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# Regional detention ponds top City Council priority list

■ *Projects that would help maintain Cleveland's position as one of Tennessee's top industrial employers rank high on City's Council's priority list.*

CLEVELAND, Tenn.—Economic development and job expansion and retention initiatives were a major focus at the Cleveland City Council's annual strategic planning workshop Friday. This year's session was held at the Cleveland-Bradley Chamber of Commerce.

After discussing the status of a variety of city projects and hearing from city staff about major initiatives and the city's finances, Mayor Tom Rowland and City Council members Bambi P. Hines, Bill Estes, Avery Johnson, David May, Bill Robertson, Richard Banks and George Poe voted on their top five strategic priorities. The Woolen Mill detention ponds project by far was identified as the city's No. 1 priority.

While City Manager Joe Cate and the city's management team assisted in identifying issues, needs and opportunities at the all-day Friday session, only Mayor Rowland and the City Council took part in the prioritization vote. Rowland and Council members selected their top five priorities from a list of more than 50 discussed at the planning session. A No. 1 ranking counted for five points, a No. 2 ranking, four points, and so forth. Seven of the eight members selected the detention pond project in their top five, and it averaged 4.6 points per member voting in favor, indicating the detention pond project was by far the most selected choice.

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A new general aviation airport was the second-highest priority for the second consecutive year, with three votes totaling 13 points. Expanding the Cleveland Public Library, which is jointly funded by the city and Bradley County government, was third with three votes and nine points. Rounding out the top of the list were contingency plans for loss of income, two votes and eight points; a new public works building on city-owned property on Fulbright Road, three votes and seven points; CALEA (The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies) accreditation for the Cleveland Police Department, three votes and seven points; and identifying alternative sources of revenue for the city, two votes and seven points.

The City Council, in February of this year, identified the detention ponds project as one of the city's top three federal legislative priorities because of its economic development implications. City engineers say the detention ponds, once constructed, will reduce flooding for Maytag Cleveland Cooking Products, a wholly owned subsidiary of Whirlpool Corp.—the community's largest employer—and other businesses and residential property owners in the drainage basin.

The city has made progress with the detention ponds project. The City Council has committed a total of \$725,000 in local funding for the project, including \$200,000 in this year's budget. The city has also secured a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant for \$124,200, which helped fund Phase I of the project. The city also received a Fast Track Tennessee Industrial Infrastructure Program (TIIP) grant for \$476,000, which is committed for Phase II. The city has also been approved for \$1 million in Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Stag funding, which was secured with the assistance of U.S. Congressman Zach Wamp (R-Chattanooga).

Other economic development and job recruitment and retention-related projects also made the priority list. In addition to the detention ponds and airport, a new Old Tasso Road/APD-40 connector and a new industrial park were among the top 10 priorities.

“This direction allows management and staff to identify ways to accomplish as many of

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these priorities as possible,” said City Manager Cate. “This isn’t short-term planning; it can take several years to accomplish some of these goals, but it gives us the direction we need to prioritize issues.”

Funding sources for many of the priorities have yet to be identified, and many of the identified priorities require City Council action in a formal meeting before further work can be performed.

The Southeast Tennessee Development District facilitated the planning exercise. It was the city’s sixth annual planning session. City Manager Cate requested an annual strategic planning meeting soon after he joined the city in April 2001, and the process has been used ever since as a way to identify which projects should receive priority.