



Meeting 9 Report

Feb. 3, 2010

Engage Gwinnett, the citizens committee on the future of Gwinnett County, held its ninth meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2010, 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 45 minutes was held in plenary session (with all members present), so members could hear a talk by J. Mac Holladay, an economic development consultant, and reports from spokespersons for the four Work Groups that make up Engage Gwinnett. They also received 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 rest of the time in Work Group sessions.

Meeting Process

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

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

Mike offered a preview of the public sessions Engage Gwinnett would host later this month. In the four sessions, held in different parts of the county, participants would be seated in small groups, Mike said, and would begin by viewing a brief video about Engage Gwinnett and its work. They would be told about some of the major themes emerging from Engage Gwinnett's work, given a handout with the major recommendations of each of the four Work Groups, and asked for their reactions to the tentative recommendations. There would also be a survey and other opportunities for Engage Gwinnett to ask participants about their ideas and feelings.

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At today's meeting, Mike said, the Work Groups should work on their tentative recommendations – and the observations and considerations that underlie them – so they can be drafted as a handout for the public meetings. And if the groups had questions they would like the citizens to be asked, they should submit them as well.

Mike then introduced Bill McCargo, who introduced the speaker, J. Mac Holladay. Mac is CEO of Market Street Services, an economic development consulting firm which worked with the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce several years ago on a far-reaching economic development plan called Partnership Gwinnett. He is the former chief operating officer of the Governor's Development Council in Georgia and was head of statewide economic development agencies in South Carolina and Mississippi.

Mac said that the recession that has affected the nation's economy in the past two years has hit Georgia – and the Atlanta area – especially hard, with a large loss in household net worth. It's little wonder that government tax receipts have been so deeply affected. But, he said, it's important for Gwinnett to continue its support of the Partnership Gwinnett plan, which ties economic development to continued excellence in the schools, greater efforts to attract young workers and their families, wider choices in transportation and investments in other infrastructure, and other initiatives. These investments will, in turn, help build a stronger tax base, he said, one based on greater business investments and less on homeowner taxes.

After Mac's talk, the spokespersons for the four Work Groups shared 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 come to consensus on a number of recommendations on health and human services and on the library system and was close to consensus on parks and recreation recommendations, which the group would complete today.

Scott LeCraw of the Fire and Emergency Services group said that his group had learned how well the Gwinnett Fire Department was run and felt that its recommendations should be based on the notion that they should “do no harm” to existing fire and EMS services. Among other things, he said, the Work Group had learned that fire response times affect the amount homeowners and business owners pay in insurance premiums. If the response times are reduced, Scott said, insurance premiums will rise. His group was starting to look at another set of services, those that are internal to county government (such as human resources and finance). The Work Group would look at indicators like staff ratios that will help it determine how Gwinnett County's internal services compare to those in peer counties – and make recommendations based on this information.

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Jose Perez of the Development and Infrastructure Work Group reported that his group had moved from looking at increased efficiencies that are “inside the box” – staff reductions, outsourcing and so on – to efficiencies that may be “outside the box” – changes in how its assigned departments do their work. One of the key questions his group is asking, Jose said, was, “how would we do this today, if we were creating the government?” One area of concern, he added, was the reductions that are underway for the Planning and Development Department. The department needs to be more “business friendly,” in support of the goals of Partnership Gwinnett, and some of the outsourcing changes that are underway may make economic development more difficult, he said.

Charles Swain of the Law Enforcement and Judiciary Work Group said his group has now begun drafting recommendations after an extended information-gathering process. Charles said the Work Group had made recommendations about changes in fee structures, outsourcing of some services (such as courthouse security), and the adoption of “paperless systems” that could make the criminal justice system more efficient. But the group was struck, he said, by how interdependent the system is – how changes in one area could affect others. Nothing illustrated that more, he said, than the county police chief’s answer to the group’s question about what he would do if he were given \$500,000 to spend any way he wanted. He would use it, he told the group, to hire more judges, since that would reduce the legal backlog and get officers out of courtrooms and back on the streets.

