

# City of Cedar Falls Goal Setting Report 2019

## Mayor:

**Jim Brown (outgoing)**  
**Rob Green (elect)**

## City Council:

**Mark Miller**  
**Susan DeBuhr**  
**Frank Darrah**  
**Daryl Kruse**  
**Dave Wieland (outgoing)**  
**Tom Blanford (outgoing)**  
**Dave Sires (elect)**  
**Simon Harding (elect)**

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# GOAL SETTING SESSION 2019

## **Introduction**

The City of Cedar Falls requested Iowa State Extension and Outreach (ISUEO) assist the city with goal setting. ISUEO agreed to organize and facilitate a process that involved the following steps:

1. Conduct interviews with the Mayor and City Council Members to discuss recent accomplishments, issues/trends/concerns, potential new initiatives/programs/policies, and suggestions to improve organizational effectiveness.
2. Conduct a preliminary session with department heads.
3. Conduct two goal-setting sessions with the elected officials.
4. Preparation of this final report.

## **Goal Setting Work Sessions**

City Council Members held goal setting work sessions conducted by ISUEO on December 9 and 10, 2019. In attendance and participating at these meetings were current Council Members Mark Miller, Susan DeBuhr, Daryl Kruse, and Frank Darrah, outgoing Council Members Dave Wieland and Tom Blanford, current Council Member and Mayor-elect, Rob Green, and newly elected Council Members Simon Harding and Dave Sires. Tom Blanford served as Mayor Pro Tem.

Also attending were City Administrator, Ron Gaines, Director of Community Development Stephanie Houk Sheetz, Public Safety Director/Police Chief Jeff Olson, Director of Finance and Business Operations Jennifer Rodenbeck, Director of Public Works, Chase Schrage, City Attorney, Kevin Rogers, Building Official, Jamie Castle, Tourism and Cultural Manager, Kim Manning, David Wicke, City Engineer, and Communications Specialist, Amanda Huisman.

In addition, the facilitators and City Administrator held individual meetings with the Mayor and City Council Members on October 28 and 29. A summary of those interviews is included with this report as Exhibit A.

ISUEO held a preliminary session with department heads on November 7. In attendance at these sessions were City Administrator Ron Gaines, Director of Community Development Stephanie Houk Sheetz, Public Safety Director/Police Chief Jeff Olson, Director of Finance and Business Operations Jennifer Rodenbeck, and Director of Public Works, Chase Schrage.

## **Policy Agreements**

After review and discussion, the group reached general agreement on the following policy issues:

1. FY 20-21 Budgetary/Financial Goals:
  - a. Property Tax Goal – Increase no more than CPI on residential properties
  - b. Cash Reserves Goal – Maintain at 20% (15-25% by resolution)
  - c. Plan for FY 20-21 budget without state backfill
  - d. Continue Bond Replacement Policy
  - e. Maintain debt strategy that protects at least 25-30% of capacity
  - f. Seek minimum private donation match of 25% of recreation & quality of life projects
  - g. Maintain fiscal discipline and maintain compliance with Financial Policies
  - h. Update timeline to comply with new state property tax law
2. Emergency fund
  - a. Maintain balance of at least \$1.5 million for emergencies
3. Black Hawk County Gaming Association

Staff provided a timeline of projects requested for funding from Black Hawk County Gaming Association. Council was supportive of the project list and timing proposed.

4. River Improvement Project
  - a. Council supports staff's proposed CIP timeline
  - b. Council approves proposed changes to funding mix including a private ask of \$500,000 and \$300,000 in Hotel/Motel Tax.
  - c. Council requires all the private donations at beginning of project.
5. Code Enforcement policy
  - a. Council supports the continuation of current city policy:
    - responding on a complaint basis city wide
    - proactively, grid by grid, in focus areas
6. Visioning – there was agreement to continue the following sequence of visioning and code revision projects:
  - 1) Downtown
  - 2) College Hill
  - 3) University Ave corridor
  - 4) Other areas may follow

7. Economic development policies
  - a. Continue to transfer \$1.3 million of TIF release per year from the general fund into the economic development fund.
  - b. Reconsider of TIF policies (Downtown & College Hill) including additional incentives for: architectural design, adaptive reuse, and public parking.
  - c. Exploring the establishment of a downtown Urban Revitalization District.
  - d. Maintain a balance of approximately \$4 million in the Economic Development Fund.
  
8. Parking – Downtown, College Hill
  - a. Allow 15 minutes free in public lots if the existing technology allows it.
  - b. No senior pass discounts
  - c. Businesses may purchase passes for employees at the regular rate.
  - d. Allow volunteer parking to be prepaid at the regular rate if possible
  - e. Explore allowing businesses to pay parking fees or tickets for clients
  
9. Washington/2nd St. Project & E. 3rd / State St. Projects
  - a. Explore public-private parking agreements in the downtown area.
  
