

Reno Service Priorities Task Force

Final Report

October 28, 2010

Appointed Task Force Members

Brett Kandt, Chair, Ward 1
Mike Steedman, Vice Chair, Ward 4
Robert Bayer, Ward 2
Pamela Bedard, Ward 5
Paul Klein, Ward 1
Jenny Martinez, Ward 3
Rob Morrison, Ward 5
Douglas Parsons, Ward 4

Facilitator

James Johnson, Managing Partner, Level Three Performance Solutions

City of Reno Support Staff

Kevin Knutson, Director of the Office of Management & Budget
Jaime Schroeder, Sr. Management Analyst
Liz Habkirk, Sr. Management Analyst
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Introduction

The Reno Service Priorities Task Force was established to deliberate and provide a report to Council that would make recommendations regarding the priority of City of Reno services from a citizen perspective. This report will be used in conjunction with revenue projections; Federal, State and local laws; and other data to assist the Council in making decisions about future budgets and potential service level reductions.

From the perspective of Reno citizens, the task force achieved consensus on ranking 58 City of Reno services in four primary groups that they believe best represents the relative importance of each service, as shown beginning on page 5.

Internal services were not included in the ranking, with the understanding that those services would be scaled to most efficiently meet the level of service needed by the staff and equipment assigned to the external services.

The task force also provided a number of recommendations for Council to consider when making future financial, budgetary, or service level policy decisions, which can be found on page 8.

History

On January 27, 2010 the Reno City Council discussed establishing “a new ‘stakeholders group’ to advise and make recommendations regarding the 2011/12 budget, service and maintenance levels.” On February 10, 2010, they voted to establish the stakeholders group and for staff to begin the process of recruiting potential members.

On February 27, 2010 the concept was referred to the Financial Advisory Board (FAB) for advice on the makeup and mission of the board. The FAB recommended on May 4, 2010 that the Council appoint seven to nine members and that the mission should be “to advise the Council on budget priorities for 2011-2012, and on economic strategies over the next five years.”

A total of 31 applications were submitted during the recruitment process, of which 21 met the criteria for the task force, which included that they live within the City limits and have previously served on a City board or commission, or have attended the Reno Citizens Institute.

At the May 26, 2010 City of Reno Council meeting, the Council took action to appoint nine citizens to the task force.

In June, the staff responsibility for the task force was assigned to the new Director of the Office of Management & Budget, Kevin Knutson, and his staff. City staff then engaged an outside consultant, James Johnson, a Managing Partner at Level Three Performance Solutions, to facilitate the process.

After contacting the members, the first meeting was scheduled for June 29, 2010. At that meeting, the task force elected a Chair, Brett Kandt, and Vice Chair, Mike Steedman. They also set the meeting schedule and initial outline of the work plan based on recommendations from staff.

At the July 8, 2010 task force meeting, the task force adopted a mission, refined the work plan, and received presentations on the City’s history, role, charter, current services, and recent budget history.

The task force’s adopted mission is:

Advise the Reno City Council on service prioritization, financial strategies, and community needs for the fiscal years 2011-2012 and beyond.

As part of their work plan, they heard presentations from the following departments:

- July 27, 2010—Police and Parks, Recreation & Community Services
- August 10, 2010—Fire and Community Development
- August 24, 2010—Public Works and City Manager’s Office

The presentations by the departments were asked to include the following information:

- The services provided by the department and the director’s opinion of the relative priorities of those services within the department,
- Workload and service level trends, with comparative data to other like cities or national standards (whatever the department uses to establish service levels),
- Funding sources and restrictions,

- Mandates and regulatory requirements that the department must meet, and
- A summary of programs that have been cut in the past.

On August 10, 2010, the task force adopted an attendance policy, requiring members who had missed more than three meetings be considered for removal. The City Council upheld this decision at the September 8, 2010 Council meeting.

In addition to the presentations, the task force asked a number of questions of specific department directors that were submitted in writing and, once answered, posted to the task force's website (<http://www.cityofrenosites.com/servicetaskforce/>). The task force members were also provided with background materials such as budget summaries, organizational charts, and departmental business plans which were also posted to the task force's website.

After the fact-finding stage was completed, the task force entered a deliberation process described in the "Prioritization Methodology" section below. The meetings were held on:

- September 14, 2010—Selection of services to be included and criteria.
- September 28, 2010—Initial prioritization ranking and consensus discussion.
- October 12, 2010—Final review of prioritization ranking and initial review of draft final report.
- October 26, 2010—Review and adoption of the final report with final priority rankings.