Work Group Discussions

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

Community Services

The Community Services Work Group spent most of its time on recommendations for the Parks and Recreations Division. The consensus was that, wherever possible, users of “active parks” (those that offered active recreation activities and, therefore, cost more in upkeep, staff and operations) should pay enough to offset their costs. The group acknowledged the value of these active parks to Gwinnett County’s quality of life and the considerable contributions that volunteers, such as those involved in youth athletic programs, make. But increasing fees for services, the group felt, was the only way of providing these parks in the future.

A key to increasing fees for services, the group felt, was for the Parks and Recreation Division to accurately calculate the costs associated with recreational services – such as the cost of providing lights on ball fields at night, cutting the grass and marking fields – and bill the groups that use them. There was a concern that some groups might not be able to afford even minimal payments – such as groups serving

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low-income youth. So the Work Group felt that there should be a minimum level of service that the county would pay from the county's recreation tax – such as providing a field – and let those who needed additional services (such as lights and field markings) pay for them. In coming up with these user fees, the group felt, the county should distinguish between non-profit groups that serve a broad public purpose, such as a youth athletic association, and those that are more exclusive, such as a corporate outings. The non-profits should pay just for the incremental costs of additional services, the group suggested, while others should pay a higher price that would help support the Parks and Recreation Division.

In addition to these general recommendations, the group had specific ones: that the county's swimming facilities should be either privatized or made entirely self-supporting through increased user fees, and that the Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center should be made self-supporting as well. On the subject of charging for parking at parks, the group suggested that the Parks and Recreation Division study the idea, consider the costs and possible public reaction, and make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners.

The group also suggested that active parks that have not yet been completed be delayed, but with the option that, if groups eager to use these parks would be willing to support their operating costs, the work be finished and the parks opened. That is, if an athletic association or other groups would be willing to pay for the costs of operating the park, the county should complete the park from SPLOST funds and bill the groups for its operation.

In general, the group felt that the Parks and Recreation Division should live within the recreation tax's limits and that additional revenues should come from user fees and not the general fund.

The group edited its observations and recommendations about the library system and health and human services but did not make major changes to them.

Development and Infrastructure

The Development and Infrastructure Work Group began a process of refining its lists of Observations, Considerations and Recommendations.

The Work Group discussed some of the issues surrounding the outsourcing of Planning and Development functions. A 2006 study released by the Matrix Consulting Group gave specific recommendations on this issue, but the Work Group members were unsure of the content of those recommendations, or whether they were implemented. A request was made to find out which recommendations from this study were implemented, which were not implemented, and the reasons for not implementing some of the recommendations. The Work Group also wanted to know the cost for updating the recommendations.

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Work Group members also began a discussion of some of the changes that have been made with the transit service. Jon Richards, chair of the Gwinnett Transit Advisory Board, provided some of the details of the ways Gwinnett's transit service has been restructured to reduce costs and maximize ridership. Most of the bus routes once originated from the transfer center at Gwinnett Place Mall. Many of these routes have been rerouted and renumbered for both cost savings and to make the routes more convenient for riders.

The Work Group also discussed an observation made at a previous meeting regarding transit service. The Work Group expressed concern over the observation that only 0.5% of Gwinnett's population uses the transit service. One Work Group member thought this observation was misleading. Another member pointed out that the Work Group is still dealing with opinions on transit service, but not many facts. The Work Group decided to invite a representative from Gwinnett's DOT back to give a more in-depth presentation on the transit system before making any recommendations.

There was also a discussion of the recommendation that the DOT should make better use of its existing technology. One Work Group member said he felt this should be a global recommendation, across all departments in Gwinnett County. Another member believed that the DOT's underutilization of technology stands out from other departments. The Work Group came to a consensus that while it was a good idea to make technology utilization a "global" recommendation, it was also important to narrow down this broader goal to specific recommendations for each department.

