**Call to Order**

Mayor Nate Fontaine called the meeting to order at 9:00am

**Public Comment**

There were none

**Town Council Members Present**

Mayor, Nate Fontaine
Vice Mayor, David Steadman

Councilmember David Earl

Councilmember Chris Hornbaker

Councilmember Joy Pritz
Councilmember Buck Smith

**Town Staff Present**Town Manager Rob Ritter

Town Clerk Candi Choi

**Berkley Group Consultants Present**CEO Drew Williams
Facilitator Kimball Payne

**Introductions and Initial Discussion**

Mr. Payne introduced himself and Mr. Williams. He then reviewed suggested goals for the retreat, possible themes that might come up during the day, and ground rules.

**Icebreaking and Conversation**

Mr. Payne asked several questions to break ice and get Council members talking.

Mayor and Council Responded with their enjoyment and appreciation for certain projects and goals, their personal interests for being Mayor and Councilmembers, as well as what they would like to improve for the betterment of the Town.

Mr. Payne noted specific themes that were consistent among conversations throughout the day, including: Broad Street, 287, teamwork, leadership, getting projects done and money to do it, service, Engle tract, efficiency, what citizens want, job opportunities, sidewalks to school, events, more commercial activity for community conveniences, community, 3500 maximum town population, development approval process, and staff development.

**Discussion:**

1. **Goals and Agreement**

Mayor and Council discussed goals and found agreement among several priorities, including: one vision for the whole Town Council: Priorities of CIP, Long-term vision for business and development (fiber access), sidewalks and connectivity (South Loudoun Street; timing and costs); open, honest, complete communications and information to the citizens.

1. **Vision for the Town**

Mayor and Town Council developed ideas in respect to a vision for the next five years and beyond, including:

* the Community doesn’t want a lot of change,
* population under 3500 with slow growth (learn from neighboring localities on fast growth),
* build on relationships and preserve community experience,
* retain town status for more control over land use decisions,
* balance convenience (small grocery store) with community preservation,
* commercial opportunities desirable
	+ (business retention, work proactively with business/property owners to guide them through processes without local regulations getting in the way of expansion),
* convert older homes on Broad way to professional office,
* develop Engle tract will help financial position of the town
1. without downzoning,
2. industrial would be problematic,
3. office park space with amenities desirable,
4. property doesn’t have pad ready sites,
5. consider public ownership,
6. partner with owner to create a development plan, work with the County to market the site)
* There was a recognition that commercial development follows residential development creating some conflict between the goal to remain small and a desire for more commercial amenities. It was suggested that the town could serve as a center of commerce for a broader region of the county.
* Need to make a commitment to maintain public infrastructure
* Lovettsville is the most affordable community in area
	+ More affordable housing may require smaller lot sizes and smaller buildings where the developer can get more value for the land.
1. **Town Operations**

Mr. Payne led discussion on Town operations.

* Doing Well: Mayor and Council responded with thoughts on what the Town is doing well (communications, business support, Town services-water and trash, events and its contribution to QOL, engagement outside of town, streamlined budget that is easier to understand)
* Do Better: Mayor and Council responded with thoughts on what the Town could do better (communications with business owners for information sharing, development approval process, support town businesses at events, engage stakeholders, committee efficiencies, less government (with respect to requirements for grants to offset utility costs using CARES Funds), Meeting preparation (by Council members-familiarity with agenda, questions raised in advance) Website (review and improve).
* Stop Doing: Certain Committees or revise charters, Quarterly meals tax (make it monthly)

**Action items**

1. **Operations:**

Mr. Payne facilitated discussion about what initiatives or improvements for operations and administration did Council want to address moving forward. He noted that several (\*) could be started and completed within the fiscal year:

