



Meeting 6 Report

Dec. 17, 2009

Engage Gwinnett, the citizens committee on the future of Gwinnett County, held its sixth meeting on Thursday, Dec. 17, 2009, at the Gwinnett Center in Duluth. The meeting started at 8:00 a.m. and lasted three and a half hours. The Engage Gwinnett committee will make recommendations by the end of March 2010 on county government services, the benefits citizens receive from those services, and how they should be paid for.

The first 30 minutes was held in plenary session (with all members present), so members could hear reports from spokespersons for the four Work Groups that make up Engage Gwinnett and receive an overview of the day's activities from Jon Abercrombie, the Engage Gwinnett facilitator. Members then went to their Work Group meeting rooms, spending the next three hours in Work Group sessions.

Meeting Process

Bill McCargo and Mike Levengood, Engage Gwinnett's co-chair, welcomed the members, alternate members, citizens and observers. Bill reminded them of Engage Gwinnett's mission:

- Look at the major benefits provided today by Gwinnett County government.
- Make judgments about these benefits, their levels of service, and how they are delivered.
- Recommend ways of paying for the ones that are truly needed.

Bill congratulated members on their diligence and progress. In five meetings, he said, they had learned how county government was organized and financed, how the current financial difficulties of the government developed and about an important vision for the county's future that's included in the Unified Plan. And they've dug into the services of county government in their Work Groups, learning among other things about the cost reductions the county has already made.

In his remarks, Mike urged members, as they moved from learning about county government to making actual recommendations, to include two elements: context for the recommendations and detail. "Lay the groundwork for the recommendations by making some judgments about the services, their benefits, and

ENGAGE GWINNETT
MEETING 6 REPORT
DEC. 17, 2009

how these departments are functioning today,” Mike said. And in making recommendations, he said, include enough detail that the recommendations will be “taken seriously by the Board of Commissioners and county staff.”

In his overview of the day, Jon Abercrombie said that each of the Work Groups would be furnished with templates for the recommendations that will provide the context and detail of the recommendations that Mike had said was needed.

The spokespersons for the four Work Groups talked about what their groups had learned and where they were focusing their attention.

Norwood Davis from the Community Services group said that his Work Group had learned of the deep cuts the Community Services Department and Public Library system had already made. One result, he added, is that the Parks and Recreation Division is not providing the services called for in the Unified Plan’s vision for Gwinnett County’s development.

Charlotte Nash of the Fire and Emergency Services group said that her group had visited the Fire Department headquarters, and is becoming aware of the linkages between services – not only within the Fire and EMS Department but between the department and other county departments. For example, as Gwinnett reduces spending for road construction, the resulting congestion has an impact on fire response times. Her group, she said, felt it now had enough information to begin deliberating specific recommendations.

Julie Post of the Development and Infrastructure group said her group had learned that that the county’s Planning Department is proposing to raise fees and outsource a large share of its services. An important question for transportation recommendations, she said, was whether the county’s municipalities could assume greater responsibility for maintaining roads in their jurisdictions.

Chuck Warbington of the Law Enforcement and Judiciary group said his group was still gathering information about its work area. The group would hear this day from the district attorney’s office and the corrections chief, he said. But in the last meeting, it had learned that court caseloads are rising and budgets are not keep pace. A result: The time it takes to process cases is lengthening – and that, in turn, is increasing costs for holding facilities like the county jail. His group has asked about raising filing fees for services such as garnishments but has learned that some of these fees are set by state law or regulation, so the county does not have the option of raising them.

Work Group Presentations and Discussions

The four Work Groups received presentations, held discussions and brainstormed possible recommendations in their work areas. The following is a brief summary of some of the presentations and discussions that were held.

Community Services

The Community Services Work Group moved from hearing presentations to questioning agency officials and brainstorming about possible recommendations. At this meeting, the questions were directed to Nancy Stanbery-Kellam, executive director of the Gwinnett County Public Library, and Phil Hoskins, director of the Department of Community Services.

