



Liz Keating Councilmember

On October 30, 2023, Cincinnati City Council began the annual review of the City Manager, a six-phase process as laid out below.

PHASE ONE: Council publicly deliberated and agreed upon 10 categories to review the City Manager.

The first five categories reflect the priorities of the budget:

1. Public Safety & Health
2. Growing Economic Opportunities
3. Thriving Neighborhoods
4. Fiscal Stability
5. Excellent & Equitable Service Delivery

The second five categories reflect Council priorities:

6. Management: recruitment, retention, employee morale, major hires, culture of “yes and,” remove bottlenecks
7. Leadership: ability to prioritize, delegate, and lead
8. Government Efficiencies: remove unnecessary bureaucracy, move projects forward, use data-driven approach
9. Relationship and Collaboration with Council, Mayor, and Community Partners
10. Communication Skills: Internal and external

PHASE TWO: The City Manager publicly presented in committee her self-evaluation based on the ten categories agreed upon by Council. A copy of the presentation is attached.

PHASE THREE: Councilmembers engage with internal and external stakeholders to provide informal feedback to consider for their own review of the City Manager.

PHASE FOUR: Council considers the City Manager evaluation. Council unanimously voted to enter into executive session twice to consider the employment and compensation of an employee.

PHASE FIVE: Council unanimously voted to enter into executive session for a third time to consider the employment and compensation of an employee and have a discussion with the City Manager on Council’s evaluation.

PHASE SIX: Council publicly releases and discusses the final City Manager review in committee. The review organizes each of the ten categories into four segments:

1. Successes - areas City Manager exceeded expectations
2. Challenges - areas City Manager did not meet expectations
3. Opportunities - areas to improve to exceed expectations
4. Metrics - key performance indicators to track for successive reviews

COMMITTEES

City Manager Performance Review - December 2023

SUMMARY: Sheryl Long is the right person to lead the City of Cincinnati as City Manager. Ms. Long brings much needed stability and positive energy following several tumultuous years at City Hall, including high turnover in the City Manager's office; a global pandemic; and corruption charges and additional allegations. The City Manager has increased visibility of the City within the neighborhoods, implemented more team-building events to improve employee-morale, and has expanded a data-driven approach throughout all departments and decisions for the City.

An opportunity for improvement is creating an environment that welcomes investment and growth while building a culture of "yes, and" in the Department of Community and Economic Development, the Department of Building and Inspections, and all departments that interact with citizens, community development corporations, and entities looking to invest in Cincinnati. Communications with Council and the public on major hires and personnel decisions should be more consistent. Council recognizes that it must provide the resources to help the City Manager make these critical changes and track advancement over time.

1. PUBLIC SAFETY & HEALTH

- a. **Successes:** The City Manager uses her personal experience with gun violence to bring empathy and connection to the community to combat the gun violence epidemic. She carefully balances the different voices, supporting both the Cincinnati Police Department's and the community's efforts. She has empowered Crime Gun Intelligence Center operations to grow and excel, while also empowering community groups to be involved and take part in crafting solutions through key programs like PIVOT. She has empowered her team to implement place-based strategies, micro-targeting crime hot-spots. These efforts have led to a reduction in violent crime in Cincinnati.
- b. **Challenges:** Consistent communication to the public will build trust and confidence that the City is focused on public safety and the strategies are working. The rise in youth gun violence reinforces the need for more collaboration across other government entities.
- c. **Opportunities:** The City Manager should set clear KPIs to track realistic and ambitious goals to show improvement. The City Manager should set clear guidelines for communication and strategy in times of crises balanced with space for community voices. This would be separate, but parallel to CPD's process and communications following significant events.
- d. **Metrics:** crisis communication strategy; public safety goals; communication schedule to share ongoing projects and strategies with the public; partnerships with other government entities

2. GROWING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- a. **Successes:** The City Manager has led a team to implement the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and related partnerships paving the way for a clear strategy and measurable outcomes to address the affordable housing crisis. She has empowered her team to launch the Catalytic Neighborhood Projects which brings more transparency and strategy to neighborhood investments through the capital budget. She has empowered the Career Pathways team to grow and improve the program to create a stronger talent pipeline for future city employees. She

- launched the Financial Freedom project which included in-depth research, data, and a blueprint to tackle racial wealth disparities in Cincinnati.
- b. Challenges: Economic Development is a key in expanding the tax base to build financial viability for the city. The City Manager does not focus on economic development as much as she does on other critical components of the city. Council has heard overwhelming feedback from external stakeholders about how difficult it is to do business with the city.
 - c. Opportunities: The lack of housing projects on the Council agenda shows a critical need for the City Manager to empower her team to find creative solutions to combat market forces to encourage growth in Cincinnati. The City Manager needs to prioritize removing barriers to investing and growing the City. The City Manager should host roundtables with external partners to better understand challenges and opportunities for improvement.
 - d. Metrics: Evaluate peer cities in current economic development and growth and set goals on relevant data; housing pipelines and permits issued; problem-solving for relevant permits and contracts delayed or denied.

3. THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS

- a. Successes: The City has seen an increase in affordable housing as a direct result of the new partnerships and investment in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The City has significantly increased pedestrian safety initiatives. The City Manager empowered DOTE to use data and move some pedestrian and traffic safety work internally for a better return on investment, resulting in more projects completed. The City Manager has implemented Rock the Block to get more city employees into different neighborhoods and interact with more constituents, building stronger community relationships. The City manager empowered the Department of Planning and Engagement to host Connected Communities roundtables, giving constituents the opportunity to share their interests and concerns in how the City continues to grow. The City Manager empowered the Office of Environment & Sustainability to put together and begin implementing the Green Cincinnati Plan. The City Manager empowered Budget & Finance to create a more engaging way for constituents to learn and participate in the budget process. She has also given the Law Department the support to crack down on predatory landlords which improves quality of life for our most vulnerable residents.
- b. Challenges: The City Manager needs to implement a long-term systemic approach to the challenges faced by neighborhoods. Council heard from many external stakeholders about concerns about lack of communication around major initiatives, including public safety, housing, and pedestrian and traffic safety.
- c. Opportunities: The City Manager should be more proactive in communication.
- d. Metrics: Increased communication regarding department initiatives impacting the community; increased resident participation in community engagement.

4. FISCAL STABILITY

- a. Successes: The City Manager has led a disciplined approach to the budget, working with the Office of Performance and Data Analytics to use data to inform budget decisions and will be moving forward with performance-based budgeting. The City Manager has a mindset to monetize and drive revenue, she now needs to empower teams to implement these strategies to set the City up for sustained fiscal stability. The City Manager has also increased opportunities for innovation to save tax dollars. She has drafted a long-term strategy for addressing deferred maintenance and critical infrastructure investments with the sale of the railroad.

- b. **Challenges:** The budget presentations and communications to Council do not include specific details on critical needs to reach goals and KPIs set for each department and how those goals and KPIs relate to the City Manager's overall objectives for the City.
- c. **Opportunities:** Clear metrics and communication to Council addressing each department's budget needs and metrics will aid in smarter, more strategic budget decisions by Council. The City Manager should also be more affirmative against Council spending she is not aligned with. Although Council may choose to go a different route, the City Manager's clear communication and objection will help better inform decisions.
- d. **Metrics:** KPIs for each department directly related to City Manager KPIs and priorities to help Council make better informed budget decisions.

5. EXCELLENT & EQUITABLE SERVICE DELIVERY

- a. **Successes:** The City Manager has had a successful implementation of the 311 improvements and expansion. The City is responsive, rapid, and effective in addressing basic CSR requests. She has empowered her team to successfully launch and expand the Alternative Response to Crisis program, giving residents the service they need while saving critical hours for CPD. The City Manager is responsive and effective in times of crises.
- b. **Challenges:** The City still lags in responses and clear communication in more complex CSR requests. There is a lack of follow-up, tracking updates, and closed cases. While the City Manager has been strong in critical communications, she is more often reactive in situations that could have been proactively communicated.
- c. **Opportunities:** The City Manager should empower directors to be clear on what resources they need to respond to community needs, including CSRs. Directors should present more details, give feedback, and provide specific requests so Council can provide the needed resources to improve, enhance, and increase closed cases in the CSR database. Additionally, the City Manager should be more proactive in communication during times of crisis.
- d. **Metrics:** The City Manager should use the Community Perception Survey as a guide for KPIs driven by community needs.

6. MANAGEMENT

- a. **Successes:** The City Manager had an enormous undertaking to shift the culture, rebuild trust, and improve employee morale. She has made significant strides in a short period of time, particularly at the director level. She has created leadership development opportunities to improve leadership at the Assistant City Manager and Director levels. Her major hires - police chief and fire chief - were done in a collaborative, thorough manner, and both leaders have shown to be strong choices to lead the public safety departments.
- b. **Challenges:** While the morale and leadership development has improved at the higher levels of management, there still continues to be a problem among lower-level employees. The City Manager should also strive to make decisions faster - some critical positions within city leadership were left vacant which created a burden on other employees and a bottleneck in the pipeline.
- c. **Opportunities:** The City Manager can expand career pathways to include leadership development, management training, and advancement opportunities for city employees. This will help build morale and create a clear pathway for employees to move up in their careers and continue a life of public service. Growing talent within will also help create easier leadership transitions and develop succession plans within departments - where applicable - avoiding long and costly talent searches when it may not be necessary.