* + \*Rules of Procedure: Citizen input during council meetings, work sessions (consider monthly to have deeper discussions of issues; alternate with legislative sessions), motions and action (consider simplifying rules to make meetings more efficient; consider alternatives to Robert’s Rules of Order)
	+ \*Audio/Visual in Council Chambers (live streaming meetings)
	+ \*Explore a different utility model (There was discussion about whether the $13,000 funding set aside in the adopted budget for a Staffing/Structure Study was for this purpose or to look at the organization’s staffing as a whole. This confusion needs to be resolved)
	+ \*Create a maintenance schedule for town assets; asset disposal (develop procedures for disposal of assets no longer needed)
	+ \*Develop an alternate location for bulk water purchase (near fire station)
	+ \*Alert System and Utility alerts (non-emergency to notify customers of disruption and restorations—Loudoun County)
	+ \*Reconfigure Council Chambers plan (to promote social distancing and allow for use by community groups)
	+ Committees (purpose, authority, membership)
	+ Digital Records (Records Retention Act, typically 2-3 years)
	+ Staff & Staff development (membership in VLGMA, VML for networking and training opportunities).
1. **Communications:**Communications was an ongoing theme of Council’s discussion with a clear intent to provide citizens with accurate and timely information. The following ideas around this theme were captured:
	* go out to the community neighborhoods to meet residents.
		1. Team up a PC member and a Council member and invite the community to a meet & greet to learn about and discuss issues.
		2. Host a pancake breakfast
	* Website is user-friendly
	* Welcome packet for new residents
	* Social media – town has a Facebook page. Facebook is good for pushing information out, but not for interacting with citizens
	* Communications seem to be going well – but there is room for improvement
	* The lack of participants at meetings is an indication that citizens agree with the direction Council is going
	* Consider using CARES Act funding to install audio/visual equipment in Council chambers for live streaming – coordinate with the redesign of the chambers to support social distancing and accommodate other uses
	* Push info out via text or some other notification system for important community updates. Consider piggy backing on Loudoun County’s citizen notification system.

**Review and Discussion of the Capital Improvement Plan**

The next part of the retreat was Council’s annual review and discussion of the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). The following decisions or suggestions were agreed to by consensus:

* GF1, Broad Way Improvements Phase 1, is complete; remove from CIP
* Combine GF2 and GF17, Broad Way Improvements, Phases 2 & 3, into GF2
* Bid GF3, S. Church Street and Pennsylvania Ave. Improvements, at the same time as the new GF2; move the $400,000 in FY 25 for GF17 to GF3 in FY 25
* Move GF10, Town Square Park Improvements, and GF11, Town Green Park Improvements, out one year (there was a discussion about whether the Town Green Park Improvements should be funded through events revenue)
* Evaluate the feasibility of GF20, Locus Street Improvements, and if not feasible, move the funding to GF5, Future Downtown Parking Lot (there was strong interest in completing the parking lot as soon as possible to coordinate with occupancy of the new Town Hall)
* UF4, Creek Bank Shoring, may be a county issue; work to resolve this year
* Establish a project starting in FY 22, for an engineering study of WWTP sludge handling and disposal
* Add Loudoun Street Improvements and Quarter Branch Park Improvements to the CIP starting in FY 2026
* Erect the new welcome sign at the community center this fiscal year
* Re-examine the Town Green, Town Square, and Quarter Branch Park master plans for a future discussion on priorities and timing; make the plans available to Council for review
* Consider starting the annual CIP review process with the Planning Commission as called for in the State Code; Council could then review the CIP with both staff and Planning Commission input
* Consider holding the CIP public hearing concurrent with the annual budget public hearing in the Spring (rather than in the Fall) so that the adopted CIP could reflect the latest information

Outside of the focused CIP discussion, the following ideas regarding the CIP came up:

* Add the reconfiguration of Council chambers to the CIP as a short-term project
* Add an Events category to the CIP

**Council Discussion on Events:**

Council’s discussion moved to its vision for the various community events held throughout the year. Oktoberfest and Mayfest are the largest events, attracting about fifteen thousand and three thousand attendees, respectively, from across the region. These two events are revenue producers. The other three events, Love America, Love Summer and Love Winter are more focused on the local community.