Fire and Emergency Services

The Fire and Emergency Services Work Group heard from two speakers. The group is now considering "internal" services, those services that are supplied to departments of the county government, such as human resources and finance. Hazel McMullen, deputy director of human resources, addressed questions regarding employee benefits, retirement plans, and retirement and reduction in force impacts on back office functions. Aaron Bovos, director of financial services, explained the reorganization of the Department of Financial Services, strengths and weakness of the changes and how the cuts have affected vendor payments and the tax assessor's office. Bovos also described plans for new and innovative ways of operating these offices to reduce the stress on staff.

In discussing its primary area, fire and emergency services, the Work Group reiterated its concern not to do any harm to these service areas. While the county works to exceed national standards, emergency response times have already fallen behind these standards. The Work Group was also concerned about whether the county is adequately prepared for coming demographic shifts and changes in land development patterns.

The work group drafted questions to ask the public at the upcoming citizen meetings as well and compiled a list of preliminary recommendations.

Law Enforcement and Judiciary

The Law Enforcement and Judiciary Work Group heard a presentation from Susan Lee concerning legislation to raise court and sheriff fees. There was some discussion about whether it was better to get a smaller increase in fees now or wait and try to get a larger increase that more fully covered the true cost. The county is currently pursuing a list of modest increases across a range of areas.

John Matelski, Gwinnett County's director of information technology, also delivered a presentation and answered general questions from the group. Questions centered around what possible technologies could be utilized to improve efficiency. Matelski explained the background of the department and reviewed some of the efforts to date.

Finally the Work Group heard from Matt Whitley, director of the Performance Analysis Division, concerning efforts to improve accountability, improve processes and measure success across the organization. He also discussed the changes to the planning process that began in 2008.

The Work Group then reviewed its list of observations and recommendations and made refinements and additions to the list, based on the presentations.

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

- Financial analysis of facilities – does it include staff costs?
- Legal question – were pools built with SPLOST money? If yes, could they be sold?
- What does it cost the county to provide active parks? (e.g., utilities, maintenance fees, etc.)
- Which year's SPLOST funding is being used for parks projects currently in the works, specifically Rhodes Jordan renovation, Bryson, Rabbit Hill expansion and those aligned with the new school clusters Lanier and Harbins?
- What are the projected operational annual costs for these new parks?
- Is the golf course servicing the debt?

Development and Infrastructure

- From the study done by Matrix Consulting – which recommendations were implemented, which ones were not, and why?
- Were these recommendations made to the department or the Board of Commissioners?
- More details about the recommendations.
- How much would it cost for Matrix to update their recommendations?
- Questions around transit – would like Brian or a representative to be present
- What are the savings from conversion of traffic signals?

Fire and Emergency Services

- Ask Chamber HR Committee: Are there other existing study of comparisons of ratios?
- Ratio of employees per citizenry
 - Comparisons to government to government – Gwinnett HR
- All back offices: IT, finance, law

Public Session Questions

The Work Groups were asked to compile lists of questions they would like to ask at the Public Session in late February. The following is a transcript of those questions that were captured on the flip charts.

Community Services

- What county services or service levels would you be willing to have adjusted?
- What benefits do you see to Gwinnett residents from:
 - Senior Services
 - Parks and Recreation
 - Libraries
 - Elections
 - Health and Human Services
- If you could only protect three things, what would they be?
- Are you willing to pay more in taxes to maintain services at current levels?

Fire and Emergency Services

- Fill in numbers on “Response Time” questionnaire:
 - Table or examples re: ISO ratings to insurance rates. Willing to pay?
- Any ideas for improving Fire and Emergency services?
- What is the public’s perception of Fire and Emergency Services in Gwinnett?
- Communicate/educate the public why:
 - 2 vehicles (ambulance and truck) respond. Explain.
 - Fire and EMS cross train. Explain.

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- False alarm responses?
- Should the county strike fire hydrant parking rules and regulations?
- Combine the two questions: “What has been your experience with Fire and Emergency Services?” and “Any ideas for improving Fire and Emergency Services?”
- Are you willing to pay more taxes to improve the county’s ISO rating to decrease insurance rates?
- Focus on: what are the citizens’ expectations?
- Projections for future budgeting: what if... (recommendations)
 - Invest in technology to reduce future expenses?
 - Do no harm – i.e., maintain integrity of current services provided. Gwinnett: \$974.6 million total, \$355 million capital. Fire: \$75 million total, \$155 thousand capital.
- Citizen education to reduce calls. For example, CPR, first aid, fire prevention, choking, outdoor burning, smoke detectors. Targeted to all demographics.

