

**Birmingham City Commission  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Workshop  
Monday, June 13, 2022  
6:00 p.m.**

**Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/722674767>**

**Workshop Session**

**This will be considered a workshop session of the City Commission. No formal actions will be taken. The purpose of this workshop is to interview facilitators for Strategic Planning.**

**I. Call to Order**

Therese Longe, Mayor

**II. Roll Call**

Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk, called the roll.

Present: Mayor Longe  
Mayor Pro Tem Boutros  
Commissioner Haig  
Commissioner Host  
Commissioner McLain  
Commissioner Schafer

Absent: Commissioner Baller

Administration: Assistant to the City Manager Fairbairn, City Manager Markus, City Clerk Bingham, City Attorney Kucharek

**III. Presentation & Discussion**

ACTM Fairbairn introduced the topic and described the interview procedure.

ACTM Fairbairn then interviewed Jeremy Stephens of Managing Results, LLC (MR).

In reply to ACTM Fairbairn, Mr. Stephens explained:

- MR focuses its strategic planning on what the community will receive instead of on what the City will do;
- His review of MR's process for strategic planning would be coming from page 14 of their submittal, as available in the workshop's agenda packet;
- While MR facilitates the process of strategic planning, the Birmingham community's input provides the content and goals;
- MR recently worked with a municipality with a split Commission. He said that after interviewing all the stakeholders and summarizing their preferences and concerns, the Commission was able to agree on

- four strategic priorities and 17 date-specific and measurable strategic goals;
- MR recently worked with Clackamas County, Oregon, that had a list of about 90 goals they wanted to achieve. MR explained to the county that trying to focus on all of those objectives at once was not strategic. Some of the goals were then pushed down to appropriate departments, and the list was focused down to ten strategic goals. Since then the county has achieved one of its long-term goals, which was reducing homelessness among Veterans;
- MR worked with a county during the beginning of Covid-19, and they were able to collaborate and finish their work together because both parties remained in consistent communication; and,
- MR is different from other consultants because of its exclusive focus on strategic planning, its 23 year tenure in the field, its results- and community-oriented focus, and its personal approach to working with clients.

In reply to Commission inquiry, Mr. Stephens explained:

- The 'base' of a strategic plan for a public entity has to be focused on the issues and challenges facing the community;
- Parts of the master, area, parks or other plans may end up being integrated into the strategic planning process depending on the goals of the community;
- Government departments and commissions must align their operations where relevant with the strategic plan;
- 'Customers' means anyone that receives or experiences City services; and,
- They have gone through their process with small municipalities in addition to having worked with larger municipalities or counties.

Commissioner McLain cited her previous experience in helping create a municipal strategic plan. She agreed with Mr. Stephens that a strategic plan must have measurable goals, be results-oriented, and be collaboratively implemented.

Mr. Stephens said a strategic plan must be where planning, budgeting, funding, managing, and reporting begins in the City. He said that telling the community's story via strategic challenges and achievements is essential to being successful.

ACTM Fairbairn then interviewed Heather Branigin and David Beurle of Future IQ (FIQ).

In reply to ACTM Fairbairn, Ms. Branigin and Mr. Beurle explained:

- FIQ is future-oriented, people-focused, and data-driven;
- FIQ seeks to educate stakeholders in addition to gathering information about their concerns and goals;
- The use of data analysis in the process allows for the creation of a defensible plan;
- FIQ solicits and integrates feedback from a wide range of stakeholders;
- Discussions about future goals for communities began getting more contentious about five years ago, and that has been noticeable in FIQ's work with communities. Broadly, there is usually a group who believes that the community should continue as-is, and then there is a group with more appetite for change. Utilizing data to support goals and recommendations often helps clarify in how a community should proceed;
- Talking through the specific implications of certain policies can also help build a shared understanding

- and prioritization among stakeholders;
- FIQ's emphasis on emergent and future trends is its primary strength and what sets it apart from other consultants. This allows the entities it works with to evolve in a smart and thoughtful manner. He noted that successful communities in particular need to be able to continue to offer community members what they want as those desires shift. FIQ also works internationally, and brings that diversity of perspectives to its work with communities;
- FIQ has also done a lot of community planning with successful communities of Birmingham's size throughout the United States; and,
- FIQ has experience in working with communities like Birmingham that are thoughtful, well-educated, and engaged, which tends to take a bit more work because these communities strive for the best.