10. 100 Block parking lot
  - a. Reimburse improvements as the lot is deeded to the city
  
11. Bicycle Plan implementation/complete streets
  - a. Continue implementation of the Bicycle Plan
  - b. Ask the Bicycle Pedestrian Committee to update the Bicycle Plan. Council would like to see a simplified and safer updated version of the plan.
  
12. Rental to owner conversion program
  - a. Continue to fund the rental to owner conversion program and revisit the program again in 5 years.
  
13. Idaho Road Reconstruction
  - a. Council is interested in a plan for the vacation of Idaho Rd
  
14. The following were identified as continuing priorities/ongoing commitments:
  - a. New hospital and redevelopment of the existing property
  - b. Develop Storm water/Grading ordinance
  - c. Evaluate additional land acquisition for economic development
  - d. Evaluate adding new TIF Districts or re-establishing existing districts
  - e. Communicate with Regional Workforce Development Agency to identify ways to retain recent graduates from UNI and young workers
  - f. Pettersen Plaza redevelopment
  - g. Continued expansion in the industrial park
  - h. Island Park reconstruction and maintenance

- i. Sanitary sewer extensions and tapping fee districts
  - j. W 27th St. project
  - k. Union Rd. project
  - l. Main St Reconstruction
  - m. Greenhill/58 Intersection project (City match of \$4 million)
  - n. City Hall remodel
15. Legislative Priorities: There was general agreement that the council supported the list of legislative priorities shared by staff.
16. Marketing grants
- a. The City Administrator has the authority to approve marketing grants that are confidential or time-sensitive.
17. School District Partnerships
- a. Financial contributions for the North Cedar playground and new rubber surface
  - b. Continued investigation of options for partnerships for providing public pools.
  - c. Council does not support reducing building permit fees, but does support allowing staff to negotiate plan review fees with the School District.
18. Waterloo Regional Airport
- a. Exploring financial contributions to the Waterloo Regional Airport
19. General Personnel Issues
- a. Add the positions proposed by staff in the FYE21 budget.
  - b. Fund existing tuition reimbursement program for staff.
  - c. Conduct a staff climate survey
  - d. City Administrator approves all budgeted hiring requests. Unbudgeted positions will be approved by City Council.
20. The participants agreed that the following policy issues should be discussed at future City Council Work Sessions:
- a. Wastewater regionalization options
  - b. MET Route Restructuring (scheduled for presentation at council meeting at Jan 6)
  - c. North Cedar drainage study
  - d. Bicycle plan update
  - e. Presentation on PSO history & current reality – consideration of hiring consultant after presentations.
  - f. Hearst Center Study
  - g. Training and role for Human Rights, Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment, and City Council.
  - h. Reconsideration of council packet submission deadline
21. New initiatives for the Upcoming 24 Months

- a. Move forward on developing a plan for connecting Ashworth.
- b. Restructure goal setting document to avoid using bullet points
- c. Revisit the 2016 urban chicken ordinance
- d. Hire a consultant to develop sustainability plan

### **Final Comments**

It was a pleasure to again assist the City of Cedar Falls with this goal setting process. We were particularly impressed with the level of cooperation and collaboration between the City Council and the staff.

Eric Christianson  
Aimee Viniard-Weideman  
Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

December 11, 2019

## **EXHIBIT A**

### **CITY OF CEDAR FALLS GOAL SETTING – 2019 ELECTED OFFICIALS INTERVIEW RESPONSES**

1. From your perspective, how is the City of Cedar Falls doing?
  - Doing well (7)
    - Great staff (3)
    - Goal setting process has improved (2)
    - Proud of University Ave award (2)
    - One of top cities in IA
    - Innovative
    - Financially stable
    - Budget passage is generally not contentious
  - PSO issue – lots of tension, misinformation (3)
  - Busy / Possibly doing too much (2)
  - Need to balance growth and economic development

2. In your opinion, what are the key issues of paramount importance to the City of Cedar Falls that need to be addressed in terms of leadership direction, goals, programs, policies and resource allocation in order to achieve the city's strategic vision?

