

City of Centerville 2024 Strategic Planning Retreat Notes  
March 28, 2024

Meeting called to order by Mayor Harley at 9:03 a.m.

Invocation given by Mayor Harley.

Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Harley.

Present for the planning retreat:

Mayor John R. Harley, Councilman Robert Bird, Jr., Councilman Justin Wright, Councilman J. Micheal Evans, Councilman Edward Armijo, City Clerk Krista Bedingfield, Director of Operations Mike Brumfield, Economic Development Director Shannon Bryant, Municipal Court Clerk Sara Caldwell, Police Chief Cedric Duncan, City Accountant Carol Harrison, Fire Chief Jason Jones, and City Attorney Rebecca Tydings.

Adoption of Minutes: Motion made by Councilman Wright to adopt minutes as written; seconded by Councilman Evans. Motion carried.

- February 6, 2024
- February 20, 2024

Mayor Harley invited Laura Mathis, Middle Georgia Regional Commission, to lead the retreat for the remainder of the day.

Items identified by bold italic underlined text reflect the initial action items to be pursued by the city.

## **I. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN**

To reflect on the past three years (since the 2021 retreat), attendees were asked to share items considered big wins/accomplishments; thoughtful passes which were opportunities the city did not pursue because of circumstances; and, opportunities that the city had not planned for but that the city pursued.

### **Big Wins**

1. Center Park phase 1 completion
2. Hiring key staff
3. Recycle center grant
4. Mixed use zoning adopted
5. Continuity of elected body
6. Sound leadership/staff
7. Growth of city events
8. New subdivisions
9. Annexations
10. Georgia fund account earning higher interest income than expected.
11. Successful litigation outcomes
12. Management of municipal court through COVID is a model in the state.
13. Stable Police Department and approach of hiring uncertified officers.
14. Curfews and neighborhood watch activities.

City of Centerville 2024 Strategic Planning Retreat Notes  
March 28, 2024

15. Purchase of new fire truck and hiring of fire department staff.
16. Maintained services.
17. Cybersecurity (CGI server) measures enhanced.
18. Increased customer service kudos in utilities and city clerk
19. School zone sign change

**Thoughtful Passes**

1. The pace of development has not happened as expected therefore expansion of services not required as expected.
2. Selling Gunn Road property.
3. Unincorporated island annexation (Hodac property)
4. Speed zone cameras not installed.

**Not planned but glad it happened**

1. Annexations
2. COVID funds (\$3.5 million)
3. SPLOST funds more than expected
4. Millage rate reduction
5. Increased prop values led to increased revenue

**Significant social, community, economic and organizational forces that may impact future success for the City of Centerville.**

1. Georgia Supreme Court decision in the City of Winder vs. Barrow County regarding service delivery strategy.
2. Shift from single-family to multi-family homes and build to rent subdivisions.
3. Age-in-place housing options are limited.
4. Senior citizen tax exemption may reach a critical mass and be unsustainable.
5. Galleria Mall is for sale.
6. Police and Fire Department call volumes have increased significantly for medical calls and senior falls.
7. Emission standards on vehicles will increase purchase costs.
8. Workforce expectations and challenges.
9. Monitor progress on Warner Robins downtown and success of Macon amphitheater.

**II. VISION FOR THE CITY OF CENTERVILLE**

Next, attendees were challenged to write their vision of headlines for the City of Centerville in the present day and five-year increments over the next twenty years. The goal is to identify common themes for the development of a vision for the city.

**Today's Headlines**

- Show me the Money, Centerville - How are my tax dollars being spent?
- Forward thinking, building a better community
- Centerville is financially responsible, had a clean audit opinion and is compliant with state law
- Safe, clean drinking water comes from us
- Did you hear we built a park in 2020
- COVID is over, you can come to court
- I don't want to live anywhere else
- Centerville is developing plans for the future

City of Centerville 2024 Strategic Planning Retreat Notes  
March 28, 2024

- Centerville leaders iron out plans for expansion of facilities
- Centerville announces new community center and amphitheater
- Centerville is moving forward
- Come work for the best Fire Department in the state
- Centerville receives grant to relocate and expand recycle center
- Centerville is pro-business

**5-year Headlines**

- Developer breaks ground on town center project
- Amphitheater kicks off 1<sup>st</sup> annual spring/summer concert
- City app improves citizen engagement
- City attorney Retires after 26 years of dedicated service.
- Mixed-use district ready for business
- Community center open and in operation
- City pop exceeds 12,000
- Construction begins town center
- No more senior tax exemption
- City launches kiosks for payments
- Safest city by population in middle Georgia
- Building permits – You can apply online
- **City launches ACH payments for doing business**
- City implements 4-day work week
- Centerville completes sidewalks throughout city

