

**BLACK DIAMOND CITY COUNCIL MINUTES**  
**Special Meeting of April 23, 2022 - Retreat**  
**Hybrid Meeting Via Zoom and In-Person**  
**Council Chamber, 25510 Lawson Street, Black Diamond, Washington**

**CALL TO ORDER, FLAG SALUTE:**

Mayor Benson called the special meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and led us all in the Flag Salute.

**ROLL CALL:**

**PRESENT:** Councilmembers Deady, Stallard, Smith, Mulvihill, de Leon, O'Donnell, and Page

**ABSENT:** None

Staff present: Mona Davis, Community Development Director; Scott Hanis, Public Works Director; Andrew Williamson; Ec Dev/MDRT Director; Rob Reed and Tristen Bennett, IS Department; Mayene Miller, Finance Director; Jamey Kiblinger, Police Chief; and Brenda L. Martinez, City Clerk/HR Manager.

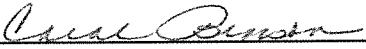
Mayor Benson welcomed everyone and turned the meeting over to our facilitator, Jim Reid of The Falcon Group.

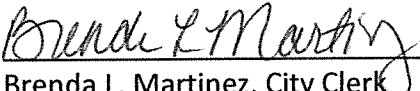
For meeting content and discussion attached is the meeting summary which is incorporated into the minutes.

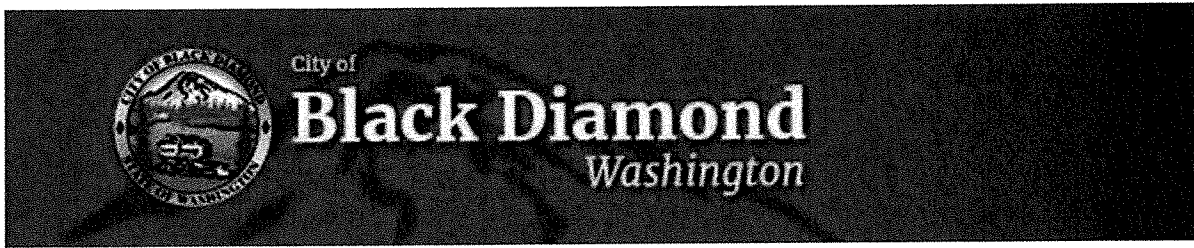
**ADJOURNMENT:**

Councilmember Smith **moved** to adjourn the meeting; **second** Councilmember Page. Motion **passed** with all voting in favor (7-0). The meeting ended at 2:58 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Carol Benson, Mayor

  
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Brenda L. Martinez, City Clerk



## CITY COUNCIL RETREAT

Saturday, April 23, 2022, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
City Council Chambers

# SUMMARY

OF THE MEETING'S MAJOR DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS

**ATTENDED (in person):** Mayor Carol Benson; Councilmembers Tamie Deady, Kristiana de Leon, Leih Mulvihill, Bernie O'Donnell, Debbie Page, Trish Stallard, and Therron Smith; Brenda Martinez, City Clerk; Rob Reed, Information Technology Manager; Tristen Bennett, Communication and Information Services; and Jim Reid, The Falconer Group, Facilitator.

**ATTENDED (via Zoom):** May Miller, Finance Director; Mona Davis, Community Development Director; Jamey Kiblinger, Police Chief; Andy Williamson, Master Development Review Team (MDRT)/Economic Development Director and Scott Hanis, Public Works Director.

### THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL REACH CONSENSUS ON GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The first agreement of this year's retreat was the consensus among the Mayor and Council for a set of guiding principles. They are based on Mayor Benson's goals, which she introduced to the Council at the June 2021 retreat. At this meeting the discussion resulted in agreements to rename the goals "Guiding Principles" and to add two more. The eight principles agreed on by Mayor Benson and the Council members are presented as an **ATTACHMENT** on page 4.

