

https://www.pmg-sc.com/the_lancaster_news/article_fc44fded-5814-5212-8850-f557ca8eb059.html

FEATURED

Lancaster City Council decides what to fund in new year

By Haley Jones hjones@thelancasternews.com

Mar 13, 2023



Lancaster City Council members walked around the room and observed the budget goals proposals that were hung on the wall. From left are Jackie Harris, Kenneth Hood, Mayor Alston DeVenny and Tomonica Marsh.

Haley Jones

Lancaster City Council prioritized its nine budget goals for the upcoming fiscal year at its March 8 budget goals meeting.

Its top three goals are updating the city's website, upgrading and repairing the city's sewer systems and funding \$30,000 to a private group to build six new pickleball courts at USCL.

Those goals were labeled as “must do,” while the middle three goals were labeled as “should do” and the last three goals were labeled as “could do.”

Council started with a total 14 goals to prioritize.

‘Should do’ goals

The “should do” goals voted in resulted in seven action items, as there were three ties. First was a tie for aiding law enforcement recruitment, compensation and developing a career ladder, and annexing both new and previously developed land, with the possible option of holding an annexation session with council.

The second “should do” tie was for improved customer service in all city offices, including diversity training for city employees, and researching and developing a splash pad, with a possible tennis court location.

The third “should do” tie was for three items — upgrading video and sound technology in council chambers for the livestream, improving the exterior look of historic downtown Lancaster, and integrating and expanding Lancaster city parks and greenway trails.

The expansion of parks and greenway would include the possible purchase of property, hiring a parks planner and looking specifically at Springdale Park.

‘Could do’ goals

Among the “could do” goals, reviewing and updating the city’s mission and vision statement ranked first. Creating a business incubator with private and public partnerships and tied to the Main Street program, and starting the Red Rose Development Corp. for redevelopment tied for second.

In third place, council voted to create a sports center that will recognize athletes from Lancaster and promote indoor sports and tourism.

Goal-setting process

The goal-setting session was facilitated by Charlie Barrineau, a field services manager with the Municipal Association of South Carolina. He works with MASC to facilitate goals sessions with a dozen South Carolina counties.

Barrineau used a five-step system, which involved brainstorming goal ideas as the first step.

Then he began the session with introductions, asking each council member how long they had been serving, as this was his first time working with the city.

He then asked council members to share their goal ideas, one by one, until all ideas had been presented and written on large yellow sticky notepaper, which was then put up on the wall.

Council then ranked their top three goals for each category of “must do,” “should do” and “could do,” with weighted tallies for each category. The tallies were totaled to determine the majority winners.

Municipal staff will combine the 14 goals into one prioritization list, with clear and concise tasks. Each action item for the budget will be assigned to an individual or department on a timeline for completion.

The plan will be presented to council for a vote at the March 28 City Council meeting.

The goals will be implemented into council’s budget for the fiscal year, which begins July 1.

Items that received some votes, but not enough to make the list, included improving low- to moderate-income housing, hiring an architect for the new city Fire Station 3, forming a partnership with United Way of Lancaster and S.C. Housing Corp. to address homelessness, and fixing road conditions with the County Transportation Committee.

“We sure appreciate your help,” Lancaster Mayor Alston DeVenny told Barrineau. “We certainly appreciate you helping us formulate the things we need to do.”

DeVenny said the workshop “is an enjoyable part of services, because you get to think about the things that we need to do and then think how it is possible to do the things that we think we need to do for the people in this community.”

Haley