**Goals for Events:**

Fully self-supporting

1. Oktoberfest
2. Mayfest
3. Love America (consider outsourcing)
4. Love Summer (consider outsourcing)
5. Love Winter (consider outsourcing)

The General Fund will continue to support events until the goal is achieved; net gains from Oktoberfest will support other events. Then – any additional resources will go to capital projects supporting events. Create an Events category in CIP.

The Oktoberfest event has a healthy reserve and has the capacity to support the other events from its net gains. Council agreed that a goal would be for the events, as a whole, to be self-supporting. General Fund support, when necessary, will continue to be provided until the goal is achieved. It was understood that the three “Love” events are not and will not be revenue producers but could be supported by Oktoberfest and Mayfest revenues.

Council also acknowledged its and Town staff’s significant roles in planning and supporting community events. This led to the idea that one or more of the “Love” events could be outsourced to local community groups, e.g. Love America could be sponsored by local veterans’ groups. The Town would still provide financial and logistic support but would be relieved of direct responsibility for the event.

During the CIP discussion it was noted that some of the planned improvements in GF 10, Town Square Park Improvements, and GF 11, Town Green Park Improvements, were in direct support of events and could possibly be funded by events revenues once the goal of self-sufficiency was achieved. Council agreed to create an Events category in the CIP to make it clearer which projects supported community events.

**Council Discussion on Committees**

Council concluded its retreat with a discussion on the Town’s various committees, their purpose and authority.

1. **Events:**

Five subcommittees: The Events Committee has five subcommittees, one for each community event (Oktoberfest, Mayfest, Love Winter, Love America, Love Summer). This requires a significant investment of staff and Council member time. Outsourcing sponsorship of one or more of the “Love” events could reduce this burden.

1. **Infrastructure:**

Tree Board: The Infrastructure Committee has a Tree Board as a subcommittee. Although the purpose and responsibility of the Tree Board is unclear, there was an understanding that such an organization was required for designation as a “Tree City USA” community by the Arbor Day Foundation. This requirement will be researched to determine if this group is necessary or could be established independent of Town oversight.

 In follow up, Mr. Payne noted the Arbor Day foundation’s standards for “Tree City USA” recognition:

1. *A Tree Board or Department*
2. *A Tree Care Ordinance*
3. *A Community Forestry Program with an Annual Budget of at Least $2 Per Capita*
4. *An Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation*

*Mr. Payne followed up with the following about the tree board from the Arbor Day website (*[https://www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa/standards.cf m](https://www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa/standards.cf%20m))*:*

1. *Someone must be legally responsible for the care of all trees on city- or town-owned property. By delegating tree care decisions to a professional forester, arborist, city department, citizen-led tree board or some combination, city leaders determine who will perform necessary tree work. The public will also know who is accountable for decisions that impact community trees. Often, both professional staff and an advisory tree board are established, which is a good goal for most communities.*
2. *The formation of a tree board often stems from a group of citizens. In some cases, a mayor or city officials have started the process. Either way, the benefits are immense. Involving residents and business owners creates wide awareness of what trees do for the community and provides broad support for better tree care.]*
3. **Business & Community Development:**

Rewrite charter to focus on economic development; marketing, advertising, & promotion

The current charter of the Business and Community Development Committee provides an overbroad grant of responsibility, including some oversight of Town operations. Council agreed that the charter should be re-written to narrow the committee’s focus to economic development promotion and business support.

**D. Finance Committee Pilot:**

Significant discussion was held on a proposal to create a new committee, a Finance Committee. Some Council members had put forth a commitment during their campaigns to provide more citizen input into and to increase the transparency of the Town’s financial management. Possible responsibilities of and other thoughts regarding the Finance Committee occurred.

It was proposed that the Finance Committee, composed of citizen volunteers with experience in financial matters and two Council members, could review Town fiscal policy and its investments management, explore opportunities for grant funding, provide input into the development of the annual budget and provide oversight of financial operations. The idea of the Finance Committee serving as an oversight body was quickly set aside by Council.

There was significant discussion regarding the potential role of a Finance Committee in the development and review of the annual budget. Some Council members felt that the current process provided enough opportunity for citizens to comment on the proposed budget. Others stated that there should be additional opportunity, outside of the formal statutorily mandated process, for citizen involvement.

