

City of Royston

2021 City Council and Departmental Retreat



Prepared by:



Planning Process

The City of Royston held a planning retreat on April 20 and 21, 2021 at Glen-Ella Springs in Clarkesville, GA. Prior to the retreat, Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) discussed the overall goals and needs of the retreat with Ed Andrews, City Manager.

Royston Retreat

Attendees met at Glen Ella Springs to review challenges and opportunities for the City.



Attendees Included:

Ed Andrews, City Manager
Sharleen Ayers, City Clerk
Larry Bowen, Councilman
Lee Strickland, Councilman
Tonya Allen, Deputy City Clerk
Matt Fields, Councilman
Wayne Braswell, Councilman
Keith Turman, Mayor ProTem
David Jordan, Mayor
Patrick Larson, GMRC
Daniel Martin, GMRC

Ed Andrews kicked off the meeting and gave an overview of the retreat. The Mayor opened with remarks commending the City Council and Staff on their work. The Mayor Pro Tem gave remarks on his excitement of planning and visioning. Ed then introduced the staff from Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, who would be assisting with facilitation of the retreat.

Sharleen gave a financial update to the group. There was discussion about building in cash reserves. She noted that a good reserve would be cash for 3-6 months. Currently there is approximately 5 months of reserve available. The Mayor Pro Tem commended Sharleen and Ed on financial transparency and communicating effectively with the Council on the financial state of the City.

A question was raised about the possibility of an App to be available for city leaders to have to process work orders or other needs for management.

Ed gave an update of IT Security. All new servers and system can be monitored 24/7.

Ed then talked about the City of Royston looking forward. Workforce and talent are important. The need for committee involvement is very important.

Main Street DDA – Ed introduced Mike Cump, Main Street Manager. Mike discussed the need to look at the Historic Preservation ordinance and need for possible amendments. He also outlined the need to go from 3 to 5-person board. There was also discussion about Royston Renaissance and placing it under the historic preservation commission. Mike also discussed the need for strategic planning for DDA. There was significant discussion about making Royston a more business friendly environment, focus on housing and planning. Discussion also took place regarding existing City owned properties.

Police Department – Chief Donnie Bolemon discussed vacancies within the department. He then discussed departmental priority needs:

1. Floating or Rotating Officer position for covering shift shortages
2. Fill current Captain or Patrol vacancy
3. Determining how to be competitive in the marketplace for experienced personnel
4. Weapons replacement
5. Explorer Post Director

There was discussion about the importance for the explorer program. The Mayor Pro Tem also discussed the need for more diversity. Following, there was a discussion about pay. Every officer is taser certified. Ed discussed the need to look at compensation packages and committee involvement. Mayor brought up the need for cameras around city infrastructure and properties.

4/21/21

Royston Natural Gas - Travis Quarles, Superintendent gave update on employment in the department and expansion projects. There was discussion about proposed new industries and potential for strain on the system. Travis emphasized not overcommitting on projects. There is a need for more capacity and redundancy. Need to look for new venues for job advertising.

Royston Water and Sewer Dept – Jammie Cawthon described department employee roles within the department. He also discussed the mill street parking lot project. The amphitheater is on hold at the moment. Jammie said they are working on new housing water taps.



He gave a Sewer plant update. There was discussion about a potential CDBG grant opportunity with new water and sewer lines. GMRC can assist with packaging a CDBG grant application. He also talked about the existing lift station and the age of the pump. It needs to be replaced. Fire hydrant sandblasting and painting will take place soon.

Jammie discussed and presented on water production since 2016. This went from 92 mm gal to 123 mm gal in 2019. There is a need for a new well. He also needs some help running the plant, especially with employee shortages. Weekends can be very difficult.

Ed discussed review of intergovernmental agreements and looking at volumes per day and also municipal rates.

Royston Street Dept – Patrick O’Brian discussed employees in the dept. The average tenure in street dept is 1.8 yrs. He then discussed the following major projects:

- LMIG Review
- Mill St Parking lot
- Drainage easement upgrade at Ty Cobb
- Floyd Street and Carlton St.
- Harper Lane Paving
- Carlton Shirley St. Intersection
- Jordan Street – Bank washed away
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He also discussed paving projects over the last 5 years. He showed pictures of downtown/community sidewalk priorities. The good pick-up truck continues to work well. The Mayor commented on positive feedback from citizens on Patrick’s dept. There was discussion about sanitation and staffing.

Code/Cemetery/Parks & Rec – Jared Hightower commented on the importance of working well across departments. He stated that the cemetery project is consuming. Correcting cemetery discrepancies and resolving old cemetery issues is important. He outlined the need for updating park amenities and making investments in the new trail.

Kennel space has been improved and a plan is in place to get a quote on some new kennels.

There is a need for a new truck. They are scheduled for level 1 code enforcement training and the team has already done some zoning classes. Training is important for Patrick and his department.

Marking and mapping Cemetery walkways and rows is a priority. His department will be coordinating with Faith @ GMRC for cemetery assistance.

Jared emphasized the blighted properties around town. The Mayor asked about cemetery expansion and opening up existing areas. What about a cremation vault? Need to look at cremation crypt. Also need to fence in maintenance area.

There was much discussion about a new splash pad. Several attendees voiced concerns about ongoing maintenance; however, several attendees also emphasized the need to attract people to Royston.

Strengths of Royston

1. Strong line of communication between staff and elected officials.
2. Willingness of department heads to work with one another in the interest of the City of Royston and its citizens.
3. A strong understanding of the need for planning to achieve community and economic development goals.

Weaknesses of Royston

1. Lack of agreement on city identity.
2. Select water and sewer infrastructure issues.
3. Recruitment of talent is only achieved through word of mouth and advertisements in the local newspaper.
4. Lack of a business packet and local incentives to attract new business and industry to Royston.

City Priorities

1. Retain current workforce by offering ongoing educational training and competitive salaries and total compensation.
2. Recruit new talent by utilizing alternative methods of recruitment to word-of-mouth and an advertisement in the local newspaper.
3. Pursue economic development opportunities throughout the City of Royston (e.g. downtown, residential areas, etc.)
4. Discuss the identity of Royston and the branding/marketing opportunities that come along with that.
5. Review ways to maintain existing recreational amenities and assets while also pursuing opportunities to enhance existing recreational inventory.

GMRC Recommendations:

1. Advertise employment opportunities with professional organizations, with online job websites, and in other regional and state newspapers.
2. Work with GMRC's Economic Development Department staff to research possible grant opportunities for infrastructure, downtown, and public facilities needs.
3. Work with GMRC's Information Services Department staff to pursue updates for the City's cemetery mapping needs.
4. Work with GMRC's Planning Department to update the City's Short Term Work Program with priority projects over the next 5 years.
5. Work with GMRC's Historic Preservation Planner to address the City's historic preservation-related needs.
6. Work with GMRC to organize a retreat for the City's Main Street/Downtown Development Authority personnel to create a plan for downtown needs.