Observations, Considerations, Recommendations

The following is a complete list of the draft observations, considerations and recommendations from each of the four Work Groups, as they were revised at the Engage Gwinnett meeting on February 3.

Community Services

General

Recommendations

- While elections are a significant expense, they are core to the maintenance of democracy
- Cooperative Extension Service – relatively small budget amount and they’re doing a great job – no cuts recommended

Health and Human Services

Observations

- Benefit: Safety net for those at risk and most vulnerable
- Benefit: Information, education, awareness
- Benefit: Early intervention before a situation gets worse (or before government services are needed)
- Research and data are being used to prioritize and focus on needs in community
 - Also used for grants from outside of county
 - Coalition has created strategic plan
- Big difference between subsidies: Hospital, DFCS, MH, BOH; vs. Ch Shelter, BF Gw, Coalition, etc.
- Senior population growing greatly and living longer

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- Haven't done adequate planning for senior growth – not just community services, but also transportation, planning, etc. – we're just playing catch-up now. All County Departments need to consider the great senior population increase in planning for future senior services and needs.
- Senior services funding is based on census (change in funding will come in approximately 2012) – mainly work with seniors ages 80+; very few services are available for 60 to 80 year-olds.
- Needs far outstrip funding, losing ground on Health and Human Services indicators
- Granting system is not working
- Leverage provided by subsidy funding is important
- Public health money is based on 1970s population
- Cannot afford to lower funding for Health and Human Services
- Approximately 50% of children in school are on free or reduced lunch
- County is mandated to provide Senior Services
- Broad network of providers trying to meet Health and Human Services needs

Considerations

- Subsidy process broken
 - We cannot fail to provide health and human services funding
 - Revise process – Gwinnett Coalition for HHS (or another central agency) be a re-granting agency to address specific needs and leverage capacity
 - Can ill afford to reduce funding
 - Basis of funding shouldn't be "because we always have"
 - May not be addressing biggest needs today
- How do you prioritize?
 - Create fees for some services
 - Out of sight, out of mind concern
- What group should be involved in planning senior services? (study)
 - Coalition sub-committee
 - Friends of Gwinnett County Senior Services
 - Planning Department
 - ARC
 - Non-biased
- Why are Public Health dollars based on 1970s population?
- What would be the possible consequences of the coalition being charged as the re-granting agency?
- Want more agencies considered for subsidy funding
- Consider having Coalition (or another existing group – not a new one) assume responsibilities for regranting subsidy funding
 - More efficient
 - Certain subsidies (hospital system and public health) may need to be treated differently from smaller ones

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Recommendations

- Revised process for results-based strategic (accountability, process, needs assessment, strategic plan) funding for subsidies for Health and Human Services
- Level of funding for Health and Human Services not be cut any further
- Maintain current level of subsidy funding
 - Establish more efficient granting process that meets current needs, without creating a new entity
- Implement 1997 Board of Commissioners resolution empowering Coalition and requiring subsidies to address needs in comprehensive plan and opening the possibility of funding to other non-profits that are addressing pressing needs
- Don't cut senior services – need is greater than we're addressing and is going to increase dramatically
- A study of senior services be commissioned to assess needs and what is already being done (cost)
- Advocate for an increase in public health funding based on current population rather than based on Gwinnett's 1970 population
- Suggest Coalition take on responsibility for administering subsidy funding

Library

Observations

- Budget has been constant for last three years
- Only change Hamilton Mill branch
- It is a well-run organization
- Current staffing model is very rigid – may be a structural defect that needs to be addressed with need to cut budget
- Quantify savings of regional model – need thoughtful presentation of what it involves (recommendation)
- After several decades of growth in the county tax digest, in 2009 Gwinnett County experienced a decline in the tax digest. 2009 was a wake-up call for the government and the citizens of Gwinnett County. We anticipate further declines in the tax digest before it begins to increase again. We should make recommendations that take this volatility into account while still providing some predictability. If the tax digest declines or increases by more than x% (10?), then the Board of Commissioners should revisit budget recommendations.
- Public library supports pre-kindergarten through 12th grade education – public, private and home schooling