***NOTES:** 1) After the retreat adjourned, Council member Smith developed and submitted to facilitator Jim Reid the language for Guiding Principle #7: I.D.E.A. Is this language acceptable to Mayor Benson and the Council? 2) The Guiding Principles are numbered but the elected officials did not rank them. Are they fine in the order in which they appear? Should "bullets" be used instead of numbers so that the list is not interpreted as prioritized?*

After the Council and Mayor agreed on the Guiding Principles, these ideas were suggested as ways to "bring them to life" and ensure that they truly guide policy and operations decisions:

1. Print and frame copies of the Guiding Principles and hang them in the Council Chambers, conference rooms at City Hall, and/or other key places. In addition, attach a copy to the podium

at which people stand to testify to the Council so that the principles are viewed by the Mayor and Council.

2. Make pocket-sized cards of the Guiding Principles for the elected officials and staff and, perhaps, the public.
3. Devote a work session to each Guiding Principle to discuss them in greater depth. During these sessions, hear from the departments about what the principles mean to staff and how they are guiding the department's current. Special guests who partner with the City, such as the Enumclaw School District, might also be invited to join these discussions.
4. In the work sessions, identify and develop Specific, Measurable, Accountable, Relevant, and Timed (SMART) Goals to advance the Guiding Principles. Because the City's budget is tight and new initiatives are unlikely to be funded in the next couple years, start by basing the SMART Goals on the departments' current visions, goals, priorities, and work plans. The Comprehensive Plan's vision and goals will also help guide the development of goals to advance the Guiding Principles.

This discussion also led to acknowledgement that the City needs to do even more to engage the public. As one Council member stated, "Residents see 10% of what the City does. The other 90% is done behind closed doors. We need to show them the 90% so that they know what we are accomplishing."

The Mayor and Council might revive periodic Town Halls. Brenda Martinez suggested that they will draw greater attendance than in the past if each one is focused on a major topic of interest to community members and businesses. Social events, such as an Ice Cream Social or holiday tree lighting, could also help bring the Mayor, Council, and staff, and Black Diamond residents together in a casual manner.

#### **THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL AGREE ON STEPS TO HIRE A CITY ADMINISTRATOR**

The Council and Mayor Benson agreed on the need to hire a City Administrator and the most important steps to address their interests and concerns.

Council members opened the discussion by identifying eight interests in hiring a City Administrative Officer (CAO) at this time in Black Diamond's history:

1. As the community keeps growing, the issues facing the City are becoming increasingly complex. Therefore, the City needs the Mayor to "steer the ship" while a City Administrator oversees the work that must be accomplished to support the Mayor.
2. The Mayor leads and the CAO manages. Their roles complement each other. As Black Diamond transforms from a community of 6,000 residents to one of nearly 20,000, this partnership will be a great benefit to City government and the community.
3. The Mayor's job and the departments' work plans are also growing, meaning that they are overworked and under resourced. A CAO would be a much needed additional resource and could identify other resources that are needed and how to get them.

4. Taking their cue from the Mayor, the administrator will reflect the Mayor's vision back into the departments and ensure that their work helps advance the Mayor's vision, goals, and priorities.
5. The CAO will provide continuity—institutional knowledge—as elected officials come and go.
6. The CAO will also ensure accountability by providing full-time oversight of the workplan.
7. An administrator will provide expertise in both the development of public policy and the technical operations of municipal government.
8. For a City growing at the rate of Black Diamond, having a City Administrator is an organizational best practice.

Adding to the Council's interests, Mayor Benson expressed these interests: the cost of the position must be sustainable for the City; the process must yield a highly qualified and trained individual; and the person who is hired must understand their role relative to the Mayor's and Council's roles.

Then the Mayor and Council agreed on two important initial steps to achieve their interests:

- Work with Finance Director May Miller to determine the sources of funding to hire and sustain the position.
- With Jim Reid facilitating this step, interview five to seven City Managers/Administrators in our region to learn what they believe enables them to be successful.

Once these steps are completed, the next steps might be:

- Mayor Benson, the Council, and staff identify the 3-5 most essential qualities and characteristics that are needed in a CAO for the next four or five years.
- Revise the April 2009 CAO job description.
- Produce a Request for Proposal (RFP) to hire a professional recruiting firm or consultant.
- Hire the consulting firm or consultant to design and manage the CAO hiring process.
- Agree on strategies for involving key stakeholders and the community in this process.
- Perhaps in coordination with the recruiting consultant(s), develop a process and the criteria for evaluating the City Administrator's performance and determine the length of time the CAO would be in office before the first assessment of their performance.

