

relaxed atmosphere because people are less intimidated. She stated a good approach, along with advertising the meetings, is to be specific about the topics to be discussed.

Ms. deCaussin stated the structure put together for involving citizens will be used for both strategic planning and the budget process.

Mayor Snell stated the City of Holland held a meeting in their library at the beginning of the budget process where Council members sat at individual tables with four to five residents to discuss issues of importance to the residents. He stated they felt it was very successful.

Ms. deCaussin stated the residents need to be educated on the community needs Council is faced with daily.

Ms. Hill-Schulte suggested Council should first meet with the finance team and department heads, get a listing of priorities and then meet with residents.

Mr. Robbins stated if we give a list of Council's goals and objectives to the residents, they may not come up with their own ideas/needs to put on the list. On the other hand, some residents may come in with needs of their own, but be unaware of the broader scope of the needs of the City.

Mr. Dalton stated major issues should be put on the priority list, but stressed that residents need to be included from the very beginning.

Mr. Gaber stated the strategic planning process will set the goals and objectives, and he sees the budget process being an implementation of that plan.

5. DISCUSSION - Committees - Programs/Services

Ms. deCaussin stated at a recent staff meeting Ms. Hill-Schulte and she attended, the topic of streamlining and creating more effective committees was discussed. It was suggested that individual Council members could meet with various department directors on a routine basis to be apprised of current topics. She stated a greater understanding of how things get to the point of coming before Council would offer Council an opportunity early on to give input and ask questions, resulting in fewer lengthy discussions during Council meetings.

Ms. deCaussin stated she would like Council to review the current committees and possibly categorize them by department. She stated there could be preliminary discussion at the committee level, with citizen and Council involvement, then when presented at Council meetings it will have already been analyzed and Council will have somewhere to start. She stated this would be a better utilization of time for all involved.

Ms. Hill-Schulte stated Council needs to better utilize its committees. She stated it would be helpful for committees to give a brief report to Council and to residents on a periodic basis. She stated we need to restructure the committees we currently have, not have more meetings.

Ms. Jasinski suggested including committee reports to Council as agenda items.

Ms. deCaussin stated Council's time could be better utilized by reclassifying and consolidating committees, thereby having less committee assignments per Council member, and having more active committees. She stated by doing this every issue will have an appropriate channel to go through.

Mr. Gaber stated it would be a good idea to revise committees to have all cross-sections represented; Council, residents, and administration/staff. He stated this way Council will be better informed of issues and concerns. He concurred that it would be beneficial to broaden the scope of these committees, in that there will be one body to go to regarding

issues.

Ms. Somerville stated that most committees submit minutes from their meetings to Council. If Council members are reading these minutes, they should be informed of what is going on. She stated the committees are doing well as they are. She suggested Council members spend time in the various departments to better understand their function within the City.

Mr. Robbins stated the importance of Council members building relationships and a level of trust with the department directors.

Mr. Dohr stated that Council may be receiving communication via minutes from committees, however, he does not see communication between Council members and the department heads. He stated Council needs to set priorities and give direction to committees.

Ms. Hill-Schulte stated Council needs to reevaluate why these committees were formed. She stated Council needs to stay on top of what these committees are seeking to do and follow through as to whether or not they are accomplishing that.

Ms. Peters stressed the importance of two-way communication between Council members and department directors. She stated this way when they are in the budget process, Council will already be informed.

Ms. Brooks stated committees are a way of getting communities involved. She stated they have specific interests which when combined create a narrow focus for that particular committee. However, when you combine committees, there will be a broader focus.

Ms. Hill-Schulte expressed her concern that most committees already have a full plate and questioned whether or not they will be able to focus as well if they are combined.

Ms. Brooks suggested using ad-hoc committees.

Mr. Dalton suggested rotating Council members' committee assignments every year.

Mr. Gaber stated the committees can set up sub-committees to focus on specific issues when necessary. The subcommittee can report to the committee, who in turn will report to Council.

Ms. Peters suggested having a smaller group get together and further discuss combining committees and the budget calendar to develop a proposal to present to Council by January 21, 1998. Mr. Dalton, Ms. deCaussin and Ms. Somerville volunteered to meet with her.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to discuss.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss before Council, Vice-President deCaussin adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m., Monday, December 01, 1997.