- A major focus of the questions to Ms. Stanbery-Kellam was about library system hours, which have been cut among the branches from 71 to 35 hours, in order to save money as staff has been reduced. Among the questions asked:
 - Could a branch operate with fewer staff members?
 - Could unpaid volunteers do some of the work that staff members presently perform?
 - If so, could the branches be open longer?
- There are regulations and standards of operation that come with state funding for libraries. This caused several Work Group members to ask what would be the result if state funding were lost.
- Ms. Stanbery-Kellam was asked if a public library system had ever been privatized – that is, continued as a public institution but turned over to a private company for management. Ms. Stanbery-Kellam said she was not aware of any.
- Finally, the Work Group was interested in learning more about the Public Library’s proposal, made earlier this year, for operating some of its branches in different ways – with fewer books at some locations, for instance, but more computers connected to the Internet. This would allow for a different staffing model at these branches and might allow some locations to be open longer than 35 hours a week.
- The questions for Mr. Hoskins were mostly about the Parks and Recreation Division. They centered around two questions: Are there ways of charging fees for recreational services that the division has not considered, and are there ways of maintaining the parks in ways that might be less expensive?
- Mr. Hoskins discussed the difficulty of charging fees for services. The county does charge for some of its facilities, such as pools, and it charges more for non-residents of Gwinnett than residents (\$10 per day for non-residents, \$5 for residents). But charging for parking can be difficult to administer and have unintended consequences, such as park-goers parking in nearby neighborhoods.
- Beyond that, he said, the county has deliberately focused on recreational services that don’t compete with private businesses or non-profits like the YMCA. Thus, the pools of Gwinnett County are recreational, not competitive. Many of the parks are built around walking trails and passive uses; they’re not amusement parks. For those reasons, it’s harder to charge for park usage.

ENGAGE GWINNETT
MEETING 6 REPORT
DEC. 17, 2009

- A good deal of park maintenance is already outsourced, such as maintenance of pools and athletic fields. It may be possible to mow parks less often and allow some areas to look more natural, but that also has the unintended consequences of making parks appear less safe to users, Mr. Hoskins said.

Development and Infrastructure

The Development and Infrastructure Work Group moved from question and answer sessions to holding discussions on what has been learned so far, and what steps to take next.

- The Work Group briefly concluded that no further study of Water Resources was needed, as it is an Enterprise Fund that does not impact the county's general budget. The Water Resources director encouraged the Work Group to continue studying the department to see if there are further ways to become more efficient, and invited the Work Group to a site visit of its new facility.
- All future capital improvements in Water Resources will be handled on a pay-as-you-go basis, meaning no new debt will be incurred for new capital. Recently, Water Resources finished closing older, less efficient plants in favor of a new facility. At this point, the department is focused on making their plants more efficient and increasing revenue through reuse.
- There was a lot of discussion surrounding the outsourcing of Planning and Development functions, especially plan review. Some Work Group members expressed concern that outsourcing would result in delays or lower quality services. The Planning and Development director stressed that outsourcing services would only be used if in-house staff is unable to handle the workload within acceptable service levels.
- In the coming year, Planning and Development will reduce its staffing from 71 employees to 55. Even at the lower staff levels, the department still expects to operate at 50% capacity, due to lower rates of development throughout the county. Typically, much of the excess capacity is dedicated to non-revenue generating services, such as handling inquiries from investors who are thinking of developing in the county.
- The director of Transportation followed up the previous week's discussion about county-maintained traffic signals in municipalities by pointing out that city residents pay county taxes at the same rate that residents of unincorporated areas pay. There was some concern from Work Group members that there are still too many Gwinnett County police officers on duty at these signals while the signals are undergoing maintenance. The director of Transportation responded that these officers are off duty, and are hired by the contractor that is performing the maintenance.
- The Work Group determined that there is no need to discuss sidewalks any further. Sidewalks are funded through the SPLOST, with no impact on the county's general budget.

ENGAGE GWINNETT
MEETING 6 REPORT
DEC. 17, 2009

- The Work Group discussed the county's mass transit operations. Over the past year, transit service levels have been cut and fares have increased. The entire service is contracted to a vendor, and receives a subsidy from the county. Work Group members discussed some ideas that the transit service might use to boost ridership, or cut costs. Ideas include distribution of bus schedules in grocery stores, and piloting a reduced fare to see if there is a corresponding boost in ridership.
- The Work Group also discussed road operations. Most new roads and resurfacing are funded through SPLOST. The county's general budget funds maintenance of potholes and other basic maintenance operations. To cut costs, the county has reduced the number of field crews available for maintenance. The Work Group stressed the importance of keeping the county's roads looking good.
- The director of the Department of Transportation invited the Work Group to a site visit of the county's traffic control facility. The Work Group requested making their site visits to the traffic control facility and water reclamation plant on the same day.