At the September 28, 2010 meeting, the task force unanimously voted to remove one member who had failed to meet the attendance policy.

This report will be presented to the City Council at the November 10, 2010 Council meeting.

Initial Observations

The task force members found that during the process of seeking input from city residents, businesses and organizations, a common concern was that the Council would not have found it necessary to prioritize services for the consideration of future potential service level reductions if the City was not severely constrained by collective bargaining agreements as a result of NRS Chapter 288.

The task force members also recognized that certain services or departmental functions are mandated under either federal or state law or the city charter; however, a legal mandate was not sufficient in and of itself to render a service "essential" or of the highest priority. In a similar vein, the task force recognized that certain services were not always mutually independent of one another, and that certain services were corollary to other services or otherwise inherent to a functioning municipality.

The task force also noted that consideration of whether a particular service could more efficiently or effectively be delivered through a shared services or joint powers agreement with one or more other government entities was not within its purview.

Prioritization Methodology

The fact-finding stage allowed task force members to gather information about existing City services directly from departmental staff through presentations and written reports.

During that process, the task force established the service list for prioritization based on an initial list provided by staff and refined through discussion by the task force.

Public Records was included in the initial service list, but was later removed as it was seen as a function of all departments and services, not a separate activity. The task force noted that Nevada's public records law (NRS Chapter 239) and open meeting law (NRS Chapter 241) are vital to transparency and accountability in government.

After finalizing the service list, the task force, working in small groups, conducted an initial ranking exercise at a regular meeting to begin to understand the different viewpoints among members.

To help refine the rankings, the task force then selected the following nine criteria to rate each service:

- Promotes public safety
- Contributes to quality of life
- Assists economic growth and development
- Vital to health
- Protects environment and infrastructure
- Generates revenue or has cost recovery
- Creates opportunity for arts, culture or enrichment
- Promotes civic engagement
- Provides an essential service

Based on citizen opinion, each individual task member then scored all services in a prioritization matrix, assigning a score from 1 to 4 for each criterion, with the scores representing:

- 1 = Service does not support this criteria at all.
- 2 = Service indirectly supports this criteria.
- 3 = Service provides some support to this criteria.
- 4 = Service provides major support to this criteria.

Staff combined the individual scoring matrices and provided the task force with an initial priority ranking, based on the total of the average scores for each service, sorted from highest score to lowest.

The task force reviewed and discussed the initial priority ranking and directed staff to adjust scores by quartile for particular services based on consensus.

Staff provided the revised matrix with initial consensus ranking to the task force, where further discussion led to further refinement of the list of services to be ranked and a final consensus rank.

Staff also drafted this final report, based on discussions by the task force, for review.

The task force reviewed, discussed, edited, and adopted the final report and service prioritization ranking contained herein.

Prioritization of City Services

The table of ranked City services below shows the relative priority for 58 services provided by the City of Reno.

It is important to note that this ranking shows the relative importance of current City programs and services from the task force's perspective, as representatives of the community. It does not comment on whether or not a service *should* be offered by the City, which is an analysis the task force recommends be done for all of the City's programs and services. (See "Recommendations," page 8.)

The ranking also does not imply that any of the services are not necessary, but rather shows what the rank is relative to the other services evaluated. In fact, one of the criteria that the task force chose to judge each service by was "provides an essential service," and all services were ranked between 2.1 and 4.0 on a 4-point scale, illustrating the support this group has for the City's current suite of services.

The list of services is broken down by the task force into broad categories of relative importance. The first 11 items are considered "top priority," and are therefore the highest priority services. The next six items are considered "high priority." The third grouping, consisting of 26 items is considered "medium priority," or those items that, while important, could be considered for reductions. The last 15 items are considered "low priority" and should be among the first to be considered when reductions are necessary. The task force intends that these priority recommendations will be used to assist the City in strategic planning for delivery of services.

Top Priority

There were 11 external services that the committee all agreed were the most important services that the City of Reno offers. In alphabetical order, they are:

- Building plans review, inspection and permits
- Emergency (911) dispatch
- Fire suppression response (includes specialty teams)
- Police field operations - patrol
- Police field operations - traffic
- Prosecute misdemeanor violations of the Reno Municipal Code (RMC)
- Public Works capital projects
- Recreation programs and facilities
- Sanitary engineering/treatment plant operations
- Sewer and storm water maintenance
- Special events

High Priority

The next highest priority was given to the following six services, again in alphabetical order:

- Police investigations
- Regional law enforcement assets
- Resource development and cultural affairs
- Senior adult programs
- Water quality/floodplain management
- Youth programs

Medium Priority

While agreeing that all of these programs were valuable and provided much needed support and services, these 26 items should be reduced before top or high priority services.

