



## City Council Agenda Item

**City Council Meeting Date:** February 16, 2021

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

**FROM:** Jim Throop, City Manager  
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**SUBJECT:** Review, Discussion, and Possible Action on City Council Goals, Priorities, and Community Survey Input

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### **Recommendation:**

Staff recommends the City Council review and discuss the Council goals from the Biennial Budget Fiscal Years (FY) 2019-21 for any desired modifications, deletions, or additions, as well as review the results from the community survey on such Council goals.

### **Background:**

The City Council, at the January 19, 2021, meeting requested that the current Council goals, approved in March 2019, be brought back for discussion and possible action on updating the goals.

The City Council also discussed, and requested, that a community survey be held in order to obtain additional input from the Lompoc community.

### **Discussion:**

On Saturday, March 9, 2019, the City Council held a special workshop to discuss what goals and priorities the City should focus on for the next two years. The meeting was open to the public, and had a number of residents attend and give their input on what they would like to see happen in the City.

After considerable input and discussion, the following goals were developed and approved by the City Council:

1. Ensure a safe and supportive city through fully staffed and equipped Public Safety departments;

2. Implement a Community Development program that improves opportunities for growth of our residents and businesses;
3. Provide support and partnerships that empower community members and volunteers' ability to improve Lompoc; and
4. Determine a sustainable financial plan.

A more detailed account of the progress made on the different goals are as follows:

1. Ensure a safe and supportive city through fully staffed and equipped Public Safety departments.
  - a. Police and Human Resources have worked cohesively in order to search for sworn officers to move laterally (come from another city) into Lompoc. Unfortunately, a number of factors come into play that have prevented the City from having any experienced sworn officers applying.
    - i. Changes to pension benefits – this change made by the State of California has caused officers to stay in current cities as any movement to a new city/position lowers their retirement ability.
    - ii. Salaries in Lompoc are lower than most other agencies in the same market area. This makes it difficult to attract experienced officers.
  - b. Police and Human Resources have worked on holding the required testing of potential candidates as often as allowed by POST standards. Currently, the City is testing candidates every 45 days, rather than approximately three times a year.
  - c. Due to the increased and intensive search for new officers, the City has been able to hire eight new officers but, unfortunately, the City has lost 11 officers over the same period time, for a net reduction of three officers. However, the new officers must attend and pass the required Police Academy (a six-month process), before going on to Field Training, which is approximately another six-to-eight-month process before being allowed to patrol on their own.
  - d. The City purchased four new patrol cars, as most all current patrol vehicles have over 100,000 miles on them. Staff is attempting to find appropriations for an additional four patrol vehicles in the next budget cycle.
  - e. The City purchased a fire engine in order to retire their 23 year old engine, however, one additional engine still needs to be replaced, as well as the 28-year-old ladder truck.
2. Implement a Community Development program that improves opportunities for growth of our residents and businesses.
  - a. The Community Development Department, over the last two years, has worked to expedite planning and permitting, by working with staff and figuring out where bottlenecks occurred in the process.
  - b. The City has seen not only steady building and development over the last two years, but with the implementation of cannabis, the department has experienced extreme growth. The City has received 50 applications for