Fire and Emergency Services

The Fire and Emergency Services Work Group moved from question and answer sessions to holding discussions and brainstorming about possible recommendations.

- The Work Group expressed an interest in having Ga. Gwinnett College do a cost recovery analysis. Other requests for Ga. Gwinnett College include:
 - An assessment of private EMS transport, vs. Gwinnett's current model
 - The impact on insurance premiums if Gwinnett County's ISO rating for EMS services were to change
 - Whether EMT certification costs can be recovered through fee-based training to other counties
 - The number of fire stations per 1,000 residents and per square mile.
- The Work Group also discussed whether changes in code enforcement would be necessary. Some changes may include actual changes to county code, and others may not require more than changes in how county code is interpreted. The Work Group was concerned that unnecessary changes may upset the community. Local businesses should be able to make plans without surprises, so they should know what to expect. The Work Group was less concerned with the current state of the quality of code enforcement than whether quality can be maintained or increased as density increases.
- The Work Group was unsure whether they should be reviewing 911 communications, or if this topic was being covered by the Law Enforcement and Judiciary Work Group.

ENGAGE GWINNETT
MEETING 6 REPORT
DEC. 17, 2009

- The Work Group also discussed whether volunteers could provide adult education for emergency preparedness. Given some of the challenges of reaching Gwinnett's underserved populations, the Work Group concluded that Fire and EMS would need to make special efforts to reach all communities.
- The Work Group discussed whether too many resources are currently focused on training. They recognize that highly trained personnel leads to higher retention rates and helps in cases of litigation. The Work Group suggested looking into opportunities to coordinate joint training with other local governments.
- The Work Group requested a presentation from the Fire Marshal to address the following questions:
 - What role do volunteers play?
 - Have you identified codes to be examined?
 - How often are codes revised? Are there any that need to be revised (actual code changes, or interpretation)?
 - How often are existing buildings inspected?
 - More information is needed on fire hydrant inspections.
 - What is the current status of code enforcement activities?
 - What is Medic 28?
 - What technologies are used in 911 dispatch? Is another group already reviewing 911?
 - More information is needed on forensics and investigations.
 - Do costs include post-employment benefit costs?
 - If the only way to open a new fire station is to pull people from training, is it worth it? What would be the impact?

Law Enforcement and Judiciary

The Law Enforcement and Judiciary Work Group heard a presentation from the Gwinnett County District Attorney and Solicitor. Among the information the group received:

- The DA is a state office with duties defined by state law, while the Solicitor is an office created by the county. Both offices are elected and almost entirely funded with county resources. The DA's case volume is around 6300 adult and 6000 juvenile cases, while the Solicitor handles approximately double that number, plus approximately 120,000 traffic cases. All DA activities are state mandated, with the exception of some victim services programs, which amount to a very small portion of the budget. Most of the victim services costs are paid for by a state set 5% surcharge. The DA's office uses a vertical prosecution approach, which they believe produces operational efficiencies.

ENGAGE GWINNETT
MEETING 6 REPORT
DEC. 17, 2009

- The DA expressed his belief that the indigent defense system, currently used by Gwinnett County, leads to increased time to dispose of a case. Lawyers are paid by the hour, and thus have an incentive to keep cases open in order to produce more billable hours. There was some discussion about the other options such as a public defender, which might be able to produce some savings over the current system.
- There was also some discussion about the equity of fines between the county and the municipalities. Municipal fines are reportedly significantly higher than county fines. There is also a potential cost transfer when municipal cases are bound over to county courts due to the complexity of the case.
- The DA also expressed his belief that there was a need for all law enforcement agencies within the county to improve cooperation. He also indicated that the Quality of Life unit was not effective.

The Law Enforcement and Judiciary Work Group also heard a presentation from the Department of Corrections. Among the information the group received:

- The county corrections facility handles post-sentenced inmates and works closely with the Sheriff to ensure that the county is maximizing space utilization. The corrections facility gives county judges a sentencing option that they otherwise would not have. It also affords the opportunity to keep certain inmates working through the work release program and thus able to pay child support.
- The Department of Corrections has been hit very hard through employee attrition due to the announced plans to close the facility. The attrition left the department with too few people to run work crews, a major source of income. The transfer of state inmates in anticipation of a shut down also adversely affected the revenue of the department.

Work Group Information Requests

During their discussions, the four Work Groups listed what information they would need to move forward. The following is a transcript of the requests for information.