- Staff (5)
  - Morale (2)
  - Turnover and retirements (2)
  - Social media abuse policy needed
  - worksite/work culture/morale assessment needed
  - Succession planning – lots of excellent employees retiring
- Rezoning / Form-based zoning (5)
  - Visioning downtown and college hill and University Ave
  - Current zoning process has developers avoiding Cedar Falls
- River improvements - White Water project (4)
- Prioritize infill development, more development in older pts of town (3)
- Wastewater Treatment Regional discussion (3)
  - Need strong control/oversight if working with other communities
- Revitalize downtown (3)
- Parking (downtown and College Hill) (3)
  - Explore resident only parking
- Sustainability committee / Climate action plan (2)
- Status of “emergency fund”; appropriate level of fund (2)
- PSO issue (2)
  - Strategic plan?
- 1<sup>st</sup> street (2)
- Repurpose College Square Mall
- University Avenue TIF
- Role of bike task force (makes recommendations, is not the decision maker)
- Recruit new developers
- UNI metro transportation
- Streets – repair and replace
- Availability of housing – esp. for first-time owners and younger workers
- Retention of UNI graduates in the community
- Backyard Chickens



3. What specific issues or concerns would you like to see addressed at the council goal setting session on Nov. 13?
- Whitewater Plan – feasibility of moving up the timeline (2)
  - Emergency fund reserve – what fund balance do we need to maintain? (2)
  - Building code and code enforcement (2)
    - Some buildings not well maintained
    - Similar requirements for owner-occupied and rental units
  - Regional Water Treatment facility
  - Use of health trust fund
  - Hearst Center feasibility study
  - Main Street
  - PSO – need to clarify misunderstandings
  - Communication with community; repair positive image of CF
  - Waterloo Cedar Falls dynamics – human rights (what is our role?)
  - Staff social media policy
  - Stop readdressing old problems without new information or reasons to review
  - North Cedar residential development
  - Employee satisfaction
  - Downtown streetscape expansion
    - TIF
  - College hill bar scene – Ames and Iowa City have “no minors after 10 pm”
  - Creation of student residential zones
  - Rental task force
  - Resident-only parking
  - Work with UNI to help them in student recruitment goals

4. Are there specific major projects that are currently under consideration by the City Council that you would like to see completed? If so, please identify them.

- Revitalization of Community Main Street (5)
  - Concerns with narrowing
- Whitewater feature and river bank improvements (2)
- North Cedar improvements (2)
  - Repair flood damaged bike trail
  - Drainage study
- Visioning for Main Street and College Hill
- Industrial Park – keep inviting new business
- Parks and bikeways continue improvements
- Form-based zoning
- Security on College Hill
- Complete 1<sup>st</sup> Street
- Center Street streetscape project
- Greenhill and Main (need to address congestion)
- Tree planting policy (are we planting too many trees?)
- PSO communication improvements
- City hall facility renovations

5. What new priority initiatives, programs or policies would you like the council to consider as part of this year's goal setting process?

- No new initiatives / manage workload
- Increase staff
- Maintain our reserves
- Rec Center – visioning discussion
- Purposeful infill model
- Study regionalization of Waste Water Treatment
- Establish University Ave Corridor TIF District
- Fireworks laws – Revisit idea of matching Waterloo's law
- Climate action plan
- Social media policy
- Wetland bank
- Student retention efforts with UNI
- North Cedar Playground added to CIP

6. What should be the city's top legislative priorities – state and/or federal – for the upcoming year?

- Protect Backfill (6)
- TIF – leave it alone (6)
- New lobbyist; need more updates (3)
- Advocate for increased funding for UNI (2)
- Defend existing tax incentives
- Address *ex parte* communication issue on state-wide basis (2)
- Mental health funding
- Allow self-lending
- Clean Water legislation (ensure that cities have access to funds)
- Pursue state-wide public employee health plan (similar to IPERS)
- Change fireworks law to allow cities to prohibit sales
- Support local sales tax on internet purchases
- Federal lobbying with Army Corps if there are issues with riverfront project

7. Are there any issues regarding organizational effectiveness, decision-making processes, teamwork or related issues you would like to have discussed during goal setting?
- Staff (5)
    - Doing a great job (2)
    - maintaining/retaining, turnover, rough year
    - Succession planning – transition planning
    - Internal climate assessment survey
  - Pleased with the goalsetting process (2)
  - Create more opportunities for work sessions (2)
    - Must come to clear decisions and direction for staff.
  - PSO Communications to deal with misinformation
  - More opportunities for council socialization – get to know each other, build relationships
  - Encourage council to do “ride-alongs” with staff, tours of city facilities, projects
  - UNI student liaison on council – does that position have a purpose? Encourage liaison to ask questions, participate in discussions
  - Ex parte communications
  - Pictures of more city staff on the website
  - Look for efficiencies, with tools like LEAN
  - Council members need to promote CF and each other in positive ways
  - How best to review the city administrator; council involved as a whole?
  - Make City’s goal and policy document earlier to read by using numbers instead of bullets & move fiscal policy to an addendum