Considerations

- Potentially degraded services
- Hours stay the same, services may be different
- Might promote efficiency and creativity of how to address future funding decline
- Technology changes in five years may be enormous
- Maintain high quality of service with more flexibility

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- There is a need for meeting space
- Inappropriate to assume “one size fits all”

Recommendations

- More centralized responsibilities for some things
- Each library facility should be viewed as a branch of a central library system
- Defer/suspend new sites (renovations okay)
- Reconsider replacement facilities (more square footage leads to increased costs)
- Consider implications of online access: hours of operation, staffing, cost (impending technological changes)
- Continue with state funding
- Reduce library staffing budget by 5% in 2011 and an additional 5% in 2012. This level should be maintained through 2014. The staffing budget reductions may be absorbed at management’s discretion, except that hours of operation should remain at 71 hours per week. Maintain level of services and hours – deal with budget cuts through tiered system and staffing changes. We strongly encourage the library board and leadership to explore alternative staffing models, including but not limited to:
 - Aggressively increasing volunteer staff at all libraries
 - Re-engineering the model of maintaining multiple degreed personnel to accomplish tasks that could be completed by non-degreed staff or volunteers
 - Limiting availability of non-core services to certain times or days at some locations
 - Engaging Friends of the Library to muster a volunteer recruitment, training and placement campaign
- Fix five-year budget at 2010 levels – revisit and quantify savings on regional/tiered system
- Meeting space should be made available for homework, study, independent team problem solving during afternoons, evening and weekends

Parks and Recreation

Observations

- Has already reduced recreational programs, services and special events, eliminated 18 full-time positions and reduced facilities’ operation hours
- Deferred capital projects
- YAAs have an important role in our community
 - Number of volunteers and volunteer hours
 - Involve thousands of youth and teens in activities and increase skills
 - Parent involvement
- Must preserve quality of assets – avoid cycle of decline

Considerations

- Community may benefit from county and Board of Education to work together better: communications, coordination of facilities, planning

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Recommendations

- Use SPLOST money to renovate parks that will result in future costs savings (in lieu of additional/new parks) (i.e., artificial turf, diff lighting, natural landscaping, etc.)
- Active recreational facilities – recoup more of their costs, evaluate potential for this (including EHC)
- Analyze potential for privatization of some/all(?) facilities, i.e. courthouse
- Use more natural landscaping that requires less upkeep
- Analyze coordination with GCPS – comm. Schools, use of ball fields, pools, etc., could Parks and Recreation leverage school fields more/better? Maximize cooperation and coordination.
- Institute an online process to reserve fields, park, etc.
- Analyze potential financial benefits, feasibility and other concerns related to charging user fees – including parking fees – at parks and report to the Board of Commissioners
- EHC should become self-sufficient
- Privatize, sell or outsource operations of swimming facilities or increase user fees so they're completely self-supporting, including future capital costs not covered by SPLOST, staffing, etc.
- Charge user fees for active fields and facilities. Analyze all costs, savings, youth athletics' fair share of these expenses, charge market rates for other groups (for-profits, traveling teams, adult athletics, etc. – possibly a per-player fee?)
- New active parks – if not developed by county, give communities the option to cover the operating costs
- Keep county funding at current level. Any increases in costs will have to be offset by user fees. Explore creative ways to bring new, active facilities online.
- Rethink currently planned parks to minimize operating costs in future
- If the golf course is servicing the county's debt obligation, let it ride. If not, plan an exit strategy (develop a work out plan).

Development and Infrastructure Work Group

Planning and Development

Observations

- County is perceived to be more pro-residential and anti-business development
- Conflicting policies in planning and development
- State responsibility of all roles of planning and development, Board of Commissioners and planning commission
- Planning and development department is and should be about generating revenue
- Planning and development is tasked with the future of Gwinnett County
- No near-term demand for outsourcing
- What are the current service levels?