Community Services – Requests for the county

Extra Questions for Support Services

- What about facilities maintenance?
- What is Support Services doing to reduce costs?
- Tell us about the Green Initiative, energy audit process
- Electricity: What are the rates? Do we leverage it?
- Operations of all county buildings – what cuts are being made?
- Maintenance – light sensors (Audit is being conducted)

ENGAGE GWINNETT
MEETING 6 REPORT
DEC. 17, 2009

Library System

- Can you characterize savings of tiered system?
- What is the capacity and current usage of each library?
- What does traffic in libraries represent (i.e. kids waiting for parents)?
- Can any services be privatized with cost savings?
- Percent of shelving hours done by paid personnel vs. volunteers
- Other work volunteers could do? What additional training or other considerations would be needed? Cost for these?
- Have any public libraries in the U.S. been privatized?
- Could libraries operate with fewer paid staff? What would the staffing model look like?
- How has (can) technology lower staffing needs?
- What are minimum staffing requirements?
- How are materials budgets divided up (i.e., how much for new books, magazines, etc.)?
- What would you do if you have 10 percent less (or more) money?
- Do all libraries need the same hours and services?
- What is the “cost” for receiving state funding? Fees we can collect? Other restrictions?
- What would be the “cost” of not receiving state funding? (i.e., Galileo)

Parks and Recreation

- Which facilities are intended to be cost-even centers (where revenue offsets cost of operations)?
- Cost/Revenue breakdown for Environment and Heritage Center (EHC)?
- Usage of EHC?
- Could EHC be outsourced? Or taken over by one of the partners such as GCPS, UGA, etc.?

Next Meeting

- Digital copy of template sent to group
- Health and Human Services
- Voter Registration – any room for savings?

Community Services – Requests for Ga. Gwinnett College

- Benchmark Gwinnett’s parks and recreation and green space against the three communities identified by economists as being similar to Gwinnett
- What are these three communities doing in areas identified as underserved for parks, recreation and/or library services?
- Stimulus money – Are there opportunities Gwinnett could be applying for that we may not be aware of?
- Are there any public libraries that have been privatized in the U.S. (besides Smyrna)? If so, how has it worked out?

Development and Infrastructure – Requests for the county

Follow-Up Items Needed

- Field trip to DOT signaling center and F. Wayne Hill Water Reclamation Center on Gwinnett Transit
- More info on monthly transit ridership by route and costs/revenues (Business Pro-Forma – sources and uses)
- Planning and Development: List of contracted vs. in-house services
- Planning and Development: List of state and federal tax incentives
- Planning and Development: What other activities do staff handle outside permits
- Update on state of service delivery litigation and delivery
- 2009 property tax revenues

Fire and Emergency Services – Requests for the county

General Questions

- What role if any do volunteers play?
- Have you identified anything related to codes that needs to be examined?
- How often are codes revised? Are there any that need to be revised? (could be actual code changes, or interpretation changes)
- What is the frequency of building inspections? (existing buildings)
- More info/clarification on fire hydrant inspections
- What is the status of your code enforcement activities?
- What is Medic 28?
- 911/Dispatch – What technologies are used? Is other group reviewing, or should we?
- More info on forensics and investigations
- Please have Fire Marshal present for next session, Fire Chief if he wants to
- Do costs include post-employment benefit costs? (increased benefit costs excepted) (see further explanation, below)
- If the only way to open a new fire station is to pull people from training, is it worth it? What would be the impact?

Further explanation of question on post-employment benefit costs:

We have heard from the County's Finance Director about the large increases anticipated in the annual contribution the County makes to the Defined Benefit Pension fund, as well as the fact that the County must begin to make substantial annual contributions in order to accumulate funds to cover costs of future post-employment benefits (OPEB). Such post-retirement costs primarily relate to retiree health insurance.

If we understood correctly what the Finance Director indicated, no funds have been accumulated to date for OPEB, so this would be a new budget item. On the other hand, the increased pension

ENGAGE GWINNETT
MEETING 6 REPORT
DEC. 17, 2009

contribution would likely be reflected in an increase in the amount contributed by the County annually for each employee covered by the Defined Benefit Pension Plan.

If this contribution is handled now as in the past, it is expressed as a percentage of salary cost. How have these increased contributions been treated in the budget projections we have received, i.e., the costs associated with opening additional stations?

