizens, i.e., business owners, educational representatives. The meaning of a stakeholder is defined = anybody that has a stake in what Porterville is trying to accomplish or can have an impact for Porterville. A list was made of the area’s stakeholders. Meeting the needs and expectations of the important Stakeholders is what it is all about Dr. Simon stated.

Following a short break the meeting continued.

Dr. Simon gave a handout to everyone titled Strategic Issues. The purpose of the handout has a theoretical foundation, i.e., an art and a science of strategic planning. It’s one way to go about planning Dr. Simon said – Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats a.k.a. the SWAT analysis.
The handout is used as a tool, to help set a direction. Internal/external stakeholders as it relates to success was discussed. It’s the perceptions from the Stakeholders that determines success, what they perceive. There is a flow and rhythm and a theoretical foundation for what we are doing.

Next in the meeting was the framing of issues that the City is now facing. Dr. Simon explained the three-step criteria: 1) Frame it into a question the City can do something positive about. (If the City cannot do anything about it, it’s not an issue for the City.) 2) What’s the alternative, and 3) The consequences if the question is not resolved. Discussion followed on previous five-year plans and why they were created. As the environment changes, so does the issues/plans Dr. Simon said. “Issue management” means a shorter time frame, i.e., issues we can take action on in the next one, two, to three years. Typically governments look 20 years into the future as well as real time issues. Plan vs. reacting further defined. We are in an operational world, i.e., this is where we live. We can: 1) do what I can to try and prepare a little for the future, or 2) get back to work into the reaction mode. Discussion followed on airline safety after September 11, 2001.

At this point questions were developed on the issues facing Porterville. Topics of possible discussion were on: air quality; attracting more businesses; attracting more tourism (separate to business); recreational needs, i.e., increasing green spots; combating graffiti. Last year’s Strategic Plan handouts were referenced at this point: “The City should establish an environment that encourages development of a value added dynamic base.” Dr. Simon clarified the meaning “Value added” = value of education, monetary expenditures, tax base. Dynamic economic base means diverse economic base.

Lengthy discussion followed on the topic of graffiti prevention/removal. Graffiti is everywhere - on signs, public utility boxes, trash cans and is very visible. The current Council knows the importance of the ongoing graffiti issue. City Manager indicated this topic will be addressed at the next City Council meeting.

At this point, discussion followed on incorporating county areas into the City. The pros and cons were mentioned. Possible ways to phrase the questions were discussed. For example, Dr. Simon said, “How can we increase community building efforts to enhance the community as it relates to county islands.” The City Manager said that it costs approximately $6,000 to incorporate a residence into the City. The City does not recoup its cost.

After a short break, Dr. Simon recapped last year’s handout asking the group if any of them needed to be addressed at today’s meeting. Water/sewer discussed and streets was also added. Eliminate the time period of five years to “must be met.” How can we ensure the water/sewer needs are met? Funding sources, staffing levels discussed. Leadership Program successes mentioned in working with tomorrow’s leaders to develop their leadership skills today.

How can we use the staff resources we have in a most effective manner? City Manager explained to the group where we stand with Council’s recent budget adoption. Currently, he said we have a hiring freeze on City positions, resource driven, but all public safety positions, Police and Fire,
are exempt from this. Any other position that is critical to the health and safety of the community, or meets contractual requirements are also exempt from the freeze. Resources are challenging, Mr. Longley said, but the “sky is not falling.” Dr. Simon said he doesn’t see an issue at what he is hearing because the City Manager can hire/fire public safety positions. Staffing levels for Police and Fire Departments further discussed. City Manager stated he believes it is a crucial current issue that we maintain adequate levels of staffing/support, basic public services, especially public safety.

In closing, Dr. Simon gave direction to the group to rank the issues that were developed. Following are the questions and how they were ranked by the group, the consensus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Ranked</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to ensure water, sewer, and street requirements are met?</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>How can we attract more businesses?</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>How can we improve Porterville’s “Air Quality?”</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>How to maintain efforts to recruit, train, and retain employees (staff) to meet essential service responsibilities?</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>How to engage the community to further prevent and reduce graffiti?</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determine its need for additional recreational facilities and “open-space,” and size, location, access, financing and type of same, e.g., River Parkway.</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>How can we attract more visitors?</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>How to entice “county islands” into the City?</td>
<td>5</td>
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**ADJOURNMENT**

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 1:00 p.m.

Colette Parnell, PFD Secretary

Richard M. Stadtherr, Mayor