

Opening comments from City Manager Paul A. Hofmann at the April 17, 2017 City Council Meeting

Thank you Mayor.

Following these opening remarks, I've asked Michelle Jordan and Allyson Lack with Principle to present this item. Later, Diane will introduce the possible Council action item.

We'll be talking about the city's image, the city's brand identity, the city's "look and feel". Much progress has been made on this set of subjects. We'll start construction soon on beautiful municipal facilities that will honor the park those facilities sit in. We have an urban design report from Terrain Studios that is informing real design on real city of Bellaire streets, like Spruce Street. We have a comprehensive plan and actual zoning districts in the downtown area that prescribes standards for the design of redeveloped buildings. We have a parks master plan, and a parks board that pays attention to that plan, that speaks to standards and consistency of design for fences, trash cans, equipment in our parks. We'll open a beautiful Evelyn's Park this weekend. And, we are actively repairing broken curbs and resurfacing cracked streets, because failing infrastructure does not send the right message about our city.

Other assets working in our favor are a cultural arts board that actively pursues opportunities to provide public art, a Citizens for A Beautiful Bellaire group that championed the urban design work previously mentioned, a Bellaire Historical Society that ensures we don't forget the lessons from our past, and the importance of Bellaire's beginnings. We are fortunate there are passionate people in all of those groups who care deeply about this community and the messages we send about it.

This subject has a lot of history in our community, and our first objective is to respect that history. Our community has wrestled with the idea of how we identify ourselves to folks who already live here, to those who might choose to live or open a business here, and to the region. And again, lots of progress has been made, but there are still missing pieces, there are still unanswered questions. We have not brought it all together. It's my suggestion we go back to the very beginning, and ask the very important fundamental question, of what is it we're trying to accomplish here.

We have a real opportunity, and perhaps a real need, to answer those questions, over the next several months. It has long been suggested that the municipal facilities project can be the benchmark for the city's look and feel. While the architectural decisions have been made, and while we have received great input from the ad hoc committees on much of the interior and exterior design concepts, we have the opportunity to do more, make even more of an impact, and ensure we represent in those new buildings how this community wishes to be represented.

It's on that point I will end my introduction. This is not the staff's attempt to drive a particular outcome. In fact, we need to have a process here that ensures no one, and no one group drives the ultimate outcome. Our objective is to put a process and a consultant in place that gets us to a set of products that positively and accurately reflects what this community is all about.

Michelle, please provide more context for us, and then introduce our guests.