

John Hamilton called the meeting to order at 5 p.m. after the **Pledge of Allegiance**.

City Commissioners present: Keith Grohe, Jeff Smith, Julie Farrar, Pervis Brown, John Hamilton and Diedre Cole.

City staff present: Todd Roth – Engineer, Jim Lang – Interim Police Chief, Paul Ricci – Fire Chief, Scott Miller – General Services Director, Don Rumbutis – IT Department, Don Icsman – Law Director, Nicole Ard - City Manager, Hank Solowiej – Finance Director and Kelly Kresser – Commission Clerk.

Upon motion of Julie Farrar and second of Diedre Cole, the commission voted to excuse Wesley Poole. The President declared the motion passed.

CURRENT BUSINESS

Nicole Ard distributed a draft copy of the **vision, mission statement and focus areas** for the City of Sandusky based upon previous input. Nicole Ard said at tonight's meeting, she hopes to further discussions regarding the issues facing the City of Sandusky from a customer/citizen perspective.

Nicole Ard said the vision for the City of Sandusky - drafted after the last strategic planning session - is as follows: "Provide a framework for public/private partnerships to create a safe, prosperous and economically viable community with a sense of place and pride."

Nicole Ard said the mission statement - drafted after the last strategic planning session - is as follows: "The mission of the city is to make Sandusky the best city in America through improved services, effective stewardship and management of public dollars and infrastructure. "

There was some discussion regarding the vision and mission statement and including making Sandusky the best city in America using words such as: 'a premiere place in Ohio to live, work and play.' The city should focus on its assets: water, tourism and its staff and add words to identify Sandusky.

Nicole Ard said numerous things were highlighted regarding how to make an "Ideal Sandusky" and ideas about what Sandusky will look like in 2022 or beyond. "Sandusky will be a walkable, livable community where people live, work, shop and play in the city year-round. Downtown Sandusky will thrive with development and revitalization. Downtown attractions will include a brew pub, hotel, expanded Farmers' Markets and more shops – local shops, like West Side Market, and complemented by chains such as Trader Joe's. These attractions, new industry and transportation improvements will foster downtown, east and west Sandusky development and expand the city's tax base. There will be annual events and seasonal festivals. Citizens of all ages will enjoy recreation. Activities for youth and senior citizens will be abundant."

Nicole Ard said the first focus area is the **livability/quality of life to live work and play in Sandusky all year long**. "Sandusky's citizens should enjoy a high quality of life in a livable, walkable community open year-round for citizens and visitors. There should be things to do, allowing a resident to eat, drink, shop and enjoy recreation such as boating. Sandusky is a desirable community for youth and generations of Sandusky residents to remain in or return to Sandusky, particularly as business people. Sandusky will also be an up and coming suburb of Toledo and Cleveland. Sandusky citizens should feel welcome, safe and well protected not only for police and fire services, but also general neighborhood and commercial areas appearances. The city will address perceptions about Sandusky's safety by addressing neighborhood and building appearance. City efforts will make it less risky for potential investors considering relocating or expanding in Sandusky, for example, one who may renovate a home for a personal residence or a building to establish a business. Removing weeds and promoting well lit neighborhoods is a key to addressing negative perceptions. Maintaining streets for people to safely drive and bike, as well as multi-modal facilities, will be a priority. Homes in disrepair on main streets will be supported. Use of CDBG to clear out brush and debris will also be a priority. The city will partner with other organizations for similar services."

Nicole Ard said another focus area is **public safety**. "Citizens will feel safe and well protected not only because of excellent police and fire services, but also general neighborhood and commercial areas appearances. Sandusky will be recognized as a safe place, including at night. Citizens will trust city government, in particular, police and fire services. Sandusky will be considered a desirable, low-risk location for potential development and individual investors considering relocating or expanding in Sandusky. Citizens will have improved access to police reports via online software. The city will better

inform citizens of the types of crimes that occur in Sandusky, as well as the number of times crimes occur.”

Nicole Ard said another focus area is **community development**, involvement and sustainability. “Sandusky will promote and support businesses and residential investment that enhances quality of life and tax base. The city will highlight Sandusky’s location, physical and cultural assets, taking the lead in generating positive, accurate information about Sandusky, including community outreach and public information on government activities. Sandusky will maintain communication with businesses and industry leaders, as well as potential residents to learn ‘Why do they come – why don’t they come?’ Likewise, the city will communicate with existing residents and businesses to learn why they stay and how to keep them. The effort will help attract businesses that will ‘survive the winter’ and drive people into downtown, beyond attractions in other communities. Sandusky will reflect a ‘business-friendly/citizen friendly’ attitude and incorporate that attitude into procedures and interactions with businesses and residents. Streamlined activities and ‘one-stop shop’ support will be offered to anyone interested in investing in Sandusky, demonstrating that ‘Sandusky is open for business’. Staff will maintain a community-minded focus on the short and long-term needs of 25,000+ citizens to support the city’s survival and the city government’s ability to provide quality services and support the community. This includes recognizing efforts to improve properties in distressed areas. Periodic review of policies, such as zoning law, will help to ensure policies are timely relevant to retaining businesses. City staff will facilitate housing rehabilitation by individual property owners as well as larger developers.”

Nicole Ard outlined another focus area: **marketing**. “The city and partners will proactively market Sandusky, its quality of life, cultural and physical assets, and prime waterfront location between Toledo and Cleveland and quality services. Residents will be aware of city and city partners’ services. Potential citizens, visitors, investors and businesses will find information readily available regarding Sandusky’s year-round attractions and advantages including location, natural resources, affordable housing, transportation, shipping channels, established industry and ready workforce.”

Yet another focus area: **employee development and learning**. “The City of Sandusky will identify existing and future city employees’ capabilities and needs. As an employer, the city should also survey employees for feedback on workplace environment, job satisfaction and specific points like ‘How is the city doing as an employer?’ Supervisors will review employee training, technology and other needs. Supervisors and managers will identify any needed process changes to help an employee to do his job better or more efficiently. The city must address the impact of building and equipment safety as well as facility condition and appearance on employee morale and productivity, including the ability to do the job, comfort and possible enjoyment of work. When individuals enter buildings, public perception of city facilities should reflect well-maintained, professional environments. Employees throughout the organization deserve a safe, secure work place.”

Nicole Ard said the last focus area is **extraordinary city service and management**. “City staff will continually strive to provide extraordinary service to obtain the best value for citizens and support the city commission’s vision. Departments will work together as well as across jurisdiction bounds with other governments, non-profits and the private sector to provide extraordinary service. This includes continued commitment to shared services like information technology, training, water, safety services, fleet maintenance and joint purchasing. This will help save city funds and tax dollars, possibly increase revenue and promote better, efficient service. Staff will strive to achieve fiscal strength, provide affordable services and deliver competitive services. Staff will ask the question, ‘What can we do?’, not ‘What can’t we do?’”

Nicole Ard said the city is also working on: IT upgrades, cell phone service and towers, rehabilitation to Fire Station #7, improvements to Lions Park, a vehicle replacement schedule, police officer and firefighter recruitment for the spring civil service exams and answering questions regarding the contract for the Erie County Economic Development Corporation.

Nicole Ard said the next steps are to try rolling out some of the strategic plan items addressed tonight and working on budget estimates for 2013.

Upon motion of Keith Grohe and second of Jeff Smith, the commission voted to adjourn the special meeting at 7:25 p.m. The President declared the motion passed.

Kelly L. Kresser
Clerk of the City Commission

John F. Hamilton
President of the City Commission