**10-year Headlines**

- Inaugural concert held at amphitheater
- Satellite combined precinct (FD/PD)
- Fire Chief retires after 35 years of dedicated service
- Commercial growth doubles
- Final phase of Center Park complete (live, work, and play plan) – ribbon cutting held
- Move over Macon, Centerville music festival celebrates middle Georgia’s music heritage
- Record population growth
- Emergency Vehicles replaced
- Ribbon cutting Community Center held

**15-year Headlines**

- 5<sup>th</sup> council member position created and new member on board
- Senior living community ribbon-cutting
- Centerville expands into Macon-Bibb County
- Numbers don’t lie, Centerville’s safety, schools & quality of life outpace local municipalities
- Centerville is a destination for fun
- #1 place to live in Houston County
- Police Department is a great place to work
- Centerville continues long history of fiscal responsibility
- New Municipal Courthouse Opens
- City Clerk retires after 47 years of dedicated service

**20-year Headlines**

City of Centerville 2024 Strategic Planning Retreat Notes  
March 28, 2024

- Galleria Mall redeveloped
- Technology Center opens at Galleria Mall
- Mega church built
- Free broadband for all
- In a thriving middle Georgia, Centerville is the local gem. A small hamlet to live and raise family
- Centerville is first city to automate code enforcement and city services
- Public transportation – from here you can go anywhere – Centerville is the hub for fast train to Atlanta

Through the discussion, attendees identified reasons why people live or visit Centerville.

- Tax exemption for seniors
- Available rental properties
- Eagle Springs neighborhood
- Quality of life
- Feel safe
- Parks and greenspace
- Events
- Large mobile home parks
- Schools
- Location (not far from Interstate 75)
- Affordability

### III. SPECIFIC TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

The agenda and discussion then focused on specific topics that were identified before the retreat by the attendees.

#### **Staff Recruitment, Retention and Succession Planning**

- The number of applications for open positions is down.
- The quality of applicants is lower than in the past for senior level positions (sub-department heads).
- Salaries offered are not necessarily competitive in market. The benefits are higher than others and are costly. The benefits package may not be attractive to current applicant pool.
- **Create a Recruitment and Retention Committee on Council to evaluate, further study and recommend. Councilman Wright and Councilman Armijo were appointed.**
  - Consider two pay scales- depending on benefits status
  - Develop a Compensation and Benefits statement that shows the cost / value of salary and benefits.
  - **Consider salary adjustment based on approved training/certifications – Chief Duncan to develop.**
  - **Consider instituting pay for sleep time (24-hour cycle not 18 hours) in the Fire Department- Chief Jones to develop and present**
- **Consider re-instituting City Administrator position.**
  - Key staff retirements and growth of the city
    - Starting salary of retiring staff will not be competitive for successors.

- **Review of policies and ordinances if City Administrator position was re-established. City Attorney Tydings to complete.**
  - Council to determine role of City Administrator

### **Downtown Development / Center Park**

- Market private property where there is an interested/ willing seller to developers.
- Center Park Master plan should be reviewed and updated as needed before Phase II improvements are launched. This includes an assessment of the scale of the amphitheater.
- Tax incentives and other incentives may assist with developing Centerville.

### **Financial Health**

- City Accountant Harrison reviewed year to date revenues and expenditures for the current fiscal year and projections for the upcoming fiscal year in advance of budget meetings.

### **City Buildings/ Facilities**

- **Recycle Center Grant - after grant acceptance, next step is site plan.**
- Police Department – included in 2024 SPLOST - next step once funding begins is plans and designs which is scheduled for 2026.
- Community Event Center – City owned land next to the library is planned location – next step is a plan, budget and funding.
- **Old House next to Fire Department - Boy Scouts to move out at end of school; then plan for demolition and re-use of the land.**
- **Facility rentals and special events (Community Room and Pavilion) – need a game plan for management due to departure of Economic Development Director Bryant.**

## **IV. Next Steps and Follow-Up**

- Future staffing needs (over the next five years)
  - Police – 4
  - Fire – 3 / 4
  - Public Works Operations – 10
- Marketing /Public Relations / Social Media – need to determine strategy for handling
- Retreat notes will be provided to all.
- Initial action items identified by ***bold italic underlined text***.
- Council to consider vision statement and provide direction to staff on areas where five year goals and strategies should be developed. Middle Georgia Regional Commission will draft and provide to city for consideration.

Mayor Harley adjourned meeting at 4:22 p.m.

City of Centerville 2024 Strategic Planning Retreat Notes  
March 28, 2024

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor John R. Harley

\_\_\_\_\_  
Attest by City Clerk Krista Bedingfield

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date