



*City of Westfield*  
MEETING MINUTES

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WESTFIELD CITY CLERK

**Master Plan Committee - January 17, 2023**  
**City Hall Room 315**

Master Plan Committee members in attendance: Chair Jay Ducharme, Sharon Greany, Bill Schneeloch, Richard Salois (PB), Bernie Puza (PB) (at 5:40), Rania Kfuri (remotely), Alexandra Smialek, Jennifer Battles, Rick Berry, Melissa Trzasko. Also attending: Jay Vinskey (City Planner) and Christine Fedora (Secretary).

Members not attending: Brent Bean (CC), Harrison Stefano, Jillian Battles, Agma Sweeney, Maureen Socha (WSU), Les Pooler

A quorum being present, Chair Ducharme called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**A. Public participation**

Chair Ducharme asked if anyone would like to speak.

Maryann Babinski –voiced concerns regarding public outreach that has been done regarding the Master Plan update. She felt there are other venues that could be used for outreach to all neighborhoods of the city. She also felt 5:30 is not a good time to be holding these meetings; people on the North Side should have more of an opportunity to be involved.

**B. Approval of Minutes. No action taken.**

**C. Master Plan Development**

Consultant Jim Riordan gave a review: the main focus will be Goals, Policies and Actions. Planner Vinskey noted we have not received the final survey data results or final workshop findings. Mr. Riordan then proceeded to summarize the key strengths, weaknesses and actions that came were outlined in from the workshop; it was noted that much of this had been previously presented, but he will compile a complete summary get it out to members. It will also be in master plan. In the interest of time, it was decided to skip the survey results review.

It was noted that the idea of developing a cultural identity for Westfield was important. Member Smialek asked about the term 'cultural' as referring to arts versus heritage; Westfield has both types. The cultural identity is so diverse, unique populations.

Chair Ducharme noted walkability, pedestrian friendly is a strength -there needs to be a decision as to where activities are to be held in the city. The area at the old J.J. Newberry site? , Park Square can be a problem. The actions need to consider if this is walkable downtown, how do we plan the flow of people?

Mr. Riordan felt Westfield should prioritize more walkability, should try to incorporate bike trail more. Certain areas within the city may allow accessibility to the trail.

It was mentioned there is free but limited bus travel between Westfield State and Downtown; not always at convenient or desirable times. This was also noted in the meetings with the college.

Mr. Riordan proceeded to review the draft goals and action items for Climate Change; documents will be reviewed tonight;, member can send their comments over the next couple of weeks.

Goals for Climate Change topic, summarized:

1. Plan development to be resilient
2. Protect water resources
3. Evaluate update policies, programs and ordinances to match up with actions doing.
4. Promote emergency preparedness climate hanger.
5. Address climate change related vulnerabilities.
6. Educate residents especially those residing in flood areas.
7. Convert from fossil fuel to renewable energy sources.

Member Smialek felt the committee should educate all the community members about vulnerability, climate change events. Mr. Riordan also felt all residents should be made aware of climate change and its adverse effects as well as opportunities to improve it.

Vinskey noted he has heard some pushback with the term 'climate change' and felt the committee should avoid any political nuances. Members discussed how this should be worded. It was also brought out sometimes there are problems when presentations are being made when the phrase climate change is mentioned, it sometimes causes immediate shut downs, what should the verbiage be? Mr. Riordan agreed the verbiage can be an issue. Councilor Mello (audience) felt the using the words 'extreme weather events' can be a good substitute.

Member Salois also noted we are not only talking about extreme weather events, but also talking about fossil fuels here and felt it does not all fall under this category. How change to preparedness, energy efficiency, how to title this portion something other than climate change to remove a trigger? Goal Number 7 has nothing to do with weather. After discussion it was felt that fossil fuel goal could be put under renewable energy section; most members agreed.

Members did not come to a consensus on use of the 'climate change' term. Vinskey thought the chapter title was "Natural Hazards and Climate Change' which takes some focus away; actions should be limited to local adaption to a changing climate versus trying to affect any global movement or get into climate change causes. Riordan stated sometimes for grant funding it is important the term 'climate change' is used.

Mr. Riordan started to review the climate change action items, but with Members Kfuri and Schneeloch departing at 6:35, the meeting adjourned by lack of quorum.

(matters of Natural resources, Water supply, Housing, Economic Development were not discussed in the meeting; Mr. Riordan to send out the presentation)