- Adjudication of municipal code violations
- Advance land planning
- Business licensing and enforcement
- Civil litigation services (see Discussion below)
- Code enforcement
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) (see Discussion below)
- Crime analysis
- Current land planning
- Downtown maintenance (see Discussion below)
- Economic development projects (see Discussion below)
- Elections
- Emergency preparedness
- Environmental control and inspections
- Fire prevention
- Green initiatives (see Discussion below)
- Neighborhood services
- New development engineering
- Park maintenance (see Discussion below)
- Parking meter maintenance and collection
- Pavement maintenance/right-of-way maintenance (see Discussion below)
- Public Works traffic operations
- Reno Direct
- Snow/ice control
- Special event security
- Public Works traffic engineering
- Web site management

Discussion

The task force recognized that **civil litigation** is a corollary of City operations and that proactive legal advice from and representation by in-house counsel is significantly more cost-effective than retaining outside counsel.

The task force also concluded that the City should take full advantage of **CDBG** funds to the extent they are available, but noted that many of the programs funded are not within the mission and charter of the City.

The task force, in recognition of the current economic decline, recommends caution in pursuing future **economic development projects** at the taxpayers' risk. However, with regard to the services related to land use planning (e.g., **current land planning, new development engineering**, etc.) the task force recommends that the City work to facilitate private projects that remain viable in this current economic climate.

In ranking the "**Green initiatives**," the task force gave the highest priority within this category to energy retrofit measures in City facilities and infrastructure and other energy conservation measures that reduce maintenance and operation costs.

The task force recognized that services such as **downtown maintenance, park maintenance** and **pavement maintenance/right-of-way maintenance** may be scaled back or deferred due to budget constraints; however, the task force believes these services must be maintained at a level sufficient to protect the City's infrastructure.

Low Priority

The remaining 15 services were ranked lowest because the task force concurred that they should be the first to be considered for reductions, even while acknowledging the importance of the public safety elements and the value added to the community by these programs.

- Alternative sentencing programs
- Community Assistance Center (CAC) (see Discussion below)
- Court case processing
- Fire medical response (see Discussion below)
- GIS data mapping
- Internal affairs
- Marshals service
- Parking tickets and permits
- Police community affairs
- Public information and ombudsman
- Repeat Offender Program
- Sewer billing
- Sewer Rebate Program
- Street sweeping
- Victim Advocate Program

Discussion

The function of the **Community Assistance Center** was seen as important by the task force, but fundamentally not aligned with the City's mission and charter, and legally the responsibility of Washoe County. The task force supports the current efforts to work closely with the County and non-profit organizations to take responsibility for this service.

The task force could not find sufficient justification for the **Fire Department's emergency medical service** (EMS) delivery methodology, which employs a two-tier or dual response

system in conjunction with Regional Emergency Medical Services Authority (REMSA—under an agreement with Washoe County Health Department); while this response system arguably provides optimal coverage, it is essentially redundant and not cost-effective. The task force recommends that the City conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the current EMS delivery methodology in comparison to other response systems.

Recommendations

While reviewing the City's services, the task force discussed a number of financial and management strategies that the City should consider using to manage the current economic situation.

- Address the impacts of State laws on bargaining unit contracts.
- Scale the size of internal services to provide the most efficient support necessary for external services to function.
- Reduce any duplication of services between departments and between the City and other government entities.
- Analyze all service offerings in light of the City's core mission and legal mandates to determine if the service should be offered.
- Set appropriate cost-recovery targets for services with specific customer market segments.
- Use a managed competition process to provide lowest cost of service delivery.
- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the current EMS delivery methodology in comparison to other response systems.
- Focus green initiatives on measures that improve City facilities and infrastructure and other energy conservation measures that reduce maintenance and operation costs.
- Exercise caution in pursuing economic development projects at the taxpayers' risk, but work to facilitate viable private projects.
- Continue current efforts to work closely with the County and non-profit organizations to take responsibility for the Community Assistance Center.
- Maintain services such as downtown maintenance, park maintenance and pavement maintenance/right-of-way maintenance at a level sufficient to protect the City's infrastructure.
- Regardless of the priority ranking, individual programs within each service area must be evaluated for cost-effectiveness on the basis of meaningful and measurable outcomes.