If these major increases in personnel costs have not been included in future budget projections, we would like to know how much the projections will increase if such pension and OPEB contributions are added. Also, we would like to get a sense of the total impact increased pension and OPEB contributions will have on Fire's budget over the next few years. This impact could be very significant since the vast majority of Fire's operating budget is related to personnel. We would like to have a five-year projection of pension and OPEB costs for Fire, both as a percentage of salary and as absolute dollar amounts. Additionally, a summary of the latest actuarial report regarding the County's OPEB liability would give us context for reviewing this issue for Fire. This report should identify the actuarially determined Unfunded Liability for OPEB.

Fire and Emergency Services – Requests for Ga. Gwinnett College

- Assessment and Comparison of Private EMS Transport vs. Current Service Model (with Acknowledgement of Staffing Impact of Cross-certified medical personnel)

The Gwinnett County Fire Department (GCFD) currently provides ambulance transport to the hospital for emergency medical patients, as well as the initial emergency medical response and services. However, there are many jurisdictions across the USA where emergency transport is handled by private sector ambulance providers. There are two primary models for private sector emergency ambulance transport. In one case, emergency ambulance service may be treated as a franchise agreement, where providers are awarded a franchise agreement covering some specific service area. The other approach involves the issuance of a contract by the government to one or more ambulance provider to provide services to the community. In either model, it is not unusual for the jurisdiction to subsidize the operations of the private provider through a direct payment to the company.

GCFD is convinced that the current approach not only provides better service to the Community, but also is cost-effective when viewed in the context of the Department's total operations. Field personnel are required to be cross-certified. In other words, firefighters also hold EMS certifications and medical personnel are certified as firefighters. The medical personnel

ENGAGE GWINNETT
MEETING 6 REPORT
DEC. 17, 2009

essentially expand the number of firefighting staff that are available, if necessary, for fire scenes and improve staffing for ISO rating purposes.

The Fire and Emergency Work Group (Fire Group) would like independent verification or refutation of GCFD staff's evaluation of this issue. We believe that the best way to do this would be for Georgia Gwinnett College to compare Gwinnett's approach with that of one or more jurisdictions which use private providers for emergency transport. The comparison ought to incorporate quantified valuation of service costs and benefits for both service delivery models. Some measurement of the quality of service would be most helpful. Costing of Gwinnett's approach should include valuation of the availability of additional fire personnel, aka ambulance personnel. One-time costs and offsets associated with switching to a private provider should be determined for Gwinnett so that the total financial picture is revealed.

We understand that it may be difficult to obtain comparable data, and multiple estimates and assumptions may be necessary to prepare this analysis. We know that the results will likely have many caveats. However, we think that even a rough comparison of the service delivery models will be useful in assessing GDFD's model and demonstrating its value in comparison with the value of the use of private providers.

- **ISO Rating Impact on Insurance Premiums for Residents and Businesses within Gwinnett**

ISO ratings for a geographic area are the predominant factor in the determination of insurance premiums for the residents and businesses located in the area. Using valuations assigned to real property in Gwinnett and premium schedules for one or more insurance companies, it is possible to estimate the financial impact of changes in the ISO rating. The figures could be generated and expressed as either premium increase/decrease for average business and home or the impact could be calculated for all real property within the County on an aggregate basis.

All of Gwinnett is currently rated "4" other than a few sections which fall outside the acceptable distance from a fire station; these areas are rated "9/10". Gwinnett is overdue for an updated review and rating by ISO since the last one occurred in 1997. We would like to see the financial impact on the community for the three following ISO ratings:

- Maintenance of current rating – "4" with few areas of "9/10"
- Deterioration of rating to "5"
- Improvement of rating to "3"

Once the premium cost has been determined for each of the three ratings, then the differences in cost among the ratings should be calculated and expressed as an equivalent millage rate. Our objective is to have a basis for a business case for fire improvements, even where these may

require some amount of increase in millage rate. We know that that tax increases to improve fire services are offset to some degree by changes in the ISO rating, and that a worsening of the current rating will cost property owners. We need Georgia Gwinnett's help in quantifying these costs and potential offsets.

- EMT Certification – Cost recovery amount that may result from offering fee-based certification training to other jurisdictions

Gwinnett is in the process of implementing EMT training that meets new requirements. There may be opportunities for GCFD to offer such training to other emergency medical providers on a fee basis that could offset at least some of the Department's cost for developing and implementing such training. We would like to have an independent assessment of the viability of this idea and an estimate of the amount of potential revenues that could be generated.

