

SMITHVILLE BOARD OF ALDERMEN RETREAT MINUTES April 17, 2025

A Retreat of the Smithville Board of Aldermen was held on April 17, 2025 at Northwest Missouri State University-Kansas City building located at 6889 North Oak Trafficway, Gladstone.

Present: Mayor Damien Boley; Board members: Melissa Wilson, Leeah Shipley, Dan Hartman, Dan Hartman, Marvin Atkins, Kelly Kobylski and Ronald Russell.

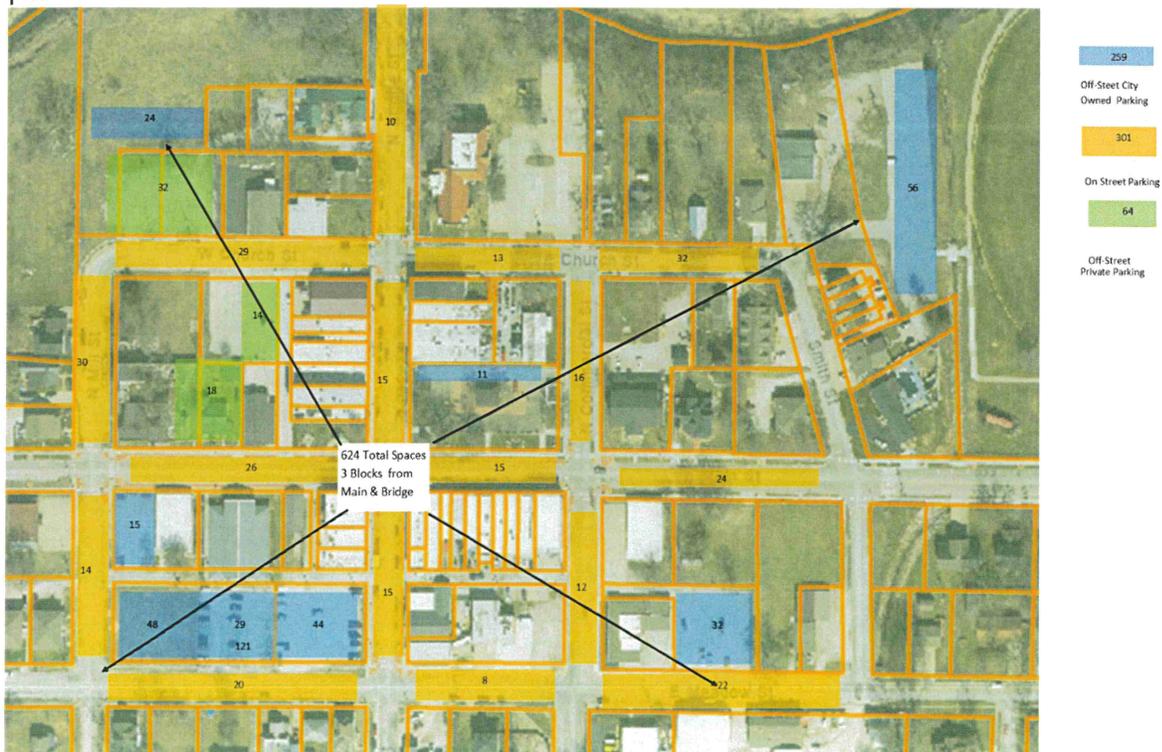
Staff: Cynthia Wagner, Gina Pate, Jack Hendrix, Jason Lockridge, Rick Welch, Chuck Soules, Matt Denton, Linda Drummond, Tony Roetman, Mayra Toothman, Brandi Schuerger, Alex Threlkeld, Chase Stewart, Scott Davis and Dave Schuerger.

Call to Order

Mayor Boley called to order the Retreat at 9:33 a.m. on Thursday, April 17.

Cynthia noted that staff sought feedback from the Board as they prepare the FY2026 budget. The strategic plan from 2019 requires a refresh, with a focus on more measurable goals. Key themes from discussions with Board members include continued emphasis on economic development, housing diversification, parks and recreation improvements, and balancing the small-town feel with growth. They explored ways to implement the strategic plan, including collaboration, community engagement, and resource stewardship. There was also discussion about enhancing communication strategies to better reach citizens.