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Considerations

- Consider opportunities to combine departments (cross-train)
- Policy and procedures should be business friendly because businesses generate revenue. Our tax base is too heavily weighted to residential vs commercial.
- Can permits and inspection be combined with license and review (consideration)

Recommendations

- Board of Commissioners to maintain current permitting, processing and plan review service levels – keep us competitive when growth returns
- Department evaluate policies and procedures to ensure that they align with Partnership Gwinnett goals
- Fast track renaming the Planning and Development department to Planning and Economic Development
- Do not outsource (outside contracting) any essential Planning and Development functions
- Consider updating the recommendations made by the Matrix Consulting Group
- Implement interventions of the 2030 Unified Plan

Transportation

Observations

- Public transportation system serves less than (0.5% - what % is this available to?) of population in Gwinnett
- Roads: SPLOST is capital only, not for operating
- Great strides in efficiencies and cost-cutting (maintenance)
- Centralized facility functional and efficient
- Everything stops at the county line – no coordination with the other counties

Considerations

- Will stimulus funds save costs on traffic lights? How much, now and in the future?
- 21st Century traffic control training (more efficient) – need more training
- The department of transportation has managed well within the box – time to consider a new box.
- What role would technology play if starting a department from scratch?

Recommendations

- Do a better job of marketing transit service
- Ensure we're maximizing our use of technology
 - Staff trained and knowledgeable in its use
 - Develop plans and strategies

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- “Smart” technology
- Independent expert review of county’s use of technology and facilitate integration across functions (e.g., traffic lights, public safety)
- Third party facilitation/review of inter-departmental coordination

Water and Sewer

Observations

- Goal is to pay as you go and reduce debt
- No more bonds – Water department has determined that it’s their goal to no longer issue bonds to finance future projects and to maintain a triple-A bond rating
- Operates on an enterprise fund, which means it pays for itself through user fees. Therefore, it receives no income from the general fund.
- Costs more to treat sewer than water (60% more)
- Storm water is on property tax bill – funding is approximately 50% of what’s needed. Department is researching alternative technologies to reduce costs.
- Implemented collection agency to improve collections by ___ / to ___ % of collectables

Considerations

- How do we address the storm water infrastructure failing? (cost)
- Shortfall in revenue from fees

Recommendations

- Continue following the current policy of department operations and financing.

Fire and Emergency Services

Observations

- These cuts have already been made:
 - Human resources from 3 to 1.5
 - Reduction in overall headcount – countered by new hires (need exact figures – we have them, and will find them)
 - Consolidation of warehouse (police warehouse added) – centralized inventory
 - Overall reduction in support personnel
 - Consolidated Fire Marshall, etc., in headquarters
 - Plan review has had cuts in Planning and Development
 - General Operating a/c’s have had to cut certain percentages – more cuts than capital with personnel – example, fuel costs
- Gwinnett County has ensured that we have adequate staffing at each site – deliberate cross-training – Fire/EMT

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- Interconnection of total system as it relates to service – not just your local station
- Very flexible/dynamic system and process
- Very well trained, professional staff that is well-equipped
- Outsourced some – fire hydrant inspection, EMS billing and collection
- Response time does not meet national standard
- Openness of fire chief and staff – very good attitude
- High morale and team spirit – team-based approach – morale high despite challenges
- Maintain an ongoing process of consistent interpretation of various codes
- Outsourcing was looked at – example: warehousing
- Improvement in relations between fire and hospital system
- Have tried to hire diverse staff – identified current staff and volunteers to promote education

Considerations

- Response time does not meet national standard
- Aging population in Gwinnett
- Impact of road system and congestion (response time), density, development types, redevelopment (CID)
- Halt in new development gives Fire Department time to catch up
- Gwinnett County strives to exceed the national standard
- Water delivery system affects ISO rating
- SPLOST must do what was voted on – result: unmanned stations, which must be staffed
- Georgia Gwinnett College's new dorms
- Cultural/language diversity
- Effectiveness and efficiency of 911 affects Fire/EMS
- First, do no harm – don't make it worse

