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MEMO

TO: County Commission
FROM: Robert W. Wilson
Date: November 17, 2022
Subject: Cass County Strategic Plan Final Approval

For several months Commissioners and Department Heads have been working on an update to the County Strategic Plan. The current three-year plan was adopted in 2019. Following a county-wide survey and several small and large group follow-up meetings, a plan update is attached for consideration at the meeting on November 21st.

The attached draft was distributed several weeks ago to Department Heads and Commissioners for a final round of edits. Several additional comments were received and have been incorporated into the draft.

Assuming the text of the plan is approved Monday, our strategic planning consultant Jason Matthews of JM Strategies will then format the document with the assistance of a graphic designer. The final product will be delivered in December as the 2023-2025 Cass County Strategic Plan.

Please review and provide any last comments that should be considered as part of the Plan.

SUGGESTED MOTION: Move to approve the 2023-2025 Cass County Strategic Plan Update.

STRATEGIC PLAN

2023–2025

FOR REVIEW & APPROVAL BY CASS COUNTY COMMISSION



The Structure of Our Plan

Elements of Our Strategic Plan

- **Mission:** Defines Cass County Government’s purpose and commitment.
- **Vision:** Establishes Cass County Government’s direction and guides our strategy.
- **Focus Areas:** High level organizational areas that Cass County Government will focus its time, energy, and resources in advancing in order to fulfill its vision.
- **Strategic Objectives:** The framework upon which this strategic plan is constructed around, these are the defined outcomes that Cass County Government will accomplish.
- **Desired Outcomes:** These are the key indicators that the strategic objectives have been met.
- **Actions:** The initiatives and steps Cass County Government will undertake to meet its strategic objectives and achieve desired outcomes.
- **Deadlines:** Deadlines will guide work towards the timely implementation of each strategic objective.
- **Responsibility:** The responsible individuals and/or parties that will oversee the implementation of a strategic objective.
- **Priority Levels:** Priority levels are assigned to each strategic objective to serve as a guide for Cass County Government in prioritizing its work in implementing this Strategic Plan.

Our Foundation

Our Mission

Cass County Government is dedicated to providing quality public service in a respectful, professional, efficient, and fiscally responsible manner.

Our Vision

Setting the standard for excellence in public service.

Our Values: C.A.S.S.

- **Commitment:** To honor our commitments to those we serve and each other.
- **Accountability:** To work in a responsible and transparent manner.
- **Service:** To put service to the public first.
- **Shared Purpose:** To work collaboratively to fulfill our mission and meet organizational goals.

Our Focus Areas, Strategic Objectives & Desired Outcomes

Focus areas are high level categories Cass County Government will work on in fulfilling its vision of setting the standard for excellence in public service. During the planning process, the following three focus areas were identified:

- **Employee Empowerment**
- **Efficient and Responsive Government**
- **Future Focused**

Taken together, these three focus areas provide the framework for this strategic plan. Seven strategic objectives were created with each strategic objective tying into one of the three focus areas. Desired outcomes accompany the strategic objectives. These outcomes will help measure progress towards

implementation. In some cases, depending on the strategic objective, the desired outcomes set specific metrics.

Focus Area: Employee Empowerment

Context: This area is internally focused on Cass County Government's most pressing immediate and long-term challenge: recruiting and retaining employees.

Strategic Objectives Within This Focus Area:

1. Develop and implement strategy to retain county employees while demonstrating Cass County Government is a rewarding place to work and build a career.
2. Create and enact new employee recruitment strategy with a focus on collaborative partnerships and increased visibility of county job opportunities.

Desired Outcomes:

- Increase employee retention rates county-wide by 10 percent during three-year plan.
- Have sufficient applicant pools that uniquely advertised positions can be filled in one round of interviewing and hiring 85 percent of the time.

