



TO: Michele Weiss, Vice Mayor, Chair of Strategic Planning SC

FROM: Michael Dylan Brennan, Mayor 

CC: Directors/Chiefs, City Council, Clerk of Council, SC members

DATE: May 11, 2021

RE: Future Handling of Strategic Planning

By the City Charter, the executive and administrative powers of the City are vested in the Mayor, directors of departments, and other administrative officers (hereinafter “City Administration.”). The Charter provides further that the Mayor is the Chief Executive Officer of the City and supervises the administration of the City’s affairs; thus the Mayor is the head of and speaks for City Administration. Strategic planning is an administrative power and the province of City Administration. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in 2020 the Vice Mayor formed a Strategic Planning Subcommittee of Council’s Finance Committee (hereinafter “Subcommittee.”) which began meeting in Fall 2020.

After consideration and evaluation of the Subcommittee’s proceedings and output to date, City Administration does not have confidence in the Subcommittee to do the work meaningfully, thoroughly, or timely.

As it is an administrative function, this memo is to inform all stakeholders that the City Administration has taken back the strategic planning process of the City. City Administration will not be attending the May 12, 2021 Subcommittee meeting, will no longer attend other Subcommittee meetings or pre-meetings, and will no longer prepare materials or perform other work for the Subcommittee.

To date, the output of the Subcommittee has been uneven. The Subcommittee did approve of the proposal City Administration obtained for a municipal facilities study, which City Council then approved, and is now underway. This is a significant development in which all involved may share credit.

Beyond that, there has been a breakdown of communication by the Vice Mayor with City Administration. As it pertains to this process, it is both in preparation for meetings and their subjects, and by way of failing to provide descriptive meeting

agendas (which is not transparent, does not promote meaningful preparation, and does not serve the public interest).

The Subcommittee has not followed through with agenda items once noticed (e.g. the Benefits discussion item that was noticed for April 14). The Subcommittee has not followed through on either an approval or other feedback of the draft compensation scale (meeting of February 16); when ready for Council consideration, such matters are appropriately put before Council or referred to the Finance Committee (which unlike the Subcommittee, exists by ordinance. See UH Ord. 220.10(a)(3)). The Finance Committee has not met for three months now (last meeting was February 10, 2021), with no meetings scheduled.

At the March 16 meeting, the Subcommittee chair shut down attempted discussion by a citizen Subcommittee member who raised a concern over the ongoing unresolved issue of the method of solid waste pickup (see Solid Waste Collection Analysis of May 15, 2020) with respect to the discussion of the Service Department equipment replacement schedule. Naturally, the method of pick-up directly impacts the decisions on what equipment the City requires in replacement of the current failing and worn out equipment (most of which is past due, due, or shortly due for replacement). Following presentations at the same meeting, some council members revealed that they only now understood the commitment and budgeting needed for keeping up the roads program (which would have been helpful before those same council members voted to cut the proposed roads budget by 50% in 2021). The eventual (and seemingly only) result of that meeting was the Subcommittee decision that four administrative department spreadsheets should be merged onto a single spreadsheet. City Administration performed this task.

City Administration's distribution of the combined spreadsheet was followed by an April 7, 2021 email from the Subcommittee chair questioning why the police department listed a future need for new photocopier when "[t]hey can lease them with a \$1 buyout.... no one should be purchasing copiers," and other opinions that the City should wait till various equipment fail before replacing them – rather than planning on their periodic seamless replacement to avoid disruption to municipal operations.

Aside but relevant to that last point, City Administration reported at the City Council meeting of April 19, 2021 (see Mayor's Report that date) that the internet and phones at the 2245 WCR Annex were down for nearly a month due to City Council's November 2020 failure to approve replacement of certain switches the City's IT consultant recommended for replacement. At that time, and after a special meeting called by City Administration on the subject of the proposal, City Council declined to do the work as the switches were not yet broken. The disruption caused by failing to follow the advice of our IT consultant, and instead waiting for the switches to break, is something we should be planning to avoid in the future.

When the Subcommittee chair maintains the position that we should continue to wait till equipment fails before making replacements, that isn't strategic planning.

Actual strategic planning should include, among other things, committing to avoid disruption of operations and services through routine maintenance, upgrades, and replacements, not formalizing failure and disruption as a matter of City policy.

These are just some of the reasons why City Administration will no longer engage in the Subcommittee's proceedings.

Should the Subcommittee nevertheless continue to meet in an advisory capacity, it is reminded to take care to follow open meeting laws, properly notice the public with meaningfully descriptive agendas, record the meetings on Zoom, and produce minutes. Any public documents it seeks from City Administration for its proceedings are to be coordinated through the Clerk of Council, and not by the Vice Mayor or other Subcommittee members contacting any department heads directly. Any suggestions the Subcommittee may make to City Administration will be taken under advisement.

In the meantime, City Administration is working on matters regarding compensation, including a revised Compensation Scale with Salary Ranges, and issues regarding certain salary add-ons and benefits that were to be discussed at the Subcommittee meeting of April 14, 2021 (and then weren't, when the Vice Mayor texted during the meeting that she did not want to discuss the subject in front of the media and would move it to the Committee of the Whole meeting) which then were addressed superficially (although not formally placed on the agenda) at the Committee of the Whole meeting of April 26, 2021. City Administration will then present these matters to City Council as ordinances for consideration on a Council meeting agenda, at which time City Administration will present in support of its proposals.

The City Administration's Revised Policies and Procedures Manual had its First Reading at the May 3, 2021 City Council meeting, as was also supposed to be (from the Committee of the Whole) a companion ordinance regarding salaries and benefits (which City Administration is handling now); City Administration will hold back the revised PPM from second reading until it has completed the other items for presentation to Council, to ensure that all items are considered together and are consistent. In taking back the process and making up for lost time, the City Administration's goals are to be careful and correct in our computations and to have these items ready for consideration and a vote for implementation before the summer recess; if necessary, City Administration will call special meetings through the summer.

Further Strategic Planning matters will be addressed by City Administration, presented from time to time to City Council and/or an appropriate standing committee, and to the public.

City Administration thanks the Subcommittee members, especially the citizen members, for their attendance and efforts to date as we now move the City forward.