

News Chief
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Herr puts blueprint together for Winter Haven

By [Mike Ferguson](#)

WINTER HAVEN — City Manager Mike Herr hasn't been on the job for quite a year yet in East Polk's largest city, but that hasn't stopped him from putting together a blueprint for moving forward.

Herr went over the plan during Monday night's City Commission meeting. Herr sat down with key members of staff during what he called a "strategic doing session." Herr also had each city employee receive a six-question survey on what was important. Out of about 500 employees, nearly 60 percent returned their survey.

"Every successful team has a strong bench," Herr said. "While we don't forget the past, it's time to move forward."

10-point plan

In addition to the "strategic doing session" that helped create a mission statement, a vision statement, organization values and key results area, the city's 10-point plan moving forward includes implementing a formal and legal planning process. Also included is the development and implementation for best practices for each city department.

The plan mentions focusing on processes to become more efficient and benefit customers. The city also plans to create an "idea collaboration center" and a "one-stop call center," which Herr said could include moving all city employees and services to the larger Nora Mayo Hall.

Number 7 listed on the 10-point plan is recruitment and talent management.

"In order for us to continue to be the best in Polk County ... we have to take a look at our recruiting," Herr said. "I want us to be the best and I want us to hire the best. Anything else is settling for mediocrity as far as I'm concerned."

More neighborhood discussions, Herr said, was an important part of the plan. One of the aspects to that, he said, was more consistency with code enforcement to keep areas from becoming run down.

"We need to work with neighborhood leaders to take back their communities in a very proactive way," Herr said. "We already see efforts toward revitalization. We have private sector development, but we can do so much more."

The 10-point plan ended with staying in contact with representatives of the state legislature about the importance of “home rule.” Number 9 on the list read “City Stuff Matters,” which includes budget overviews, best practices and topics of importance to city employees.

“I think our employees need to know we care,” Herr said. “We have to be more visible; we have to do a better job communicating and that begins with me.”

Mission and vision statement

The mission statement unveiled by Herr on Monday night read, “Enriching lifestyle through exceptional service.” Herr said his goal was to create an “unparalleled experience” for employees, residents and city businesses.

“I think it’s a very rich mission statement,” Herr said. “I think it’s bold and I think it’s attainable.”

The vision statement is “To be the best city through relentless pursuit of excellence.” Herr said that includes safety, quality of life, a vibrant economic atmosphere, an inclusive cultural environment and environmental sustainability.

Values

The values Herr spoke of Monday was represented by the acronym “I-FIVE”. The letters stand for integrity, financial performance, inclusive, visionary and exceptional service.

The integrity aspect includes teamwork, self-policing and personal accountability.

The financial performance and stewardship category focuses on transparency, finding creative funding sources and prioritizing.

The inclusive aspect is both internal and external. Internally, it included mentoring while externally, Herr said, he wants strong social media engagement and to celebrate diversity and cultural events.

Visionary seeks best practices, employee input and thinking outside the box.

The exceptional service aspect included timely responses, high levels of engagement and delivering results.

“We’re going to be all about providing seamless customer service,” Herr said. “If someone calls about a pothole, we’re going to call (Florida Department of Transportation), we’re going to call maintenance and we’re going to follow through to see that it gets fixed.”

Key results area

The key results area was put together after discussion with city employees, Herr said. Aspects include morale, retention, recognition systems, employee development and continuous improvement.

“I think it’s a great philosophy,” Commissioner J.P. Powell told Herr. “I think you’ve already started some of it. You can really tell from employee attitude.”

Herr said teams have been put together to address short-term and long-term goals for each of the five areas.

“Everybody who works for city government has to feel important and that they’re making a difference,” Herr said. “Retention is important. I’m not going to take that lightly.”