Minutes of the Veneta City Council
Work Session
June 23, 2014

Present: Sandra Larson, Brittany Boothe, Thomas Cotter, Victoria Hedenstrom, and Thomas Laing

Others: Ric Ingham, City Administrator; Kay Bork, Community Development Director; Katie Babits, Management Analyst; and Darci Henneman, Assistant City Recorder

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Sandra Larson called the Veneta City Council Work Session to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. FOLLOW UP TO BRANDING EFFORTS

Ingham reviewed the packet materials and handouts. He said the purpose of tonight's work session is to determine if there is value in pursuing a branding campaign or elements of an image strategy. He said the Council and staff continue to come full circle about a branding campaign, creating a new logo, and updates to the website. He said regardless of what's decided, a decision should be made. He said the initial background piece focused on a branding campaign for Veneta. He said a few months ago Bob Parker was contacted about preparing the City's Economic Opportunity Analysis (EOA). Staff felt with the recent infrastructure and amenities (pool, Park N Ride, Service Center) it was a good time to do that.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ingham said a branding campaign can be very beneficial but is the timing right for Veneta and have we identified the right product to brand? He asked the following questions:

- Do we need to spend that kind of money?
- As far as tourism, do we have enough product?
- Have we done enough work to capitalize on that kind of a branding campaign?

He felt at this point, we don't have the critical mass of business to support an influx of visitors.

Thomas Cotter said this is an opportunity to start from the beginning. He said there are a couple of branding steps we could take to make the City attractive to our existing community as well at new residents. He felt if we go for an economic draw focused on tourism then we should be a user-friendly area for local agri-businesses. He said and they could come to Veneta to show off their wares, wine, farming, etc. He said if we put an effort into a bike/walking path around the reservoir that connects to Eugene not only could it bring in tourism, new residents, and business but current residents would also use it. He said the City has talked about developing some kind of path which would keep Veneta in the park outdoor recreation theme. He said because we're somewhat of a pass-through we could make it a nice pass-through without costing the City a lot of money. He said currently we can't rely on just one thing (tourism, business, and housing) to attract people to Veneta. He questioned if the economy is stable enough to attract people.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Thomas Cotter said an example of providing central retail space for agri-businesses is the Wineries without Walls (WwW) program but the space should be more usable and workable. He said the Wings and Wine Festival was also a good event.

Mayor Larson said unfortunately, the wineries didn't see the value in the WwW program.

Victoria Hedenstrom said her take from the last Chamber meeting was that the young wineries see the value in the program but the more established wineries see the WwW program as competition. She said the wineries don't want to collaborate with one another but that's what the program is all about.

Mayor Larson said the farmers are working together but they don't need more farmers or more competition.

Thomas Cotter asked the question: How we brand ourselves; would we brand just Veneta or the entire community?

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ingham said the Benton County fairgrounds is in Philomath which is a 100 year old city. He said there's a lot of historical value in older, established cities.

Thomas Laing said Veneta is the gateway to the Fern Ridge area.

Mayor Larson said many residents from other local communities have to drive through Veneta to get to their own communities but there's not much happening in those other communities.

Victoria Hedenstrom suggested we should be on the outside of Veneta looking in and ask Eugene residents or other surrounding residents "what do you think of Veneta".

Mayor Larson said that's the reason to hire a consultant.

Thomas Cotter said we're a destination spot for some things but if we lose our grocery store we would be in bad shape like Creswell. He said building on our attractiveness may cost less in the beginning and we could expand in the future and reach out to small businesses. He said making the pitch that we're a great place to live, may bring businesses in. He said we're still too fractured as a City to bring it together but developing some kind of trail system might do the trick.

Mayor Larson suggested focusing on our parks. She said Veneta is a Tree City USA City. She said but how do we incorporate the reservoir, birding, bicycles, agriculture, wine, etc.

Thomas Cotter said we may not need to incorporate them into a brand but it may give us a direction to move toward. He said the things Victoria Hedenstrom mentioned would be enough. He said he doesn't mind branding the entire Fern Ridge area, with a focus on Veneta, because Veneta is the only incorporated city in the Fern Ridge Area.

Thomas Laing said Junction City has the Scandinavian Festival, but we don't have anything.

3. BACKGROUND ON RECENT WEBSITE AND LOGO ACTIVITIES

4. REVIEW OF THE FERN RIDGE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2007 BRANDING CAMPAIGN

Ingham reviewed the Chamber branding campaign. He said in seven years very little has changed and people do make the connection between the Oregon Country Fair (OCF) and Veneta.