Preliminary Recommendations

- We don't want to do any harm – don't want to go backwards
- Additional emphasis on citizen education and outreach for purposes of risk reduction – consider volunteers (expand CPR to include choking and other first aid)
- Code adjustments – example, residential sprinklers (consideration) cost must be balanced with return (including maintenance costs) – example: dense single-family dwellings pose a different challenge for fire coordination with cities as well for interpretation
- Outdoor burning – education issue vs regulation issue? Tie in to HOAs, insert in water bills?
- Inspect fire hydrants more frequently

Law Enforcement and Judiciary

Observations

- Police training facilities may be underutilized with current budgeting constraints

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- Information is available online – general public is not aware of resources
- (1) Constitutional fees (not updated) outdated – does not reflect actual costs or cost of living
- (2) Justice system components are complex, interrelated and interdependent
- (3) Justice system could benefit from implementation of new technology
- (1 – 2/3) Benefit of consolidation of police and sheriff (reference article from Randy Meacham on city police training) requires detailed planning and time frame.
- (2 – 2/3) County does have department for process analysis, measurement and improvement (Public perception without this information breeds mistrust)
- (3 – 2/3) Culture of “risk aversion” stymies innovation and creativity at the county government level
- (4 – 2/3) Consolidation of all business unit IT functions (refer to #3 observation from 1/20)
- (5 – 2/3) Justice system has done well utilizing “do more with less” eliminating all “fat” from operating budgets.

Considerations

- Explore partnership with NCR to automate court, fee and filing processes
- Consolidate all facility maintenance
- Expense of whole GJAC security
- Goal: create a world class justice system that is cost-effective, innovative across all platforms
- Use of police training facilities (after officers currently authorized by revised budget are trained) for outside agency training as revenue stream
- (1) Analyze and determine potential revenue with updated fee structure
- (2a) Greater efficiencies and client outcomes can be achieved by interdepartmental consultation
- (3a) Expedite implementation of Criminal Justice Information System – recognize investment in Criminal Justice Information System
- (2b) Assess cause/effect relationship between components of justice system
- (3c) Determine cost efficiency of online payment systems
- (2 – 2/3) Make departmental ‘score cards’ available online

Recommendations

- Ask county to reevaluate state mandated fees/price for service and court fees; advocate legislative action
- Privatization of collection of remaining unpaid fees/fines at end of probation period; recommend legislative action
- Explore indigent defense funding, fee per case vs. hourly defense
- Expedite “paperless” system for courts, filing fees, permits
- Use innovation to streamline all processes/implement technological advance to increase efficiency
- Explore outsourcing for / consolidation:
 - Corrections (privatizing)

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- Courthouse security
- Building maintenance
- Animal control
- Process servers
- Re-examine basis for 2030 unified plan recommendation of 1.3 police officers per thousand population – use composite numbers of county and city police and population to determine current ratio and current ratio with sheriff’s department
- Examine staffing of animal control and number of animals per household
- Recommend independent review of each judicial system department and the inter-connectivity/cause and effect/interaction of their budgeting, staffing and processes (possible task force of consultant/staff/citizen members)
- Education/community building
- Solicitor’s office explore level of charges not requiring jury trial (less than 6 months jail)
- “Summit meeting” of municipalities and county courts on fines and binding costs
- Explore state reimbursements for county services
- (1a) Support legislation to update Constitutional fees
- (1b) Recoup court costs
- (2a) Adopt a coordinated and strategic approach to justice system service delivery
- (3a) Expedite implementation of Criminal Justice Information System
- (3b) Explore private/public partnership for self-service or paperless delivery of services
- (3c) Implement online payment systems
- (1 – 2/3) Continue Engage Gwinnett process to provide continued citizen input and support
- (2 – 2/3) Continue and support process improvement initiative in the justice system
- (3 – 2/3) Education/community building to extend and compliment the capabilities of the justice system