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By [Anthony Ruiz](#)

Council convenes for 'goal setting retreat' Thursday evening

Prioritized long- and short-term goals to give city staff direction

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Anthony Ruiz / The Sun-Telegraph- Don Macke, co-director for the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, acted as moderator on behalf of Nebraska Extension, which facilitated the retreat.

The Sidney City Council had a change in venue for their special "goal setting retreat" meeting held Thursday evening, convening in the meeting room at the Hampton Inn located at 635 Cabela's Dr., to discuss and prioritize their long-term and short-term goals for their new city manager as well as city staff.

"It's for me to pass down to staff," Sidney City Manager Ed Sadler said. "'This is (the council's) priorities. These are their expectations of you.'"

The retreat was facilitated by Nebraska Extension, with Don Macke, co-director for the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship acting as its moderator. Extension agent Connie Hancock and rural sociologist Randy Cantrell were also present for the retreat.

Prior to the retreat, the council, along with City Manager Ed Sadler, City Clerk Geri Anthony and City Attorney J. Leef filled out a survey identifying what they saw as Sidney's major accomplishments, issues, concerns, trend, opportunities, and its significant initiatives or programs.

The council also identified in the survey what they felt were their short-term goals, to be considered for the next two years, and their long-term goals, which could be implemented within the next three to five years.

External stakeholders representing the city's economic development community were also interviewed as part of the survey.

For the retreat itself, Macke said the council would have an opportunity to discuss the short- and long-term goals and prioritize their individual top three onto index cards. The results would then be recorded and displayed for them so they could further discuss and prioritize a master list of their goals.

"What we're going to give you is a prioritized list," Macke said. "So those that have the strongest support to those that have the weakest support. The report won't take anything off of the list, so you will have all of this."

Macke said the details from the survey would also be imbedded into the report "so it's in there for you."

"Because you're going to have to operationalize these goals," he said. "So there will be a process after this, but you'll clearly have the things that are most important to the council."

In long-term goals, Sidney's economic development was identified as the top priority. The council discussed the possible need for a new industrial park, attracting new businesses to town and executing a targeted plan.

Streets and utilities were also high on the priority list, specifically the creation of a street redevelopment plan with a maintenance component and the development of an implementation plan for the city's utilities.

Community development was also discussed as a long-term goal, including creating a master recreational plan as part of parks system development, as well as possibly doing a public facilities assessment for city offices such as the police department, city hall and the utilities department.

Other priorities discussed were issues of fiscal responsibility, honoring the half-cent sales tax commitments, better contact and communication with businesses on how the city can help with infrastructure and filling the buildings, helping to develop the city's workforce, an overpass or underpass for the Burlington Northern railroad crossing, and more controls in budget process financial reports.

In the short term, economic development remained the top priority again, with broadening the city's long-term financing options not far behind. Discussed under the city's financing options were fiscal responsibility in bonded indebtedness and expense management, and the development of a 1-to-3-year and 5-year financial plan.

Developing a multi-pronged approach strategy for street maintenance was also identified as a top priority.

"When we're done with two years, these things, either you've changed your mind or they all need to be done," Sadler said. "Period."

Also discussed under short-term goals was honoring the half-cent sales tax, budget cuts in times of economic uncertainty, continued implementation of water system projects, rebuilding 13th St. and accompanying storm sewer connections, and promotion of community development such as hotels, public amenities and tourism.

The retreat ended after two hours of discussion. At the conclusion, Macke told council he would take the information they discussed and compile a draft report to give back to them.

"It is our hope that this process was productive for you," he said. "It's no different then what a family does to try to say, 'Here's our priorities for the next year. This is where we're trying to focus our energy.'"

"It doesn't mean that everything else goes away, but it does give you a focus point for where you can be strategic on the edge."

Sadler said the retreat and the identification of the council's top priorities was what he wanted to see, and would provide focus to the city staff that a lengthy list of unranked priorities would not.

"Nobody can do 112 priorities," he said. "And just because you don't have it on here doesn't mean that I'm not going to work on it. I've got my own set of priorities for this place."

Sadler said his desire is for, at some point, the council to further discuss and ultimately approve the report during one of its regular meetings.



Anthony Ruiz / The Sun-Telegraph- The Sidney City Council discussed and prioritized their short- and long-term goals for city staff during a special "goal setting retreat" meeting held Thursday evening at the Hampton Inn on Cabela's Dr.

"To approve and agree that these are your priorities that you would like us working on," he said.

Sidney Mayor Mark Nienhueser said they need to make sure the report matches what their intent is. Sadler said he would provide the draft to council as soon as he receives it.

"So you can go through it and make sure that you're good with it," he said.

Nienhueser said he felt that it was important that they had the discussion so they could start Sadler out on the right foot.

"I mean, we certainly don't need to tell staff how to do their job," he said. "We just need to tell them what the priorities are. How they get from 'Point A' to 'Point B,' Ed will make sure they get there."

The next regular meeting of the Sidney City Council will be Tuesday, April 26, beginning at 7:15 p.m. in the city council chambers at the Sidney City Hall located at 1115 13th Ave.