Focus Area: Efficient and Responsive Government

Context: This area is client focused to ensure county departments have the resources they need to provide superior public service and that those resources are managed in a fiscally responsible and practical manner. This area also provides direction in exploring possible innovative and collaborative approaches to service delivery.

Strategic Objectives Within This Focus Area:

3. Develop five-year county operation plan to ensure both the efficient use of resources and provide guidance to the County Commission in the budget-making process.
4. Conduct comprehensive needs assessment of county services to guide the delivery of services.
5. Launch and facilitate a review with local governments of redundancies in services throughout Cass County.

Desired Outcomes:

- A five-year plan demonstrates proper planning, budgeting, maintenance, and growth potential of the affected areas. This includes, but is not limited to, large scale purchases, new expansions in service offerings, drastic changes to current methodologies, and all other service-impacting actions.
- The assessment process will engage the public and increase awareness of county services.
- Identify redundancies in public services through a collaborative effort with city governments, township governments, and school districts. Focus on finding any gaps in services, pinpointing potential efficiencies, and developing necessary approaches to ensure affected residents are properly served.

Focus Area: Future Focused

Context: This area is all about positioning Cass County Government to be both a catalyst and a facilitator in addressing the key land and economic development issues and challenges facing North Dakota's largest county, fastest growing county, and most dynamic metro area.

Strategic Objectives Within This Focus Area:

6. Provide guidance and assistance to local governments in land development planning.
7. Serve as a facilitator in ensuring metro and rural economic development needs are balanced and fostering cooperation to advance Cass County's economic potential.

Desired Outcomes:

- Cass County will publicly lead a collaborative effort with the cities of Fargo, West Fargo, Harwood, Horace, and Reiles Acres to facilitate effective land use and development within the protected area of the FM Area Diversion Project. This will ensure smart development, integrated public infrastructure, and best use of this limited land resource.
- Continued support for local economic development efforts. Policy-wise this may consist of standing up a County Job Development Authority or continuing to support individual projects and economic development organizations.

Priority Levels

To assist in the implementation of this Strategic Plan, the following priority levels are established:

- **Critical:** Strategic objectives ranked as critical are of immediate concern as time is of the essence. Ideally, a critical strategic objective must be addressed within the first 18 months of this three-year plan.
- **Important:** Strategic objectives ranked as important are of longer-term significance to Cass County Government. Time must be spent to acquire necessary input and resources in order to properly implement
- **Desirable:** Strategic objectives ranked as desirable are ones where time and resources are variables. Progress can only be made when time is invested in bringing parties together and resources become available.

Our Plan In Detail

Strategic Objective 1:

Develop and implement strategy to retain current County employees while demonstrating Cass County Government is a rewarding place to work and build a career.

Focus Area: Employee Empowerment

Desired Outcome: Increase employee retention rates county-wide by 10 percent during three-year plan.

Actions to Achieve Desired Outcome:

- A. Conduct a semi-annual review of current employee benefits and consider additional benefit options as they come to the County's attention or are requested by employees.
- B. Review opportunities to better describe & communicate current wellness benefits and consider additional benefit options as they come to the County's attention. Develop and submit strategy to the leadership team for review and approval no later than July 31, 2023.
- C. Develop implementation roadmap for the plan by August 31, 2023.
- D. Upon approval, develop and distribute information on the plan to all departments no later than September 30, 2023.
- E. Begin full implementation of the strategy no later than October 1, 2023; if necessary, develop additional action steps to guide implementation process.
- F. Review retention rates on a quarterly basis starting in the first quarter of 2024.

Responsibility: County Administrator, Human Resources Director & Department Heads

Priority Level: Critical

Strategic Objective 2:

Create and enact new employee recruitment strategy with a focus on collaborative partnerships and increased visibility of county job opportunities.

Focus Area: Employee Empowerment

Desired Outcome: Have sufficient applicant pools that uniquely advertised positions can be filled in one round of interviewing and hiring 85 percent of the time.