Law Enforcement and Judiciary – Requests for the county

Questions/topics

- Information on national agency models referred to by D.A. on staffing models
- Unified plan: 1.3 officers per thousand - implications

Miscellaneous Notes

The following notes were also captured in each of the Work Group discussions.

Community Services

Library – Observations

- 35 hours of services (vs. 71 hours) per week – would need \$1.5 million to increase hours to 71 hours per week
- Staffing:
 - 1 Manager, 1 Assistant Manager, 2 Librarian I are salaried supervisors
 - 10-12 in \$10,000 range
 - Plus or minus 20 in \$20,000 range
- Volunteers as shelvers
 - 20,000 hours per year – equivalent to 100 full-time employees
 - Limited access to information
- One library (Smyrna) doesn't accept state funding
- IT and collections have been privatized
- \$200,000 library fund through the Community Foundation

Library – Benefits

- Access to resources (i.e., computers, Internet)
- Literacy

ENGAGE GWINNETT
MEETING 6 REPORT
DEC. 17, 2009

- Life-long learning
- Quality of life impact – people consider when moving

Library – Facts, Trends

- Can't charge for meeting rooms because of state money
- 2014 SPLOST – 1 “new” library
- Collections and IT have been privatized
- Changing demographics and technology
- Declined access – 35 hours per week, vs 71 hours (40% down)
- 15 branches (\$1.5 million per branch)
- Fewer people using library since decreased access
- Friends of the library
- Maximizing volumes
- Was: Mon-Thur 9:00 – 9:00, Fri-Sat 9:00 – 6:00, Sun 1:00 – 6:00
- Now: Tue-Thur 10:00 – 7:00, Fri-Sa 10:00 – 6:00, Sun-Mon Closed

Library – Thoughts

- Volunteers utilized more with additional training? What would be needed? Costs involved?
- Could libraries lower the caliber of services at certain times and use more volunteers instead of professional staff? (Some hours would have reduced services)
- Library technology centers – cost savings, less staff, more computers
- Consider 100% county funding

Parks and Recreation – Benefits

- Community-wide access to healthy exercise
- Environmental preservation
- Meaningful time with family
- High School swim teams
- Quality of life – move to areas with park

Parks and Recreation – Observations/Quality of Services

- Can't have more of everything (not everything to everyone)
- We're just a piece of the puzzle (need private sector, too)
- Environmental Heritage Center – recovers approximately 25% of costs, funded from Recreation Fund
- Already cut back on mowing at parks (may reduce access, have less staff)
- Presently – lower level of service compared to last year
- Renovation project – Rhodes Jordan
- New park – Bryson Park
- 2010 Renovation – Bethesda Park Senior Center (looking at Vines)
- Five new parks in the plan – community parks – land acquired, no other work done yet

- Partnership with schools – joint facilities

Parks and Recreation – Facts and Trends to Consider

- Aging population – different needs (i.e., walking trails)
- Urbanization
- Services – special needs, revitalization, redevelopment
- Outsourcing of pool maintenance and other services
- 25+ YAA – take care of areas (don't use park staff)
- Passive parks – great (no income from them)
- Fund historic preservation (does not generate revenue)
- SPLOST \$ allowed us to build the types of facilities we have
- Pools – recover approximately 80% of costs to operate
- Most expensive facilities – indoor recreational facilities (utilities, staff)

Parks and Recreation – Thoughts

- Partnering with CIDs
- Outsourcing? Private partnerships
- Swim facilities – privatize?
- To recover costs – develop low-cost parks to higher level – partner?
- How could maximize donations? Who could help? Corporate challenge?
- Parking fee – cost for staff
- Non-resident fees (pool - \$5 for residents, \$10 for non-residents) Staff impact: check ID lines longer
- Less mowed – landscaped areas
- Evaluate lower maintenance of parks
- Landscape with natural areas (less upkeep) – safety perceptions?
- Turf – only on playing fields, rather than grass (evaluating through pilot projects) – heat factor, may need to irrigate
- “Pocket” parks – may be costlier to maintain
- Passive donations box at each park
- Aquatic centers and Environmental Heritage Center – foot traffic numbers? – Cost-even – never envisioned as break-even centers

Development and Infrastructure

Water Resources – Observations

- Closed older, less efficient plants
- Exploring green and re-use strategies
- Enterprise fund
- Interest cost small (how much?)
- Pay as you go – no new debt (\$1 billion) for new capital
- Storm water – pay as you go

