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Atascadero Two-Year Action Plan

Midpoint Review

January 2016 Workshop

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1 | Introduction

In January of 2016, the Atascadero City Council held a two-day workshop to review the city's Two-Year Action plan that was originally produced in 2015. The workshop was intended to identify any major concerns the Council Members had about the direction of implementation (if any), and to identify any current challenges that needed to be addressed moving forward.

Participants at the workshop included Mayor Tom O'Malley, Mayor Pro Tem Heather Moreno, Council Member Roberta Fonzi, Council Member Bob Kelley, Council Member Brian Sturtevant, City Manager Rachelle Rickard, Deputy City Manager and Assistant City Clerk Lara Christensen, City Clerk Marcia Torgerson, Deputy City Manager Terrie Banish, Administrative Services Director Jeri Rangel, Public Works Director Nick DeBar, Community Development Director Phil Dunsmore, City Attorney Brian Pierik, Fire Chief Kurt Stone, Fire Marshal Tom Peterson, and Police Chief Jerel Haley.

The documentation that follows is a summary of what was discussed at the workshop, reflecting primarily what the facilitators captured on flip charts.

—Coraggio Group

2 | Trends

The facilitators asked the Council to identify current trends that are either currently affecting Atascadero, or which are likely to do so in the future. These trends were identified within three categories: Political/Regulatory, Economic/Business, and Social/Demographic. The trends identified as most impactful are bolded in the lists below.

Political/Regulatory Trends

- › **State reductions in funding**
- › **State focus on disadvantaged communities and environmental concerns**
- › **A push toward regionalism vs. local control**
- › Changing drug policies, including Prop. 47 and medical marijuana regulations
- › Changing state vs. local priorities
- › Political polarization

Economic/Business Trends

- › **Changes in financing requirements for viable projects**
- › **Shift to smaller and more local businesses**
- › **Growth of “clean industrial” businesses**
- › **Consumers spending more on experience vs. things**
- › “Outside” investors are becoming more common in Atascadero
- › Mixed-use development
- › Increased tourism
- › “Sharing economy” growth

Social/Demographic Trends

- › **Outside investment and priorities impacting Atascadero “community fabric”**
- › **“Smart growth” and its effect on quality of life**
- › **“Craft” businesses: food, beer, cider, etc.**
- › Local/transplant ratio changing
- › Social isolation in cities in contrast to life in Atascadero
- › Urban transplants
- › Greater community activity
- › Changing age demographic balance
- › News/media/communication changes

3 | Code Compliance & Enforcement

The facilitators helped the workshop participants to identify that there are two “sides” to code issues – the first is what we have referred to here as “Code Compliance”, which deals with plan review and inspections during the planning and construction of new buildings and is led by Community Development, and the second is “Code Enforcement”, which occurs any time after the occupancy of a building or piece of land and is led by the Fire Marshal. The primary insight was that the workload generated on both “sides” can compromise the speed of service, which was of particular concern to the City Council on the “Code Compliance” side, where there is the potential that construction could be slowed down.

The City Council noted the following “hot spots” in each category:

Code Compliance

- › Lack of tracking system (lack of Council access to statistics)
- › Workload, leading to speed issues
- › Response time, in terms of returned calls
- › “Bedside manner” of inspectors

Code Enforcement

- › Lack of tracking system (lack of Council access to statistics)
- › Workload, leading to speed issues
- › Response time, in terms of returned calls
- › Lack of succession plan/cross-training
- › Likely upward trend in complaints

Additionally, the City Council identified their level of concern for each “side” on a “pain scale” of 1-10. The scores for the Code Compliance side averaged 7.2, indicating a pressing need. Meanwhile, the scores for the “Code Enforcement” side averaged 4.8, with a note that this is likely to increase over time as Atascadero welcomes new residents who may bring different expectations, and as changing laws create circumstances that may result in more code complaints.

When considering the level of rigor that the City wishes to employ around Code Compliance and Enforcement, the Council placed themselves on a scale from a laissez-faire “Burning Man” attitude of 1 to a hyper-controlled “Disneyland” attitude of 10, and decided that they are maybe, on average, about a six. This means that they land a little bit on the side of control, but also have a healthy respect for the freedom and individuality of City residents. Principles include:

- › Fair, but flexible
- › Live & let live, within reason
- › Individual rights/freedom
- › Freedom with respect
- › Consistency and flexibility

- › Don't go looking for trouble (don't do proactive enforcement)

The Council agreed that their philosophy for Code Compliance and Enforcement is that it should be:

- › Seamless
- › Timely & Responsive
- › Collaborative
- › Consistent
- › Relationship-driven
- › Proactive on compliance; reactive on enforcement

The request of City staff in regards to Code Compliance and Enforcement is the following:

- › **Give us options on how to deploy personnel to solve this**
- › **Think about how collaboration can help solve this**
- › **Give us strategies for getting ahead of future issues**
- › **Tell us how we can improve communication around these issues**
- › **Identify technology needs**
- › **Include and build upon best practice**

4 | Council Norms

Coraggio led the City Council through a discussion about Council Norms, which focused on three areas: information requests from Council to staff, directions to staff from Council, and the use of committees by Council, with the following changes proposed for the Council Norms document (to be brought for a vote at another meeting):

Information Requests From Council to Staff

Add the following under the section “Council Interaction and Communication With Staff—City Manager”

- › Requests by Council Members for information that will take more than one hour of staff time, must be approved by a majority of the City Council at a Council meeting.
- › Documents generated by Council Member requests for information, will be passed to all City Council Members by appropriate personnel.

Under the section “Council Interaction and Communication With Staff—Staff in General”, edit the first bullet to read:

- › Council can talk with department heads if asking for information, assistance or follow up as it pertains to an item on the upcoming Council agenda

Directions to Staff From Council:

The City Council elected not to add or change any language pertaining to directions to staff from Council.

Use of Committees by Council:

Under the section “Mayor’s Role”, add the following:

- › The Mayor may appoint an ad hoc committee or a liaison for a specific purpose.

5 | Intentional and Authentic Economic Development

The City Council discussed several issues around commercial and residential development in Atascadero, and identified the following key themes:

- › Requests to shift commercial property to multi-family residential should be very carefully reviewed
- › The City should find ways to support the location of “creative clean industry” in Atascadero
- › The City’s zoning rules are flexible enough to use for steering development trends

The Council has great interest in steering development in an intentional and authentic way for the City. The direction to staff on this topic is:

- › **Bring us some creative ideas as to how we can achieve intentional and authentic growth without re-doing the General Plan.**

6 | Thinking About the Future

The facilitators asked the City Council to consider what they need to keep in mind as their two-year planning cycle comes around again next year. The Council identified four items that they need to be cautious about:

- › Atascadero needs to have intentional and authentic economic development activities
- › Additional workload for staff will come with growth
- › We need to keep our eye on marijuana issues
- › We need to pay attention to be sure we have the capacity to handle the speed of changes

When asked to describe the “story” of their plan and its successes, the Council made the following statements:

- › Stay the course; continue to do good
- › Atascadero collaborates to move the city forward
- › Atascadero commits to grow intentionally and authentically
- › Atascadero commits to authentic and intentional economic development