



WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

February 7, 2025

WORKING SESSION

I. ROLL CALL

A Working Session of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners was held at the Administration Building, in the City of Ann Arbor, Michigan, on February 7, 2025.

The meeting was called to order at 9:11 AM by Comm. LaBarre, Chair of the Working Session.

Members Present:	Comms. Shannon Beeman, Justin Hodge, Andy LaBarre, Crystal Lyte (9:16 AM), Jason Maciejewski, Yousef Rabhi, Caroline Sanders, Katie Scott, Annie Somerville (Departed at 1:00 PM)
Members Absent:	None.
Others Present	Greg Dill, County Administrator; Andrew DeLeeuw, Deputy County Administrator; Tina Gavalier & Catherine Jones-Alther, Finance; Terrence Williams, Administration; Guillermo Hernandez, Director of Human Resources; Ashley Hall, BOC Communications and Operations Manager; Ashlyn Poole, Clerk's Office; and members of the public.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

JoAnn McCollum, Road Commission, expressed her eagerness to attend the retreat and learn the commissioners plan.

III. REPORT FROM THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

None.

IV. REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS LIAISON

Ashley Hall gave an overview of the day and thanked the staff of Blackbird Lodge. She introduced the retreat facilitator Dr. Morgan Milner.

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Dr. Milner gave an overview of his background and stated the 4 phases of the working session.

The agenda included 4 phases:

- Phase 1: Why & How
- Phase 2: Opportunities & Obstacles
- Phase 3: Priorities & Objectives
- Phase 4: Roles & Responsibilities

The commissioners engaged in a series of team building exercises with the goal of identifying priorities, setting out goals to achieve these priorities, and identifying obstacles to these goals.

Phase 1: Why & How

The commissioners separated into groups and highlighted strengths of Washtenaw County. Each group highlighted diversity as one of the strengths of the county. The commissioners were asked to speak about why they were at the county.

Comm. Scott stated that she was there because she cared about connecting the diverse communities in an intelligent and caring manner and that she wanted to advocate for people.

Comm. LaBarre said that he felt morally compelled to help others.

Comm. Maciejewski stated that he wanted to work together to find common solutions to advance the community forward.

Comm. Sanders stated that she was there because she was confident that her lived experience, intelligence, and fierce nature, well positioned her to be an authentic advocate for marginalized and disenfranchised individuals.

Comm. Lyte stated that she was there because of her love for people and community make her able to provide for people in need fairly and expeditiously.

Comm. Rabhi said that he was there because of his love for the beautiful community and the diverse groups of people that are like family to him. He also stated that his experience helped the people's government to innovate so that they can achieve a higher standard

Comm. Beeman stated that she was inspired by the beauty and diversity of the county and that she had a deep sense of compassion and a creative and innovative mindset that was dedicated to developing relationships that celebrate and support the fabric of community.

Comm. Somerville wrote down empathetic, deliberate, and creative. She also stated that she was there to be deliberate in how they serve Washtenaw county with empathy, using creative solutions to reflect the diverse needs of the county.

Comm. Hodge said that he was there because he was attentive to the diverse needs and strengths of the community and that he wanted to work hard to ensure that all residents have the highest standard of living.

The commissioners were then asked how they desired to pursue collective work which they shared with the group.

Phase 2: Opportunities and Barriers

Broken up into teams, the commissioners worked on an empathy map to help them better understand their stakeholder. When they were done, they had to identify opportunities to serve their stakeholders.

- Some of the key opportunities that arose during the exploration of the Washtenaw stakeholder community:
 - Group 1:
 - Increased Community Outreach
 - Expanding out into other districts
 - Rotating BoC Meetings

- A district tour of commissioners
- Increased diversity on boards from community members
- New methods of outreach
- Regional Partnerships:
 - Boards
 - Local units of governments
- Subsidizing residential access to municipal meetings by providing video recordings
- Group 2:
 - Opportunities to demonstrate the role and values of government
 - A reprioritizing of budgets
 - An opportunity to be innovative and have new thinking
 - Going back toward the "New Deal"
 - A chance to rebuild things that creates buy-in and accessibility

Comm. Lyte highlighted her belief that what is happening at the federal level of government gives the board a variety of opportunities to message and get out the vote because of an increase in awareness.

- Group 3:
 - Right to opportunity
 - Creates an opportunity to increase the trust in the county government's work
 - Collaboration and partnership
 - Demonstrate value and effectiveness of what commissioners do
 - Shine a light on fundamental work of government
 - Be more transparent and increase trust
 - Examine work and how to do it more effectively in the context of having less funds
 - Support more local infrastructure
 - Create innovative solutions
 - Show the safety created through the county
- Themes/Commonalities Identified:
 - Group 1:
 - Access/Reach/Outreach
 - Innovation
 - Collaboration
 - Rebuild/Renew
 - Show Value
 - Increase trust
 - Leverage
 - Group 2:
 - Opportunity
 - Safety
 - Regeneration
 - DEI
 - Opening
 - Leveraging Economic Concepts
 - Finding Creative solutions
 - Refining Purpose
 - Group 3:

- Innovation
- Collaboration
- Engagement
- Outreach
- Access

The commissioners outline obstacles that may arise to keep them from the opportunities that they highlighted.