It was pointed out that the State Code places responsibility for budget development on the manager and that including a citizen committee in that process could be problematic. Of concern, expressed by the facilitator, was providing two council members access to information regarding budget development without providing the same information at the same time to the rest of Council. This could potentially undermine the statutory responsibility of the manager to craft a proposed budget for Council’s consideration, amendment and adoption.

There was also discussion about whether or not the Finance Committee would have enough responsibility or interest to meet on a routine and scheduled basis.

* + 1. **Consensus and Action Items for Finance Committee included:**
* Creating an “pilot” Finance Committee in September
* Citizen Volunteers with experience in financial matters
* Appointees who have expressed interest in service
* Review Town financial operations, opportunity to examine and comment on proposed annual budget, and tasked with making recommendations on the advisability of creating a standing Finance Committee with specific responsibilities.

**Closing Statements:**Mr. Payne thanked Mr. Payne thanked the Town Council and staff for the opportunity to serve as facilitator of the annual retreat. He stated that he would draft notes on the retreat for review and comment by the Town Manager. Once any necessary changes are made, the notes will be distributed to Council for action.

**Next Scheduled Meeting**

September 10, 2020.

**Adjournment**

Mayor Nate Fontaine moved to adjourn the Annual Retreat at 4:30pm

Respectfully submitted,

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Candi Choi, Town Clerk

Date Approved: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Note: See attached work plan**

 **Annual Retreat Work Plan Provided by Facilitator**

**Work Plan**

Items to be initiated and completed within the fiscal year:

* Amend Council’s Rules of Procedure regarding citizen input during Council meetings, to include monthly work sessions, and to simplify the process of making motions and taking action.
* Utilize CARES Act funding to install an audio/visual suite in Council Chambers to facilitate live streaming of meetings and support other uses of the space
* Explore a different utility model (consider contracting out plant operations to a third party; compare the costs and benefits of the different models)
* Clarify the purpose and scope of the Staffing Structure Study funded in the adopted budget
* Clean up the area around the Town Barn
* Purge those records temporarily stored in the Town Barn, that can be destroyed under the provisions of the Records Retention Act, when the files are placed in the new Town Hall
* Create a maintenance schedule for Town assets
* Develop procedures for the disposal of assets no longer needed
* Develop an alternate location for bulk water purchase at near the fire station and close the current site
* Develop and utilize a system for notifying customers of service disruptions and restorations (possibly a part of a more comprehensive non-emergency notification system)
* Develop a plan for the reconfiguration of Council chambers to promote social distancing and allow for use of the space by community groups; add the project to the CIP
* Review and enhance the Town website
* Amend the CIP as discussed and take it to the Planning Commission for review
* Share the master plans for the Town Green, Town Square, and Quarter Branch Park with Council
* Rewrite the charter for the Business and Community Development Committee to focus on economic development
* Appoint an “ad hoc” or “pilot” Finance Committee in September
* Check into changing the speed limit to 25 mph on Route 287

Longer term initiatives to be ongoing, or addressed later than the current fiscal year or as the opportunity arises:

* Staff roles and responsibilities & staff development
* Develop a non-emergency citizen notification system; consider partnering with Loudoun County
* Consider new forms of citizen engagement such as a pancake breakfast or Council Member/Planning Commissioner teams creating opportunities for small group meetings with citizens
* Create a welcome packet for new residents
* Digitize town records (2-3 yrs.), remaining compliant with the requirements of the Records Retention Act
* Consider starting the annual CIP review and amendment process with the Planning Commission before going to Council
* Consider adoption of the CIP concurrent with adoption of the annual budget
* Take steps toward fulfilling the goal of community events becoming self-supporting and even funding events related projects in the CIP
* Explore opportunities for sponsorship of the “Love” events by community groups, with continued Town support
* Explore if the Tree Board can be independent of Council involvement
* Receive recommendations from the “pilot” Finance Committee and consider the establishment of a standing committee