In reply to Commission inquiry, Ms. Branigin and Mr. Beurle explained:

- FIQ is successful with engagement because their emphasis on authentic conversations means stakeholders understand that their input is valued and can have an impact on the community;
- In addition, FIQ is skilled in narratively communicating the strategic planning process and outcomes to stakeholders;
- FIQ creates a project portal during the strategic planning process where stakeholders can participate and see data in a number of ways;
- Similar to MR, FIQ staff works directly with stakeholders. Mr. Beurle would be interacting with the community as Project Lead and likely one or two other FIQ staff members would be interacting with the public, with the rest of FIQ staff serving in a support role; and,
- They find that keeping the community-facing FIQ staff consistent allows stakeholders to feel more confident in engaging in the process.

ACTM Fairbairn then interviewed Lew Bender.

In reply to ACTM Fairbairn, Dr. Bender explained:

- His approach to strategic planning is Commission-centric, do-able, and flexible. Commissioners likely to best know the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. Then, he would ask the Commission to break into two groups and describe what kind of tour they would give Dr. Bender if he were to visit Birmingham in three to five years, with an explanation of not just facilities but things like programs, staffing, and/or inter-government collaborations;
- Then he would ask Staff what the City's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges are, and what input they would want to give the Commission regarding the City's strategic plan;
- Then the Commission would host an evening of community discussion, where residents could attend and give input in small groups;
- While a survey would be possible, he has never seen a survey reflect a different outlook than the one reported by Commissioners and Staff;
- Then there is a final evening to pull it all together, where the Commission selects three to five goals based off of their initial tour designs, the feedback from Staff, and the feedback from residents;
- Then they work to determine the key objectives supporting each goal area, and instead of focusing on 'priorities', he asks what is doable in each goal area in one year;
- He would then write that up in a report, which would be submitted to the City Manager, who would review the report with his leadership team to ensure it aligns with the Commission's direction. Finally, there

would be a process of revision and adoption;

- He generally recommends that a City's Commission discuss some aspect of the strategic once a month;
- Once adopted, a strategic plan has to be engaged with and implemented by the Commission and by Staff;
- The strategic plan process will be tailored to Birmingham because the emphasis will be on ensuring that the City takes ownership of the process. He would provide guidance but it would be entirely informed by the City's elected and appointed leaders;
- The challenges tend to be scheduling and getting public input. The Commission and Staff would have to actively promote the process to the community in order to receive input. Providing dinner and childcare are two ways that he has been able to help increase public turnout at the community discussion; and,
- He is set apart from other consultants because he has been doing strategic planning for about 40 years, because he is very familiar with local government, and because he is largely Michigan-focused in his work.

In reply to Commission inquiry, Dr. Bender explained:

- Commissioners could promote public attendance at the community discussion by giving a brief presentation on the strategic planning process at other meetings in the community and extending an invitation. Another way is through social media, City billing, and other City communications.

In reply to Dr. Bender, the Mayor explained the Commission was interested in strategic planning because:

- The City is continuing to go through change, including a new City Manager in the near future, and the Commission wants to have a road map for the City; and,
- Some on the Commission were frustrated that the City's current budgeting and long-range planning are largely operational in focus, and leave little room for visioning or priority-setting.

In conclusion, ACTM Fairbairn asked the Commissioners to submit their evaluations of the candidates at their earliest convenience and said she hoped to return with a proposed contract at the June 27, 2022 Commission meeting.

**IV. Public Comment**

**V. Adjourn**

Mayor Longe adjourned the meeting at 7:18 p.m.



Alexandria Bingham  
City Clerk



Laura Eichenhorn  
City Transcriptionist