Some Council members stated that it is their goal to bring the new CAO on board no later than the end of the first quarter of 2023.

Council members also expressed an interest in working with Jim Reid to develop questions for their interviews of City Managers/Administrators before those interviews take place and sending the questions to the interviewees beforehand. The interview questions could address such things as:

- What "soft" and technical skills are needed to be effective?
- What do we need to know as we go into a hiring process that we don't know today?
- What do we want to avoid, and how do we avoid it?
- Given the culture that we envision for the City of Black Diamond, what specific attributes might we seek and what are other considerations?

## MAYOR AND COUNCIL IDENTIFY POTENTIAL STEPS TO STRENGTHEN THE ECONOMY

As it was at last year's City Council retreat, economic development was a primary topic this year. The Council and Mayor identified and appeared to agree on a few **key principles** to help frame their vision for expanding and strengthening Black Diamond's economy:

1. Proactively support local businesses, whether they currently operate in Black Diamond or are considering locating in the community.
2. Amplify the history of Black Diamond to promote the community to businesses and balance the two interests in preserving the city's historic character and being seen as business-friendly.
3. Use a variety of tools at the City's disposal to incentivize business growth.
4. Find a predictable, sustainable funding source to support and strengthen the City's financial condition.
5. Build relationships with a diversity of partners and stakeholders.
6. Be flexible and resilient by tailoring business recruitment and retention strategies to the unique characteristics of business centers and businesses themselves.

Staff briefed the Council on the strategies and actions the Administration is doing now to advance these principles.

- The City is building its image as a community that needs and wants businesses.
- By developing a new checklist, hosting pre-application meetings, and coaching permit applicants, the City is able to fast-track permit applications.
- By upgrading the City's website, developing a more user-friendly packet, and consistently reaching out to provide education and guidance, the City is improving communication and coordination with developers and builders. This, in turn, is strengthening relationships with them.
- The economic development plan has strategies for attracting and retaining businesses, including medium-sized manufacturers.
- The City is working to secure grants, such as from the Port of Seattle, to fund outreach activities and marketing materials, such as the user-friendly guide/checklist for doing business in Black Diamond.

Council members identified some strategies for expanding the economic base, but there was not an attempt to forge consensus on them. For now these are potential actions:

- Build upon the City's current efforts to continue to improve permit processing.
- Update the Zoning Code to incentivize businesses and ensure that business growth fortifies the community's character. Examine land use and zoning in each of these four business areas to identify their unique characters and features: Old Town, 169 Gateway, Ten Trails, Lake Sawyer. Consider how to tailor land use and zoning requirements to meet the needs of the City and businesses in each district.
- Help stimulate the revitalization of business districts, particularly Old Town. One idea was to place electric car charging stations downtown.

- Related to the point above, the City could promote Black Diamond as an energy-generating community. In the 1900s the energy it helped promote was coal; today and into the future the energy the City would help produce would be “green.”
- Work with the Chamber of Commerce to ensure that businesses join the Chamber.
- Use the Comprehensive Plan update of 2023 to examine and, if necessary, revise policies and the Code to ensure business growth advances the City’s vision. Follow the lead of the Gateway Corridor Overlay, which is currently in the Zoning Code and provides design guidelines for businesses.
- Locate a grocery store in town.
- Use way-finding signs to help promote business districts and other key features of the community.
- Expand broadband.
- Attract “green” industries.
- Consider allowing marijuana sales to increase revenues.
- Partner with Green River College to establish an apprenticeship program or other programs to enhance the skills and preparedness of workers.
- Discuss with May the Business and Occupation (B&O) Tax. Find out why it was repealed and if there are any reasons to reinstate it. For now, the City should keep its “fingers on the pulse” of growth and the economic climate.

Finally, when the Mayor and Council conduct the work session to dive more deeply into Guiding Principle #2, the City could invite business representatives to attend so that everyone could discuss how to strengthen the partnership between the City and business community.

## **MAYOR AND COUNCIL DISCUSS ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY**

The last major topic of discussion at the retreat was public engagement, specifically the use of social media.

