

**Mayor's column for
The Beacon
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This weekend is the annual City Council retreat. This year the council will meet Friday morning by themselves, and staff will join them on Friday afternoon and Saturday. I thought I'd share with you the issues that we, as staff, will bring to them for their discussion and consideration.

Each director has identified one department priority, plus his or her top citywide priority, that they will present to the council. Council will then discuss the merits of our presentations and, if they agree with our assessments, how they will implement a plan to make these things happen.

The number-one department priorities are:

- Development Services: How do we secure long-term financial stability and what is our strategic plan to accomplish this?
- Economic Development: Create neighborhood plans for the Five Corners and Firdale Village retail areas.
- Human Resources: Create a strategy to compensate non-union employees in an equitable way.
- Parks and Rec: Obtain council's vision for this department and for our citizens ten years from now.
- Police: Define service and staffing levels and identify a stable funding source.
- Fire: Integrate public safety into the comprehensive and strategic plans.
- Public Works: How do we adequately fund on a long-term basis the maintenance of all city-owned buildings?
- Community Services: Maximize the future benefits of Edmonds Crossing; in other words, land uses along the waterfront and throughout downtown, connectivity between Edmonds Crossing and the downtown/waterfront areas.
- Administrative Services: We need a plan for our financial future.

As for the citywide priorities, there were two similar themes, even though the directors provided their thoughts independently. The first theme involves our financial future: How can we diversify our tax base? We need to find a consistent, reliable revenue stream. How can we express the importance of economic development and its role in the livability and the vitality of the city? We need to address the long-term financial needs of the city. We need adequate funding to maintain our transportation and non-utility infrastructure.

The second theme involves council processes: How can the council make more effective use of their time and decision making? How can we get them to focus on big-picture policy issues rather than small stuff? How can they make better use of their time? Examples are lengthy processes, deferring decision-making, and revisiting issues, etc. and how those processes impact staff time.

From staff's perspective, these are the important issues that we face every day, and we need the council's guidance on how we can proceed into the future. There are no easy answers, or collectively we would have figured it out by now. But if we don't start to resolve them soon, it will be too late. Hopefully the retreat will be a good starting point!