- d. Metrics: Employee perception survey (similar to the community perception survey) to keep a pulse on employee morale and increase employee satisfaction and retention.

7. LEADERSHIP

- a. Successes: The City Manager is a clear leader who is respected by the Mayor, Council, her directors, and city employees. Her enthusiasm for the job has built pride in public service and the mission of this city. She has taken a thoughtful approach in creating that mission statement and defining it for city departments and their role in enacting that mission. The City Manager has an eye for prioritization and has a “yes, and” mentality.
- b. Challenges: The City Manager has built a culture of “doers” rather than delegators. The City Manager must set the example by managing the high-level initiatives and delegating the rest to her team and directors. This will build up the capabilities of her team while also giving them the ability to do the same with their employees. The desire to do everything leads to bottlenecks, burnout, and an overworked team of leaders.
- c. Opportunities: The City Manager must lead by example by delegating and empowering her team and directors to make decisions. Council expects these changes will reduce burnout and stress within the City Manager’s office. She can build trust and accountability in leadership by creating a clear process to push certain decision-making capabilities down to ACM and director level.
- d. Metrics: Create a position whose sole job it is to handle specific issues - resident complaints, slow moving projects, bottlenecks, open CSR items, etc.

8. GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCIES

- a. Successes: The City Manager has taken a strong data-driven approach to aid in decision making and prioritization for the City. Implemented SIET initiatives to increase interdepartmental collaboration through data. She has empowered departments to innovate to improve city operations, including procurement and HR as well as expansions and improvements in critical IT infrastructure such as OnBase.
- b. Challenges: Feedback from external partners shows that there is no consistency in processes, particularly in DCED and B&I. The majority of complaints received by Councilmembers are regarding permits, inspections, and projects held up by lack of decision-making by administration. Councilmembers have consistently heard how difficult it is to do business with the city, while external partners are caught between departments blaming other departments for the challenges. As stated in section two, growing economic opportunities is critical for the fiscal viability of the city.
- c. Opportunities: The data-driven work needs to be implemented within departments to drive more efficiencies. Clear processes must be put into place, particularly in DCED and B&I. The City Manager should set clear expectations of departments and hold those departments accountable.
- d. Metrics: Build and implement an overall strategic plan on removing barriers and creating processes to grow economic opportunities.

9. RELATIONSHIP WITH COUNCIL, MAYOR, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- a. Successes: The City Manager has strong relationships with City Council and there is a healthy balance of collaboration, push back, and accountability on both sides of this relationship. Many community stakeholders have had a positive experience working with the City Manager and commend her on an increased presence within neighborhoods.

- b. Challenges: Some community stakeholders are frustrated by lack of prioritization and implementation on major initiatives.
- c. Opportunities: Build more community relationships by empowering city leaders and directors to get engaged with different groups to expand City manager's bandwidth throughout the City.
- d. Metrics: N/A

10. COMMUNICATION

- a. Successes: The City Manager implemented a new emergency alert service to keep city leaders informed of critical events. The City Manager has been effective in outreach to Councilmembers during those critical events. She has created a new internal communication publication to highlight work within city departments and celebrate successes for city employees.
- b. Challenges: There has been a lack of and inconsistencies in communication for major decisions, including major hires, large projects, and significant initiatives.
- c. Opportunities: The City Manager should be proactive for more effective communication. She should utilize the FYI Memo to keep Council, city employees, the media, and the public informed. The City Manager can set the narrative with more information sharing rather than operating under the fear of a negative story.
- d. Metrics: Increase use of FYI Memo and outreach to Council on major decisions. (NOTE: Since Council shared feedback on this review with the City Manager ON 12/04/2023, there has been a noticeable increase in FYI Memos which benefits Council, city employees, and the public.)

CONCLUSION: Council stands behind City Manager Sheryl Long as the leader of this City. The highest priorities should be tackling challenges in government efficiencies, economic development, and communication. Council recognizes that it must provide the proper resources to help the City Manager make these critical changes and track improvement over time.

Carin Campbell
Council Calendar
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