

Introduction

On June 30, 2009 the Rice County Board of Commissioners and Department Heads held a strategic planning session at the Rice County Government Services Building. The goal of this session was to strategize ways to address the current financial crisis created by the shortfall of funds from the State of Minnesota. The session began with a welcome from 2009 Board Chairperson, Galen Malecha and comments from the other Commissioners. During the planning session participants reviewed the mission statement, reviewed preliminary 2010 budget information, completed a SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis and set goals for moving forward.

Mission Statement Review

County Administrator Gary Weiers facilitated a review of the the Rice County Mission Statement. Only minor changes to the statement were considered. The current statement and possible options include:

Current Mission Statement: *To proactively address the needs of the public we serve in an efficient and effective manner to enhance the quality of life for the citizens.*

Option A:

To enhance the quality of life for the public we serve by proactively addressing needs in an efficient and effective manner.

Option B:

To enhance the quality of life for the public by proactively addressing needs in an efficient and effective manner.

At a future date the Rice County Board of commissioners will consider the statement, but there was broad consensus that the statements capture the desired points.

Review of 2010 Budget Forecast

Upon completion of the Mission Statement review, County Administrator Gary Weiers then presented budget forecasts for 2010. Due to significant State revenue reductions, the 2010 budget will be very challenging. As a result, there are insufficient resources available to grant salary and benefit increases to employees in 2010. The State mandated levy limits will exacerbate this situation further by restricting the Board the ability to levy additional funds. With the effects of the Recession it is also a very difficult time to substantially increase property taxes.

SWOT Analysis

Participants were divided into 5 small groups for completion of a SWOT analysis. After a small group discussion was held, each group reported back to the large group on the four elements included in the analysis. A complete listing of each group's findings is as follows:

Strengths

People/Staff	Positive customer oriented reputation
Technology Use	Good prevention and education programs
Longevity/Experience of Workforce	Good website
Do core services	Media releases are helpful to the public
Do much with little resources	Leadership provided by department heads
Sharing of resources between departments	Beautiful landscape
Manage budget well	Provides social services close to the public
Well trained employees	County board experience
Physical location of county-in growth corridor	Cooperation between departments
Investment in technology	Staff experience
Practice and preparation for emergencies	Public image of fiscal responsibility
Capability to respond to emergencies	Financial impact of landfill operation
Competent workforce	Staff knowledge
	Lean organization

Weaknesses

Only do core services	Lowest per capita tax county may be hindrance to progress
Working with other government agencies	County perceived as entity of last resort
Exchanging services with other government agencies	Lack of qualified employees who speak other languages
Sharing resources	Lack of diversity in workforce
Duplication of data entry between departments	Organization is lean
Working with other county departments	Low reserves
Lack of funding to enhance economic development	Who leads efforts to move forward? Too many interests
Lack of cross training of staff	Lack of funding for departments
Communication	

Opportunities

Economic development	Increasing opportunities to hire bi-lingual staff
I-35 corridor	Partnership and collaboration with other agencies use of technology to be more efficient
Sharing resources with cities etc.	Beautiful landscape
Partnerships	Economy
Communication	Strong agricultural base
Grants	Strong township governments
Making changes to how things are done	More cooperation between departments
We have an engaged constituency and volunteers	Consolidation of services/departments
Expand volunteer base	Low bond rates for financing projects
Potential for federal stimulus dollars	Favorable building climate (contractors hungry)
Less state dependency	

Threats

Public awareness	Constantly changing state and federal funding
Governor	Unpredictability
Legislature	Natural disasters
Financial resources	Pandemics
Less \$ but more needs for service	Loss of good staff
Competition with other jurisdictions	Decaying infrastructure
Unfunded mandates	Social services are dependent on state
State audits for compliance	Crime
Less state and federal aid	Health care costs
Financial downturn	Demographics

Goal Setting

Upon conclusion of the SWOT analysis each small group then developed goals based on the information gleaned from the SWOT analysis. After the small groups discussed this information, each shared 1 or 2 goals with the large group that included the following:

- Maximize outside revenues.
- Explore regionalization of services.
- Impact legislation more effectively-lobbyist services.
- Identify overlapping service areas (between departments and in departments) to maximize staff time.
- Review all services Rice County provides and evaluate them based on mandates, need, value, return on investment and cost effectiveness.
- Find efficient services through use of technology, and collaboration with other government agencies and private sector.
- Formalize review of opportunities involving interdepartmental cooperation. Plan ahead together and get down to specifics. Better utilize department head meetings to initiate this process and form task focused groups to work on specific projects that are identified and to follow through on implementation.
- Encourage and make a priority of exploring other opportunities for cooperation with external entities and other counties.
- Utilize existing staff expertise across departments to retain employees, improve efficiency, reduce duplication and insure cross training of employees.
- To increase revenue by taking advantage of the I-35 corridor, building partnerships and capturing available funding.

Summary and Next Steps

The group discussed the need for continuing this dialogue on a periodic basis. The Board will review the Mission Statement at an upcoming meeting to determine if any modifications are necessary. Additionally, the Board will continue to discuss goals that can help the organization become more efficient and cost effective in the delivery of services to the public.

Addendums

- Agenda packets
- List of Attendees