Thomas Cotter said he, Mayor Larson, and Ingham toured the Oregon Country Fair grounds. He said OCF and the City have their own identities. He said he felt the OCF would be cooperative with the City on any venture.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ingham said unfortunately, he could not invite the entire Council to attend the tour but in the future the OCF is looking at hosting daily music events throughout the summer. He said when asked about it, the OCF board knows the City is very supportive of any long term plans they may have.

Mayor Larson said she agreed with Thomas Cotter about developing some kind of trail system as well as a long term event with OCF.

Thomas Cotter said the bike trails would also be a goal. He said it's also an opportunity for the City and OCF to get behind a project which may provide a better opportunity for a branding.

Mayor Larson said she would prefer to set the branding aside and focus on "Building an Image". She said she felt taking on a branding campaign would be more involved.

Brittany Boothe said she would rather like to see the City "Build an Image" that identifies a place to spend a Saturday or Sunday and that helps fulfill that brand promise. She said she liked Thomas Cotter's bike trail idea and other ideas that would not only support the community but also bring people to our community.

Ingham said instead of focusing on the brand, we could identify tangible products; the four corners beautification, Trail Master Plan, etc. He said a unifying project would be a bike path from Veneta to Elmira and include school safety and activities. He said many things are woven in but are we far enough in it to start branding something? He said from what he's hearing from the Council we're not there.

Victoria Hedenstrom asked if is there someone locally that can work up the logo to transform it to something more. She said it's not necessarily a bad thing to come up with a temporary brand for now.

Mayor Larson said she would like to see the City work on what we want to become.

Ingham said as Mr. Baker stressed that we need to identify the objective; to make us more attractive to more residents. He said even with that we need to be very clear.

In response to a question from Brittany Boothe, Ingham said we could use something like the Chamber's sailboat logo.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ingham said we cannot use the Chamber's "Inspired by Nature" tag line because it's not ours – we didn't pay for it.

Ingham said this community has a lot to be proud of and maybe we're somewhat hung up on that. He said we've done a lot to define who we are; more than any other small City but maybe we're not ready to say what we want to be or that we need a clearer objective before we make further commitments. He said maybe it's not a wholesale effort of the website but just a minor tweaking and come up with a simple tag line. He said if the Council wants to proceed, he said staff is very excited about what Mr. Parker is working on for the EOA. He said staff can continue to bring that forward and work on making our residents feel better about our community and those who pass through.

Victoria Hedenstrom said Art, Inc. did a great job on its facility at Central Elementary. She said thanks to the School District, Art, Inc. has a place to offer a great play house and another asset for our community.

After a thorough discussion, it was the consensus of the Council to reconvene the logo committee.

As a recap, Ingham said we won't proceed with a full blown campaign but follow up with an image strategy and identify our initial objective. He suggested the logo committee could reconvene to review all the options and do some things off line and not during a Council session.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ingham said we are still paying LCOG any time we send updates for the website. He said for four or five years we wanted to support LCOG to update the City's website and they did a pretty good job. He said but recently there's been new companies that work with municipalities to make websites more user friendly. He said staff felt we should look at the many relatively low cost avenues to pursue.

Ingham said currently all significant website updates are still done by LCOG and they charge by the hour. He said Babits' memo identified logo committee members as Mayor Larson, and Councilors Boothe and Cotter. He said staff will send out the information to all Council members and Babits will send out a notice and dates for the reconvening of the website committee. He said the meeting will be considered a public meeting so all Councilors could attend.

5. Discussion and Deliberation

The following agenda items were included in the above discussion.

a) Should the City pursue a Branding Campaign or elements of a Branding Campaign?

b) If so, should the effort be done simultaneous with Economic Opportunity Analysis (EOA) and Economic Development Strategic Plan or at the conclusion of the effort?

c) If no elements are to be pursued, provide recommendations on development of logo and website.
   i. Maintain or modify existing logo.
   ii. Utilize logo developed by the Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce.
   iii. Reconvene Logo Committee.

4. Adjourn

Mayor Larson adjourned the Veneta City Council work session at 7:05 p.m.

Sandra Larson, Mayor

ATTEST:

Darci Henneman, Assistant City Recorder
(Minutes prepared by Dhenneman)