Actions to Achieve Desired Outcome:

- A. Develop points of contact in key college and university that directly tie into specific county government departments; identify and assign points of contact by January 31, 2023; begin outreach no later than February 28, 2023; ensure outreach at the start of fall and spring semesters.
- B. Identify regional job fairs for relevant county departments in need of employees; provide list and schedule attendance by February 28, 2023; moving forward, update list of job fairs annually.
- C. Coordinate internship, volunteer, and job shadowing opportunities for college and university students; develop plan and submit for approval by the leadership team no later than June 30, 2023.
- D. Implement Human Resources six-month reviews with new employees to gather input regarding areas for growth and understanding of benefits; begin reviews in the fourth quarter of 2023.

Deadlines: Strategy will be developed internally communicated by July 1, 2023.

Responsibility: County Administrator, Human Resources Director & Department Heads

Priority Level: Critical

Strategic Objective 3:

Develop five-year county operation plan to ensure both the efficient use of resources and provide guidance to the County Commission in the budget-making process.

Focus Area: Efficient and Responsive Government

Desired Outcome: A five-year plan demonstrates proper planning, budgeting, maintenance, and growth potential of the affected areas. This includes, but is not limited to, large scale purchases, new expansions in service offerings, drastic changes to current methodologies, and all other service-impacting actions.

Actions to Achieve Desired Outcome for Facilities Operation Plan:

- A. Conduct an audit of the current state of all county buildings. Determine which components and features are in great, good, poor, or non-working order.
- B. Based on the audit's findings, develop a year-by-year five-year priority list of facility needs for each building. Develop initial draft and submit to leadership team by July 1, 2023.
- C. Develop a five-year operations plan for submission to the County Commission by December 31, 2023.

Actions to Achieve Desired Outcome for Information Technology Operation Plan:

- D. Conduct an audit on the current state of information technology throughout all county departments.
- E. Based on the audit's findings, develop a year-by-year priority list of IT needs for each county department. Develop initial draft and submit to leadership team by July 1, 2023
- F. Develop a five-year information technology plan for submission to the County Commission by December 31, 2023.

Actions to Achieve Desired Outcome for Capital Needs Operation Plan:

- G. Conduct a review of each county department's capital needs based on the findings and recommendations of the operations plans for facilities and information technology.
- H. Based on the review, each department will develop a year-by-year priority list of capital needs. Develop and submit an initial list by July 1, 2024.
- I. Develop a five-year capital needs operation plan for submission to the County Commission by December 31, 2024.

Responsibility: County Administrator, Building & Grounds Director, Information Technology Director, Leadership Team, Finance Director

Priority Level: Important

Strategic Objective 4:

Conduct comprehensive needs assessment of county services to guide the future delivery of services.

Focus Area: Efficient and Responsive Government

Desired Outcome: The assessment process will engage the public and increase awareness of county services.

Actions to Achieve Desired Outcome:

- A. Conduct a needs assessment on a department-by-department basis examining how the department is reaching clients and the public, determining both physical space needs and additional online models for delivery of services. Complete and submit all needs assessments to the Leadership Team by December 31, 2023.
- B. Departments in need of making changes will work with the County Administrator to develop next steps. Next steps will be determined and reported to the Leadership Team by March 31, 2024.
- C. Department heads will identify potential benefit to examining alternative service delivery practices will have worked with Administrator and identified methods to further investigate alternative service delivery methods and utilized that communications method. Recommendations will be submitted to the Leadership Team by June 30, 2024.
- D. Leadership Team will determine and prioritize next steps for impacted departments and provide recommendations to the County Commission no later than December 31, 2024.
- E. Next steps will be determined by the Leadership Team and the County Commission and be developed and implemented throughout 2025 leading into the creation the next three-year Strategic Plan.

Responsibility: County Administrator, Department Heads, and County Leadership Team

Priority Level: Important

Strategic Objective 5:

Launch and facilitate a review with local governments of redundancies in services throughout Cass County.