Cynthia presented information on downtown parking availability, indicating there are over 600 spaces within a three-block radius. The Board noted they would like this communicated with the public.



The discussion covered various aspects of Smithville's development and infrastructure. Cynthia highlighted progress in downtown improvements, including street and sidewalk renovations. The group emphasized the need for continued focus on infrastructure, particularly streets, water, sewer, and sidewalks. They also discussed the importance of economic development, attracting businesses, and creating diverse housing options. The conversation touched on the challenges of promoting affordable housing and the need to communicate the value of development to the community. The Board agreed on the importance of supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as improving hospitality and communication about new developments in the area.

The group discussed various economic development issues and opportunities for the city. They considered attracting more professional businesses, potentially offering incentives like tax abatements, and the need to review and update economic development policies. The conversation also addressed improving downtown infrastructure, filling gaps in sidewalks, and the importance of having businesses open on weekends to support tourism. The Board recognized that while they cannot regulate business hours, they can encourage extended hours through communication and marketing efforts.

The Board reviewed the results of a SWOT analysis, focusing on the city's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. They highlighted the city's strong community, effective leadership, and quality of life as strengths. Weaknesses included economic challenges, infrastructure constraints, and limited entertainment options. Opportunities for improvement included economic development, infrastructure upgrades, and enhancing community identity. The Board also addressed the issue of negative talk about the city, emphasizing the need to focus on positive aspects while still addressing valid concerns. They stressed the importance of balanced communication and not letting negative comments overly influence decision-making.

The group discussed the results of a SWOT analysis conducted with Board members and department directors. The analysis identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the city's development, public safety, governance, and internal operations. Key points included concerns about maintaining the small-town character while growing, the need for strategic planning and communication, and challenges with staffing and infrastructure.

The group discussed strategic planning priorities and reviewed financial data, focusing on property tax and sales tax trends. They noted significant growth in commercial property tax revenue over the past five years, with commercial properties now comprising a larger portion of total property tax revenue compared to residential properties. Sales tax revenue has also increased substantially, though there is uncertainty about future projections due to economic conditions. The group examined data on assessed property valuations, including the impact of tax increment financing (TIF) districts. They plan to update projections and analyze sales tax data by category as they move into the budget process. There was some discussion about how to present the financial information clearly, particularly regarding TIF impacts on property tax revenue.

Gina presented updates on the city's compensation, including recent market adjustments and union agreements. They discussed potential changes to benefits, such as enhancing retirement plans and implementing sick leave buyback programs. They also reviewed the results of an employee benefit survey. The career development program's first year was highlighted, noting promotions and internal hiring successes. The Board provided direction to focus on CPI-based

increases, explore LAGERS enhancements, and conduct a staffing needs analysis. They also discussed the shift from merit-based evaluations to career development plans.

Staff provided an update on the status of various projects included the new website, which is expected to be fully live by March 15. The budget for the year includes funds for a follow-up citizen survey and the recruitment of a financial analyst. Staff highlighted departmental needs which will be presented to the Board at the May 20 budget work session. Discussion at that meeting will also include a budget for the newly approved public safety sales tax.

The Board discussed two funding requests from external organizations and considered how to handle such requests in the future. They also reviewed existing partnerships with Main Street and the Chamber of Commerce. The discussion then shifted to preparations for the 2026 World Cup, including potential plans for an enhanced July 4 celebration to coincide with matches. The Board considered options for marketing Smithville to World Cup visitors, including geo-targeting and website development. They recognized the potential economic impact of the event and discussed ways to attract visitors to the area.

The team discussed the utility budget, focusing on projects and the need for rate increases. They also discussed the potential impact of decreasing rates on revenue and the need for a rate study to determine the best approach.

A follow up work session will be held on April 29, at 6:00 p.m. for discussion on the capital improvement projects. Additional work session discussion of several other items was also recommended. These discussion will be added to the planning calendar.

Adjourn

The Mayor declared the retreat adjourned at 4:48 p.m.


Linda Drummond, City Clerk


Damien Boley, Mayor