



RIVER FALLS CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP REGARDING FOCUS RIVER FALLS

July 12, 2022, 5 p.m., Training Room, City Hall

City Council Members Present: Mayor Dan Toland, Todd Bjerstedt, Jeff Bjork, Nick Carow, Sean Downing, Scott Morrissette, Alyssa Mueller, Diane Odeen

City Staff Present: City Administrator Scot Simpson; Assistant City Administrator Jason Stroud; Utility Director Kevin Westhuis; Community Development Director Amy Peterson; Community Services Director/City Clerk Amy White; IT Specialist Jon Smits; IT Specialist Sterling Hackney; Jennifer Smith, Assistant to the City Administrator; City Planner Emily Shively; Public Works Director Mike Stifter

Others: Ben Fochs

At 5 p.m., Mayor Toland called the workshop to order. Community Development Director Amy Peterson provided background on the workshop and introduced Stephanie Falkers from SRF Consulting.

Falkers reviewed the agenda and talked about the four phases of each plan saying we are in Phase 3 and are having stakeholder conversations, pop-up events, plan element analysis and small area plans. She talked about the Focus River Falls goal structure – there are nine elements required by state statutes (issues and opportunities, housing, transportation, economic development, natural and cultural resources, utilities and community facilities, intergovernmental cooperation, land use and implementation). She said recreation was added as a component to the comprehensive plan. The Outdoor Recreation Plan will provide specific guidance.

Falkers talked about the three plans. Data collection has been completed for the Outdoor Recreation Plan and is in Phase 3. There are some pop up events happening. We are deep in the needs assessment and have worked with Mike Stifter and his crew on inventory and facilities in the community. She provided further details on the process.

The Bike and Pedestrian plan is in the third phase. We are looking at our recommendations and implementation. We have had some walking and biking tours. Our partner, Alta, is deep in working on recommendations.

She highlighted Engage RF which is the online platform. There have been over 6000 visitors to the site, 700 registrants, and 673 active participants. She provided further details.

Falkers provided an update on the Comprehensive Plan. She talked about working on establishing goals and goals for long range planning. We think of these as ‘draft’ goals and want to make sure the goals are feasible. We are working with staff and the goals were presented to the Plan Commission. There are opportunities to change the goals.

She reviewed the goal structure beginning with the overall goal statement. She talked about how the statements were written, priorities, and specific implementation action.

There are 13 draft goal statements. She gave Council some time to review the goal statements. Falkers said the goals are meant to be broad. She reviewed the 13 goals with Council. They are:

- River Falls is a livable community that is welcoming to all
- River Falls has a quality and diverse housing stock that provides a range of affordable and accessible housing choices.
- River Falls has a robust and diverse local economy that supports businesses and provides a varied range of job opportunities and provides access to good and services that support livability.

- River Falls has accessible transportation infrastructure that provides opportunities for people to safely, sustainably, and efficiently move throughout the city and into the region using varied modes of transport.
- River Falls prioritizes its diverse, unique, and rich natural resources, environmental features, and biodiversity (i.e., rivers, bluffs, woods, etc.).
- River Falls celebrates its diverse range of existing and historic cultural resources that represents the entire River Falls community.
- River Falls incorporates resiliency considerations into decision making to preserve quality of life for all residents and protects investments for future generations.
- River Falls has mutually beneficial relationships with the community, organizations, education institutions, and state/regional agencies.
- The City of River Falls incorporates equity and inclusion into decision making and planning processes and is a place where you can feel free to be yourself.
- River Falls has a resilient system of infrastructure, community facilities, and utilities that ensure that health, safety, and welfare of the community are maintained and supports the economic vitality of the community.
- River Falls has flexible growth management policies and development standards that promote human scale development and redevelopment that is consistent with community values and supports a strong connection to place.
- River Falls has a system of recreation opportunities that is accessible to all residents, provides connection to natural resources, and supports a healthy lifestyle.

There was discussion and input on each goal. Council shared their priorities and what concepts were important to them pertaining to each goal.

When goal discussions were complete, Peterson asked Council about which goal they would cut. She talked about paring the goals down, so it would be manageable for both staff and Council.

Falkers moved onto land use. She provided an introduction talking about how land use planning protected the health and safety of residents, protects property values, preserves natural resources and was a tool to understand growth. She had Council do a land use exercise asking them to mark on a map of the city the three areas they would like to see growth and also where they do not want growth. Upon completion of the exercise, there was discussion from each of the Councilors about the reasons the dots were placed in the locations they were. Simpson talked about the last comprehensive plan that was completed providing a foundation for development now. He provided details about decisions that were made.

Falkers talked about policy considerations including development density, development appearance, resilient and sustainable development, development and infrastructure. She talked about what happens next, plan element analysis and engagement activities. Alderperson Morrissette talked about providing information at the Cookout Conversations for residents. Simpson spoke about Councilors attending events. There were discussions about upcoming events.

Workshop adjourned at 6:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristi McKahan, Deputy Clerk