Focus Area: Efficient and Responsive Government

Desired Outcome: Identify redundancies in public services through a collaborative effort with city governments, township governments, and school districts. Focus on finding any gaps in services, pinpointing potential efficiencies, and developing necessary approaches to ensure affected residents are properly served.

Actions to Achieve Desired Outcome:

- A. Departments will identify a list of nonprofits in Cass County that provide services that interacts with, or potentially duplicates, their own work. A master list will be created to inform county officials and be submitted to the Leadership Team by March 31, 2023.
- B. Leadership Team will select departments in need of reaching out to other local government providers. Departments will interact with service providers that closely align with or potentially duplicates their work.
- C. Department Heads will provide an initial report on their findings to the Leadership Team by June 30, 2023.
- D. Leadership Team will then determine next steps to develop a collaborative process with local governments to fill in any service gaps and maximize potential efficiencies. Process will be developed collaboratively with input from affected local governments. Recommendations on next steps will be reported to the County Commission by November 1, 2023.

Responsibility: Department heads within their areas of focus, County Leadership Team

Priority Level: Important

Strategic Objective 6:

Provide guidance and assistance to local governments in land development planning.

Focus Area: Future Focused

Desired Outcome: Cass County will publicly lead a collaborative effort with the cities of Fargo, West Fargo, Harwood, Horace, and Reiles Acres to facilitate effective land use and development within the protected area of the FM Area Diversion Project. This will ensure the smart development, integrated public infrastructure, and best use of this limited land resource.

Actions to Achieve Desired Outcome:

- A. Build a working group of one elected official and one or two staff from Cass County, the cities of Fargo, West Fargo, Harwood, Horace, and Reiles Acres, and one or two staff from FM MetroCOG. Meet every two months.
- B. Develop a formal charter and planning organization with the member entities listed above. Look at adding other partners like the West Fargo Public Schools and Cass County Joint Water Resource District.
- C. Develop updated land use plans and transportation plans by 2025-2026.
- D. Be prepared for the wave of expected new development in FM Area Diversion protected areas by 2027.
- E. Engage the North Dakota Department of Parks & Recreation in discussions on, and explore the feasibility of, creating a county-run park in the diversion zone.

Responsibility: County Planner, County Engineer, County Administrator, and County Leadership Team

Priority Level: Important

Strategic Objective 7:

Serve as a facilitator in ensuring metro and rural economic development needs are balanced and fostering cooperation to advance Cass County's economic potential.

Focus Area: Future Focused

Desired Outcome: Continued support for local economic development efforts. Policy-wise this may consist of standing up a County Job Development Authority or continuing to support individual projects and economic development organizations.

Actions to Achieve Desired Outcome:

- A. Review process for policy development of a process for receiving and reviewing incentive applications that do not involve Cass County municipalities.
- B. Preparing for County Commission consideration a resolution for creating a County Job Development Authority resolution. If approved – supporting the nomination and selection of members and assistance in developing the structure, schedule and organization of the JDA’s work.

Responsibility: County Administrator

Priority Level: Important

Strategic Objective 8:

Engage Cass County youth to raise both awareness of what county government does and future career opportunities.

Focus Area: Future Focused

Desired Outcome: Be available to all elementary, middle, jr. high, high school and college-level students & instructors in Cass County who want to learn more about county government.

Actions to Achieve Desired Outcome:

- A. Reach out & be available for student groups to attend County Commission meetings.
- B. Be available – and communicate our availability to speak to school groups about the work of Cass County and county government in general.
- C. Between Commissioners & Department Heads present to at least 10 school groups a year about county government.

Responsibility: Commissioners, Administrator & Department Heads

Priority Level: Critical

PLEASE NOTE: Upon approval of this plan, JM Strategies will work the County Administrator in the layout and design of a formal Strategic Plan, which will be distributed to all county employees sometime after the first of the year.