

**From:** John Kotarski  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 02, 2013 7:02 PM  
**To:** Rizzolo-Brown, Connie; Simbuerger, Wiltrud; Miller, Bob; Winborne, Malverne; Chamberlin, Marsha  
**Cc:** Seagraves, Aaron  
**Subject:** Re: Annual Plan 2014

Good evening Commissioners,

I am a bit perplexed by this task. My understanding was that we were to divide the city into quadrants and two Commissioners were to represent each quadrant to get to know the needs and expectation of residents of these areas. Connie dutifully presented an excellent orientation for each quadrant but attendance was sparse by both residents and Commissioners. There were no follow-up meetings that I am aware of. My impression was that this was the method on which we would draw for long-term planning options.

Consequently, I was planning to defer to the judgement of the Commissioners representing each quadrant for the process outlined in this email. However, there appears to be no quadrant input and I am at a loss, for example, to provide adequate insight into what public art would best serve residents of the south quadrant. In fact, items in the west quadrant, to which I was assigned, are mostly new to me. I know where they are but have little idea what they mean even though I was present at the west quadrant meeting. I don't know what it would mean to prioritize Maple to Scio Church @ Pineview condos and Grace Bible Church. In fact, this is the first time I recall hearing of this project/location. Are we prioritizing a proposed project or a proposed location? What does it mean to prioritize a location? I feel quite comfortable prioritizing a location but it seems to me that this is exactly what the quadrant task forces were intended to do – each team of Commissioners was to take this list to their quadrant task forces and discuss priorities using a scoring rubric. However, we have no quadrant task forces nor do we have a scoring rubric.

We also have no standards (criteria) by which we are measuring art or locations. We have no way of measuring our process against best practices of successful communities elsewhere. All of you know that this has been a concern of mine for some time and it relates to art selection task forces as well. We were just informed that we should additionally consider prioritizing CIP projects. I am not certain that we share an understanding of what our duty is as a Commission much less an understanding of how we are to prioritize this list. I doubt if anyone can randomly select five locations on the list and offer the advantages and disadvantages for public art to be placed there.

For the time being, I propose we tell the administration that we want public art at every bus stop and ask the AATA to prioritize by ridership. That we want public art at every park and playground and to ask the Parks to prioritize by use. That we want public art in the downtown business district and ask the DDA to prioritize by their master plan. That we want public art at every major transportation artery into the city and let the Roads prioritize by usage. And that we want public art at every new CIP project and let the city staff prioritize. We are not organized well enough to do any better.

Several Commissioner have expressed to me that we have great ideas but lack follow through. My read of the quadrant meetings are that fewer than 10 residents showed up collectively and some of those were not from the quadrant in which the meeting was held. How can we remotely suggest that these 10 residents are the basis for our decisions? We were to assemble task forces for each quadrant that would focus on the public art opportunities and needs of their quadrant. That was not done.

We do not know how other cities do this. We do not know what residents want. We do not know how to evaluate public art or public art locations. I for one do not know how our proposed new leaders plan to change this. We do not even know what our new charge will be from the City Council.

We have over 40% of our Commission vacant, we lack the staff that everyone agrees we need, and we do not have a clear consensus among ourselves about what our job is. The adage "when you find yourself in a hole, stop digging" comes to mind. I know we have a deadline coming up, but to me this document does not serve to simplify the decision-making process but rather confuses it.

Some think we are a gatekeeper for public art in the city, yet I believe many on the City Council think differently. Many on City Council want us to grow public art from outside a taxpayer base and empower other groups to work independently. They want us to simplify and streamline the process. We at the least need that clarified before we proceed to recommend a public art plan.

Regarding a policy for donated art, I think we would be better off inviting Sarah Gay to organize the Coleman Jewett chair independently until we can better sort out what we currently have on our plate. This would not set a precedent and would avoid criticism that we held this project up for no particular good reason.

I hope you take these suggestions constructively because that is my intent. We can reorganize ourselves into an even more productive body but we need a vision, a plan, and a consensus on moving forward.

Best,  
John