Obstacles included:

- Values of other governments
- Local government vs. Federal government
- Matching Capacity with need and resources
- External evil
- Resources
- Relationships

The group broke for lunch and Commissioner Somerville left the meeting.

Phase 3: Objectives and Key Priorities

Dr. Milner asked the commissioners, broken into groups to focus on one area of priority, and to create a statement of opportunity related to that area. He also asked them to create at least 3 objectives to address the priorities. In phase 4, the commissioners took all of the information that they gathered and identified measures of progress and expected timeframes for their progress. They also identified partners who could aid them in their success.

- **Area of Priority: Outreach & Engagement**

- Statement of Opportunity: Given the increased needs in Washtenaw County, the ability to improve the lives of residents - knowledge and access to resources are a priority to strategically addressed by the board efficiently
- Objectives:
 - Increase BOC and county leadership's awareness of each part of the county by "getting on the bus" and traveling to well structured, quarterly listening sessions in addition to regular meetings
 - Aggregating information about resources and allowing commissioners to disseminate that knowledge to county residents through a variety of outlets and methods
 - Engaging w/other organized bodies to regularly learn about priorities and needs expressed to them by residents

- **Area of Priority: Innovation, Renewal, Regrowth**

- Statement of Opportunity: Given the expected Federal Climate and its anticipated impact, we must cultivate a county where residents are resilient through education, empowerment, fostering regenerative collaboration and community visiting and data driven connectivity.
- Objectives:

- Support the use of data and innovative thinking to drive creative solutions
- Enhance resilience through education and opportunities to enable Washtenaw county to adapt to federal project and ensure that they are well prepared for future challenges
- Foster regenerative collaboration and community building through connections and information gathering.
- **Area of Priority: Resource Management**
 - Statement of Opportunity: We must create an understanding on the available discretionary funds or resources in order to manage expectations at the Board of Commissioners level and staff level with the partners civic partners and CEOs.
 - Objectives:
 - Clear understanding of what money is provided to legally mandated services
 - What is the county providing minimally or not to fulfill internal commitments or to meet workforce needs?
 - What has the county committed to contractors to provide services?
 - What is left? Creating a cohesive policy of top objectives for money

Phase 4: Roles & Responsibilities

In phase 4, the commissioners took all of the information that they gathered and identified measures of progress and expected timeframes for their progress. They also identified partners who could aid them in their success.

- **Area of Priority: Innovation, Renewal, & Regrowth**
 - Objective: What the main impact is of the community
 - Measure of Progress: : The board understanding the value of the services that the county provides
 - Timeframe: 3-4 months
 - Partners: State, County, Local governments
 - Objective: Develop Roadmaps to address and resolve issues
 - Measure of Progress: to educate and equip partners in the community with the roadmap
 - Timeframe: 6 months
 - Partners: All community elected and staff
 - Objective: Making the public a partner and solving vulnerabilities
 - Measure of Progress: Use of success and the roadmap
 - Timeframe: indefinite
 - Partners: State, local, communities
 - Resources needed:
 - Funds
 - Resources
 - People
 - Tools

- **Area of Priority: Outreach and Engagement**

- Objective: Increase BOC and County Leadership Awareness
 - Measure of Progress: Attendance and Engagement
 - Timeframe: End of 2025
 - Partners: Racial Equity Office, Commissioner Liaison
- Objective: Enabling the dissemination of information to residents by opt-in data
 - Measure of Progress:
 - Timeframe: End of 2025
 - Partners: Commissioner Liaison, BOC staff, County Leadership Staff
- Objective: Engaging with other bodies to learn about their priorities
 - Measure of Progress: Attendance engagement, increased utilization of resources
 - Timeframe: End of 2025
 - Partners: Community partner champions
- Resources needed:
 - MSSl
 - Commissioner Newsletter
 - BOC Participation
 - Texting System

Comm. Maciejewski stated that the board has tried to implement some of these policies in the past.

- **Area of Priority: Resource Management**

Comm. LaBarre stated that their priority, resource management, was an obstacle and not an opportunity. He stated that one of the biggest obstacles was time because of legal and clear mandates. He also spoke about mandates containing arcane language. He stated that the timeframes could vary. Roles and partners included department heads, administration, finance, and the community.

Dr. Milner wrapped up the day and thanked the commissioners for their work. The commissioners spoke about their outlook moving forward.

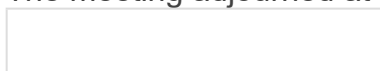
VI. **ITEMS FOR CURRENT/FUTURE DISCUSSION**

Comm. Rabhi asked about the public participation survey. Dr. Milner explained the survey. Comm. Rabhi asked for a summary of the results at the next meeting.

VII. **ADJOURN TO NEXT SESSION**

Comm. Scott, seconded by Comm. Hodge, moved to adjourn. Voice vote - motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 3:52 PM



Andy LaBarre, Chair of the Working Session
Lawrence Kestenbaum, Clerk/Register

By: Ashlyn Poole, Deputy Clerk

Board Approved:

Draft