- cannabis-related businesses, and has overseen the planning and permitting of approximately 15 different businesses, as of January 2021.
- c. During this same period, the Planning Division was reduced by half its staffing in the most recent budget cycle. That caused a stressful work environment as the Planning Division has upwards of 60 different projects to spread between the two remaining Planners.
  - d. Another area of concern is that the Building Division currently has one full-time employee, the Building Official, who handles all the Building Official duties, plan check, and is the City's only Building Inspector. Should this staff member be out of the office for any reason, all inspections and most plan checks will cease until the person returns. Some plan checks are sent out to a consultant for review, but the Building Official must do a first review.
  - e. The Community Development Department continues to hold development assistance team meetings, which not only helps staff ensure that projects continue to move forward, but the developer may also be part of this process and hear of issues that may need to be addressed on their part.
3. Provide support and partnerships that empower community members and volunteers' ability to improve Lompoc.
    - a. Due to the reduction in staffing over the last number of years, it has been difficult to create a program that partners with community members and volunteer groups.
    - b. Currently, staff is focused on mission critical priorities, but is open to ideas and input on how to allow for community members and groups to participate.
  4. Determine a sustainable financial plan.
    - a. The voters of Lompoc approved a sales tax measure to help improve the finances of the City. This 1% sales tax was approved for 15 years.
    - b. During the Spring of 2019, Council majority voted to do a "Fresh Start" with the California Public Employee Retirement System (CalPERS), which reset the City's Unfunded Accrued Liability (UAL) to a 15-year repayment period. In doing so, the interest savings was projected to be approximately \$20 million.
    - c. Staff has also worked on holding many General Fund positions vacant in order to create a salary savings to help secure the General Fund, which has been operating in deficit for a number of years. Staff has also worked on holding down all operational costs, as long as it does not cause any public health and safety issues.
    - d. The City Council recently asked for a presentation on Pension Obligation Bonds (POB) as a possible way to free up cash flow. This would potentially be accomplished by selling the POBs and paying off the current UAL at a much lower interest rate. This potential option will be presented to the City Council in March 2021.

The City Council also created priorities for staff to attempt to incorporate into the Biennial Budget FY 2019-21. Those included:

1. Market Rate Housing Incentives
  - a. Currently no funding is available.
2. Business Incentives
  - a. Currently no funding is available.
3. Public Safety Personnel Retention
  - a. Currently no funding is available.
4. Retrofit of Fire Station #1
  - a. A full engineering study needs to be completed in order to see what level of retrofit is required. An RFP for engineering services is required, but currently there is no appropriation for it.
5. Funding/Savings for Construction of New Fire Station and Police Station
  - a. Currently no funding is available.
6. Rehabilitation of Turf at City parks
  - a. Currently no funding is available. However, a new playground and fitness area is nearly completed at Beattie Park using grant funds.
7. Business Counter – Revisions/changes to Hours of Operation
  - a. Community Development has worked on creating a better business model by creating workflow documents and customer service training. Extended hours are not possible at this time due to lack of staffing.
8. Project Tracking
  - a. Community Development is implementing new plan submittal software
9. Greater Efficiencies
  - a. Staff has been tasked with finding new and better ways to be more efficient.
10. Improved Customer Service
  - a. All staff have received customer service training.
11. Upgrades to City Park Restrooms
  - a. Pioneer Park restrooms were updated. Plans are to do more as the City receives additional grant funds.

The City Council has the ability to discuss these goals and priorities, including additions, changes, or removal of any items. The City Council may also decide to start fresh, given the new conditions that have impacted the City since March of 2019, which include the worldwide pandemic, and the implementation of the new sales tax.

### Community Survey 2021

The City Council also requested a community survey be given to gauge the needs of the community during their goal setting discussions.

The survey, supplied in both English and Spanish, had 732 responses.

The survey asked for the community to rank the following (response is included):

1. Fully staffed and equipped Public Safety (64.9%);
2. Sustainable financial plan (17.8%);
3. Business growth/development (12.5%); and
4. Community partnerships and volunteer support (5.0%).

It is worth noting that no one foresaw a potential worldwide pandemic when these goals were created, as such, staff has done the best it can during this trying period to complete the goals and priorities. Unfortunately, the pandemic has caused an increase in retirements, as some older aged staff did not want to risk health issues by continuing to come to work. This has left a number of departments with a large deficit in staffing. As an example, the Finance Department was recently down approximately 50% in staffing. Hiring replacements has been very slow, not from a City standpoint, but from a lack of potential applicants submitting their information. Staff will continue to work on completing these goals as part of their daily work.

**Financial Impact:**

There is no current financial impact for the City Council to discuss goals and priorities.

**Conclusion**

The City Council may take no action and leave these goals and priorities in place, or as recommended by the City Manager, discuss new goals and priorities that may better match the current needs and resources of the City. City staff will be available and willing to answer all questions, or give input to the City Council on any particular item.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jim Throop, City Manager