Clemson looks to future during planning retreat

BY GREG OLIVER
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CLEMSON — Friday was a time for Clemson department heads to celebrate achievements from the past year but, more importantly, to look ahead to the next year.

During the annual City Council retreat held at the Madren Center and Conference Inn, department heads were asked to name achievements from the past year, as well as goals for the next year.

Among the future goals named during the daylong event were completing the few remaining issues with the Cochran Road Wastewater Treatment plant upgrades; preparing for the second phase of a multi-year Streetscape project for the downtown; continuing to think "green" when it comes to ways for looking at cost savings of energy and environmental improvement initiatives; and continuing efforts by the utilities department to replace aging water and sewer systems that initially began in 1986 and 1988, respectively.

Technology was among the most talked about issues at the retreat. Director Lowell Arwood said technology enhancements have occurred by way of the city's website, through an electronic ticketing system initiated by Clemson police, through cameras set up throughout the downtown area to monitor traffic and other activity and on Clemson Area Transit buses to monitor drivers and passengers and assist in public safety.

In addition, municipal court installed an updated Court Management software and hardware system while Planning and Codes purchased a new building codes permitting, scheduling and management software system that is being installed.



FILE PHOTO

Clemson Planning Department Office Manager Beth Connor helps customers at their new office in City Hall. The planning department is among city departments that have enjoyed technology upgrades over the past year.

Police Chief Jimmy Dixon listed enhancement of his department's 911 system among them.

"The current system is 10 years old and we just went with voiceover Internet with the city," Dixon said. "A new 911 system will pick up voice-generated 911 calls."

Public Works Director David Conner said his department would continue looking for ways to increase revenues from the recycling program.

"We're in the process of extracting aluminum and steel cans from the recycling stream and taking them to market and selling them," Conner said.

CAT Executive Director Al Babinicz said his department is preparing for the arrival of eight new transit buses — four slated to arrive in the next few months and the other four later in the year. He said the 40-foot buses are longer than the 30- or 35-foot buses in the current CAT fleet.

"Each bus will have maybe a 40 percent to up to 50 percent increase in capacity, but that's not going to solve the problem," Babinicz said. "There are serious concerns because we don't believe fuel prices are going to come down, and the long-term prognosis is that fuel is going to cost more in the future."

Clemson Parks and Rec Director Steve Figueroa said Daniel High School athletics, in the midst of displacement while its new school and athletic facilities remain under construction, continues to use parks and rec facilities for JV and varsity baseball, girls and boys JV and varsity volleyball, tennis and girls softball.

Figueroa added that landscaping efforts have enhanced new facilities in Clemson Area Transit and Clemson City Hall. But Figueroa said he wants to take that a step further.

"I would like to upgrade some of the entrances into the city," he said.

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