ENGAGE GWINNETT
MEETING 6 REPORT
DEC. 17, 2009

- Gwinnett required to send treated water to Lanier
- How to become better at operations? Green, gas to energy
- Make plants more efficient
- Increasing revenue, reuse
- Separate distribution
- Not enough storage in Lake Lanier

Planning and Development – Observations

- 4 staff, no division director
- 71 staff in Planning & Development, will go down to 55

Economic Development – Observations

- 3 staff
- Garnered tax incentives for part of Gwinnett from State
- TAD Management

License and Revenue – Observations

- Down to four staff
- Collects all fees

Permits and Inspections – Observations

- Outsource in 2010

Plan Review – Observations

- Outsource in 2010 - \$6.7 million budget with 55 employees, at 50% capacity
- New fee schedule approved by Board of Commissioners

Plan Review – Considerations

- Revisit process that determines which step in each project goes to vendor or staff
- Keep as much in-house as possible – set a threshold?

Plan Review – Recommendations

- Concern for quality and long-term benefit of Gwinnett
- Study processes to optimize service and expense

Transportation – Briscoe Field

- Self-sufficient
- Opportunity to sell to private entity that would like to expand for commercial schedules – this would be a long process

Transportation – Mass Transit – Observations

- Overall cuts to mass transit: less routes, less operating days – what does this save?
- Entire service is contracted
- Light rail – feasibility, timing

Transportation – Mass Transit – Consideration

- Look at ridership and where to maximize
- Benefits to operating bus system: less traffic, contributes to air quality
- System paid-for by grants, stimulus, taxes
- Increasing fares decreases ridership – consider decreasing fares to increase ridership
- Look at monthly boarding numbers to determine where to cut
- Look at efficiency in terms of operation

Transportation – Mass Transit – Recommendations

- Promote schedules in grocery stores
- Trial: one-month rate special – will it increase riders? If you reduce the fare, will ridership increase, would we continue?
- Public education campaign to promote transit
- Eliminate transit? In whole, or in part?

Transportation – Signs and Lighting – Observations

- County manages maintenance of all signals in the county (economies of scale), cities pay a tax bill to county

Transportation – Signs and Lighting - Considerations

- City taxes vs county taxes to offset costs (cost-shifting)
- Per-maintenance costs for traffic signals
- Outsource positions – look at what these costs are
- Tour/site visit
- Revenue-generating assets

Transportation – Signs and Lighting – Recommendations

- Could changing shifts save money?

Transportation – Roads – Observations

- Department downsizing personnel

Transportation – Roads – Considerations

- SPLOST – local resurfacing
- Outsourcing maintenance of potholes – reduced number of field crews
- Contracting – mowing and repaving, guard rails, signage

- Aesthetics need to be kept up

Transportation – Roads – Recommendations

- Keep roadways looking good

Fire and Emergency Services

The Fire and Emergency Services Work Group conducted a site visit of one of the county facilities. The following is a recap of that site visit.

- Competitions help keep training edge
- Balance scorecard a definite plus
- Monthly fire statistics meeting – sat in on that, then met with chief, primarily on outsourcing
- Balance scorecard showed rigor with goals
- Impressive, organized “war room” seems prepared for different emergencies
- Wall graphics show their ability to shift resources to areas of most need
- Making good use of available technology
- Good coordination between police and fire
- Seems to have learned from '98 tornados
- ISO evaluation first quarter 2010 – an opportunity for us to evaluate needs, wants, opportunities
- Ga. Gwinnett – ISO rating – impact on insurance premium – see if we can get them to conduct this study: rating 4 to 3, and 4 to 5

Code Enforcement – Benefit

- Similar to fire prevention
- Minimizes destruction, damage, loss of life
- Consistent code enforcement provides security to businesses and developers

Code Enforcement – Quality

- Development code does not always match fire code
- Excellent job of reviewing plans
- Could stand improvement
- Practical vs. aspirational

Code Enforcement – Recommendations

- Need a process to tie redevelopment with fire code changes and standards

EMS Transport – Benefit

- Additional staff available for other purposes (cross-trained)
- Continuity of care could mean patient gets to hospital quicker
- More streamlined, simplified communication and coordination
- Some cost recovery factor – minimizes tax cost

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MEETING 6 REPORT
DEC. 17, 2009

- Highly trained, professional work force

EMS Transport – Quality

- Assurance of some training, etc., whether for fire or emergency medical
- Highly trained, professional work force