Brenda Martinez, Rob Reed, and Tristen Bennett briefed the Council on what the City is currently doing to engage the public. The City’s new website and its use of Facebook and Instagram are all intended to strengthen the social media presence. The Information Technology staff are providing the public with alerts about public works projects that on any given day may affect traffic patterns, and Tristen reported that this coming summer they will feature a “Park of the Week” to promote the community’s recreational opportunities. The department would like to be able to allow the public to post comments, but additional staff resources would be needed to manage it.

Tristin also mentioned a feature called “Why Wednesday” to foster a stronger sense of community and create connections between Black Diamond residents and/or businesses. Eventually, the City may have its own App as another means to increase its social media presence.

Council member Debbie Page asked: “What is our social media strategy?” She urged the Administration to develop a long-term strategic direction and offered to help develop it. Brenda asked the Council to give things—stories, the Mayor’s and Council’s activities and appearances, notices of events, etc.—for the staff to post on social media. There was a comment that the City should post at least three times per day; again, staffing currently makes that a challenge. And both the Council and IT staff said that there are things that could be added to the website—the Mayor’s newsletter, notices, featured articles spotlighting, for example, the community’s history, etc.—that would attract more followers and build Black Diamond’s identity. Rob told the Council that protocols for how to get material on the City’s social media tools will be presented to Council in the near future.

One other suggestion was to link the Mayor’s newsletter that goes out with utility bills so that residents could hit the link and be connected to the website.

Because not all residents use social media, the Council also discussed such things as providing a longer public notice period about City actions to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of and could comment on formal actions that the City is considering.

Council member de Leon suggested that the City consider establishing additional commissions (besides the Planning and Civil Service Commissions) to increase public involvement. One that she suggested was a commission on diversity, equity, and inclusion. She also suggested engaging the public in a series of conversations about DEI with facilitators helping support the City and public.

Finally, a couple Council members supported the idea of having first and second readings before the Council makes any decisions. Adding a second reading would provide more time for the public to become aware of and comment on pending Council decisions.

## **ISSUES ON THE HORIZON**

The retreat concluded with Council members citing issues they believe are on the horizon; i.e., issues the City may have to address in the next few years. The issues mentioned were:

- Make a code change to allow marijuana sales.
- Revise the Code to update the fee schedule.
- Forge a clearer path on the Civic Commons.
- Address the exodus of employees because of retirements and the nationwide resignations of employees fueled by the experiences in American society and the workplace since COVID struck in March 2020.
- Update the Code to incentivize a wide range of housing options and provide more green spaces.
- Establish a Parks and Recreation Department.
- Create an Arts and Culture Commission.

## **TAKEAWAYS FROM THE RETREAT**

In summary, the Mayor and Council agreed on: 1) eight Guiding Principles and to use work sessions to dive deeper into each one; 2) two initial important steps to hire a City Administrator and a list of potential additional steps in that process; and 3) key principles to guide the City's efforts to expand Black Diamond's economy; and 4) the need to increase public engagement, whether through the use of social media or other strategies.

Mayor Benson and the Council expressed satisfaction that they reached consensus on important issues and, therefore, demonstrated that they are "on the same page." They acknowledged that there will be differences of opinion when discussing how to advance their vision, but that their common vision and interests will allow them to have these conversations and make decisions that are in the best interests of the community.

**ATTACHMENT**



## THE MAYOR'S AND COUNCIL'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ❖ **Growth and Development:** Growth is planned and communicated in a responsible way that retains our strong sense of community character and livability.
- ❖ **Social and Economic Vitality:** An economically vital and diverse community that is supported by robust businesses and supportive services.
- ❖ **Environmental Stewardship:** Environmental resources are proactively enhanced, protected and stewarded.
- ❖ **City Leadership and Services:** Leadership and accountability are provided in the delivery of public services for our growing and diversifying community.
- ❖ **Infrastructure:** Infrastructure systems that are planned, designed, built, and maintained well to support current and future community needs.
- ❖ **Mobility:** Getting around town is easier for people who live, work and play here.
- ❖ **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accountability (IDEA):** Actively work for a more inclusive and diverse city, with a strong sense of equity and expectation of accountability.
- ❖ **Public Safety:** The community is safe, secure, healthy, resilient, and accessible.