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## Overview

In January, 2004 newly elected Evansville Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel retained Waggoner, Irwin, Scheele & Associates to serve as facilitators for conducting an efficiency and operations review of City operations in the City of Evansville. Kent Irwin was the project manager.

The purpose of the study was to develop a plan to make Evansville more efficient and effective. The review identified organization strengths and weaknesses and provided findings with specific recommendations for implementing cost effective measures. A report was prepared which served as an operations plan for the new administration.

**Time Period** : January 2004 – May 2004. The time frame was intended to provide lead time for incorporating recommendations in the 2005 budget.

**Task Force** : An Operations Review Task force with 25-members was appointed and comprised of persons possessing specialized knowledge and experience for reviewing the operations and efficiencies of City departments. A report of findings and recommendations was produced from each committee. The committees provided opportunity for community participation. The Task Force was divided into the following 5-member sub-committees:

1. Finance and Administration
2. Public Safety
3. Public Works, Utilities, Environment, Transportation
4. Planning and Economic Development
5. Parks, Recreation, Art

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## Decision Factors

It is of critical importance to be mindful of the following factors when reviewing city operations and searching for efficiency measures.

1. Cost avoidance is often the most effective way to save money. Cost avoidance may require an initial expenditure of funds to prevent even greater expenditures at a later date.
2. The role of city government must be examined. City government is statutorily required to provide certain services to citizens, and in turn the City imposes taxes in order to pay for those services. Some other services that city government provides may significantly improve the quality of life for citizens and create public value, but are not required by statute and are costly to provide. Each municipality must determine the viability of offering these services.
3. Maximizing the efficient use of government resources, including financial and human resources, requires a commitment to improved work methods. Most city governments do not make adequate use of technology in maximizing efficiency.
4. Employee and community involvement is essential.

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## Action Steps

The following outline details the process used to complete the Evansville efficiency study.

1. Develop project work plan, schedule, and questionnaires.
2. Conduct project briefing meetings/gather department operations information.
  - a. Facilitate project briefing meetings between transition team members and City officials responsible for administering operations.
  - b. Interviews held with City officials to obtain organizational information.
3. Task Force appointed, briefing meeting.
  - a. Mayor appoints members to serve on Task Force, briefing meeting with Mayor.
4. Sub-Committee Assignments.
  - a. Division of work by sub-committee.
  - b. Preparation of Interview questions.
  - c. Schedule and conduct interviews with departments.
  - d. Collect data, develop and evaluate recommendations.
  - e. Review initial findings, draft initial recommendations.
  - f. Assist in presentation of Final Report to the Mayor and media.
5. Employee participation
  - a. Distribute efficiency review questionnaire for employee completion. Anonymous responses catalogued and summarized for the final report.
6. Comparative Analysis
  - a. Consultants conducted a comparative analysis of other municipalities, including collecting data from other cities in regards to facilities, geographic factors, growth projections, building permits issued, composition of workforce, and employees per department.
7. Conduct Staffing Analysis/Reorganization
  - a. In collaboration with department heads, consultants assessed staffing of each department and developed models of reorganizations. Assessment includes reviewing various organization factors such as volume of work, work assignments and schedules, and use of technologies.
8. Draft Report
  - a. Consultants facilitated the preparation of a draft report from committees that specific preliminary findings and recommendations.
9. Prepare Final Report
  - a. Consultants facilitated the preparation of final operations review report from sub-committees with specific findings and recommendations.

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## Employee Participation

Employee participation was sought through the use of anonymous questionnaires. Anonymity was important in order to solicit honest, open responses. Responses were reviewed and incorporated into committee recommendations and the final report.

Two kinds of questions were asked of employees.

1. *Open Ended Questions.* These questions provided employees an opportunity to describe work processes that needed improvement and provide ideas for improvement.
2. *Scaled Questions.* Employees were provided with statements and asked to indicate if they **strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed** with the statement. Each of the responses was scored and a mean, or average score, was calculated. Examples of scaled questions included:

*I feel loyal to this organization;*

*Our organizational structure helps work flow smoothly;*

*Our department makes good use of available technology to perform our job;*

*In this office, who you know is more important than what you know.*

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## Examples of Findings

1. Duplication of Internal Functions.
  - a. Three different city departments were involved in mowing grass. All three departments had mowing territories that met at the same point on the river levee. Depending on which side of the monument you stood, grass was at three different levels depending upon the last time each department had mowed.
  - b. The Levee Authority maintenance garage and the Street Department maintenance garage were located within steps of each other and performed largely the same kinds of vehicle maintenance, but no cooperation of services existed between the two.
2. Expensive Non-essential Services
  - a. The city owned cemetery operated at a budgeted loss of \$350,000 annually.
  - b. City owned golf courses were established as non-reverting fund entities yet required capital funds for maintenance beyond the revenue produced. Fees charged for use of city owned courses were found to be 25% lower than fees at other area public courses.
3. Poor Use of Technology
  - a. Internal e-mail systems were not compatible. A department head related trying to send department wide e-mail to all 20 of his employees but could not do so because they were on two separate computer systems.
  - b. In many departments, bookkeeping was not performed using computer software. Manual ledgers were the only records.
4. "Because We've Always Done it This Way"

- a. Two bookkeepers in the Finance Department also had job responsibilities with the Levee Authority. The Levee Authority duties did not involve bookkeeping; rather the employees were responsible for monitoring Ohio River water levels during periods of high rain.
- b. Several sub-departments within the Parks Department and various other city departments required the use of exterminators/trappers for removing animals and pests from city property. Each individual area signed its own contracts without the city bidding the totality of exterminating/trapping services to a single vendor.

## Positive Media Attention

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The Evansville media made frequent positive mention of the efficiency study. Local coverage in the *Evansville Courier & Press* included 20 mentions of the study over a 16 month period. Additionally, the report included a brief synopsis of the functions of each city department to better educate the public on the functions of city government.

Samples of the positive media comments:

*“Cheers for the idea of spending money to save money. Mayor Jonathon Weinzapfel has proposed a study of city government’s efficiency, and it appears to have bipartisan support on the City Council. Faced with the need to cut \$1.55 million from the city budget and an additional \$1 million in project deficits, it makes sense to have professionals take a detached look at areas of potential savings.”*

Evansville Courier & Press 1/17/04

*“Government efficiency always seemed like an oxymoron. Now, Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel is reviewing a consultant’s recommendations on making city government more efficient.”*

Evansville Courier & Press 6/27/04

*“The consulting firm of Waggoner, Irwin, Scheele & Associates offers many ideas to make the city efficient”*

Evansville Courier & Press 6/27/04

*“The study by Waggoner, Irwin, Scheele & Associates of Muncie, Ind, has a simple, overarching theme: Come into the 21st Century Evansville.”*

Evansville Courier & Press 7/14/04

*“A 2004 efficiency study recommendation—farming out city bus system advertising sales to a contractor—was realized Thursday. The Works Board approved a five-year renewable contract with Best View transit Media of Evansville calling for a guaranteed payment to the city of \$35,000 a year plus a percentage of all additional revenue. The city will get 30 percent of additional proceeds for the rest of 2005 and 50 percent per year thereafter.”*

Evansville Courier & Press 15/20/05