EMS Transport – Recommendation

- Seeking information from Ga. Gwinnett College

Training and Professional Development – Benefit

- Staff knows what they're doing
- Risk management, lower liability, litigation, less property damage, more lives saved
- Helps retention rates
- Firefighters, EMTs feel trained and prepared to do their job
- Helps us maintain credentials

Training and Professional Development – Quality

- High quality
- Are too many resources focused on training?
- High retention rates
- Can document operations manuals, education – helps in case of litigation

Training and Professional Development – Recommendations

- Maintain status quo, continue looking at other options for joint training coordination

EMS Service – Benefits

- Saving lives
- Reduce injuries and health consequences
- Lower impact on overall healthcare system
- Assurance of quality of responders
- Benefit for non-life-threatening
- Improved quality of life, community expects highly trained, timely response

EMS Service – Quality

- Outstanding – only issue is figuring out how to get them there quick enough, not yet meeting the standard
- Level of traffic impacts negatively – they respond to auto accidents

EMS Service – Recommendation

- At a minimum, maintain – do not get worse

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MEETING 6 REPORT
DEC. 17, 2009

- Want to improve – medic unit in every station, improve geographic coverage
- Pretty please, meet the national standard

Firefighting – Benefits

- Saving lives, property
- Safety
- Improve/maintain ISO score
- Reduce, contain property loss
- Leads to better economic development, brings businesses in
- All ties in to unified plan and new opportunities
- Accreditation must be maintained – highly qualified, trained

Firefighting – Quality

- ISO rating shows average, perhaps a little better than average due to size
- Our rating is lower than some/most of our neighbor counties
- Specific areas of county have greater need – address those specific areas
- Ability to maintain response times, etc., based on demographic changes in county – working hard to stand still
- Aging demographics and changes in development patterns add strain, non-emergency 911 calls

Firefighting – Recommendations

- ISO must maintain – no decrease in response time – must have
- Improve ISO 9-10 areas of county, drop ISO level county-wide, meet standard response time – want to have
- Deal with densification identified in unified plan, other possible opportunities – pretty please

Fire Prevention – Benefits

- Saving lives, property
- Reducing operations cost
- Reducing insurance premiums (ISO rating)
- Reduced cost to general community
- Increased economic benefit
- Businesses stay open

Fire Prevention – Quality

- Current ISO rating shows good job is done – not a 1, so can still improve
- Density of housing has increased – creates unique challenges for fire prevention
- Regulatory control lags behind growth and development changes
- Gwinnett standards are more rigorous than national – want to exceed the minimum
- Does metric need to change from fire station per mile to fire station per number of people

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MEETING 6 REPORT
DEC. 17, 2009

- Need more coordination between county, cities, between jurisdictions relative to coding
- Right now quality is good
- Challenge: reaching out to diverse communities – cultural, communication, signage, etc.
- Professional training

Fire Prevention – Recommendation

- Maintain ISO and improve in 9-10 areas
- No increase in fires or severity as population, density, development increase
- Maintain same proportion

Citizen Education – Benefit

- Risk reduction
- Manages, reduces service demands
- Reduces property damage
- Saves lives
- Builds trust, community buy-in

Citizen Education – Quality

- It is working, and very effective
- Starts in pre-school, setting a very early precedent

Citizen Education – Recommendation

- Can volunteers be used to provide education to adults? A speakers bureau – graduates of the fire academy, perhaps, as curriculum enhancement
- At a minimum, don't lose any momentum – maintain status quo
- Want: Reach out to underserved, including special needs population
- Aspiration: reach everyone

Law Enforcement and Judiciary

Observations

- All components connected and inter-related
- Improve cooperation between municipal and county agencies
- Benchmarking: Gwinnett doing more with less
- Reactive position of county resulted in damage to entities
- Perception of duplication of services
- Citizens not aware of level of efficiency in justice system and inter-relation of all entities
- Perception of departments working in silos – big picture
- What is an acceptable crime rate?

Opportunities

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DEC. 17, 2009

- Targeted law enforcement efforts between county, city
- Explore impact of staffing one agency on other agencies
- Education on service delivery
- Better PR
- Assess full downstream implications of budgeting
- Communicate that it is a justice system
- How to extend Engage Gwinnett experience to citizenry

Recommendations

- May recommend increased funding
- Eliminate duplication of services
- Effective PR and educational campaign to highlight positive impact
- Improved budget model to factor in impact of staffing decisions on all aspects of operation