



# Transition Team Report

Harold Perrin  
Mayor

*May 8, 2009*

# 150



Jonesboro, Arkansas - Craighead County  
*Sesquicentennial Celebration*  
1859-2009



*Celebrating People, Pride & Progress*

May 8, 2009

Immediately following my election in November 2008, I assembled a seven person Transition Team charged with reviewing different areas of our city government and assisting me in finding any potential areas where we could focus our energies in an attempt to better serve the citizens of Jonesboro. This document is my report on their findings.

The team spent the last five weeks of the previous administration and the first 100 days of our administration conducting their business. They have met with other elected officials, department heads, city employees, private citizens and other professionals. I cannot tell you how invaluable their service and input have been.

The task of transitioning administrations on a city of this size can be a complex undertaking. The seven members of this Transition Team, through their service, were able to help me gather data and input in volumes that would have been virtually impossible to have done otherwise within the time frame I desired.

As you will see throughout the report, there are several opportunities we have to initiate new practices and processes within our administration. Some of those recommendations have already been implemented, some are under way, and others are still being reviewed. I am very proud of the work of our city administration, department heads and city employees during my first four months in office. I think we are pulling together with a sense of true teamwork, and I'm excited about the direction of our city.

I'd like to thank each and every member of the Transition Team for their time and talent throughout this process. Gary Harpole, who served as Chairman, Dr. Glen Jones, Sherry Stringer, Jim Corter, Aubrey Scott, Elbert Frazier and Barry Phillips; thank you for your love for our community and your dedication to this cause.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Harold Perrin'.

Mayor Harold Perrin

**Harold Perrin - Mayor**  
**Transition Team Report**

*Committee Member: Sherry Stringer*



**Sherry Stringer** is a Certified Public Accountant and partner in the local accounting firm of Jones & Company, Ltd. Sherry has a long history of professional and community service, having served in a variety of professional organizations and affiliations, as well as being active in Altrusa, the East Arkansas Business Development Council, Inc., and Jonesboro Unlimited. She is a trusted financial adviser both personally and professionally, and was chosen to be a member of this team for the specific task of helping me to evaluate the financial processes of the city and to serve as a personal adviser during my initial conversations with Springbrook, the city's accounting software vendor.

The task for Sherry was one of the most monumental assigned to any of the committee.

In recent years, the city had not been able to produce accurate or timely financial reports to the mayor's office, the council's finance committee, or the full council itself. Sherry's task was to help determine whether or not those problems were rooted in issues with the city's accounting software or a result of human error. What she found was a combination of issues that have resulted in accounting practices that did not meet GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles).

Due to the time-sensitive pressures of erroneous accounting, many of the issues identified by Ms. Stringer were addressed immediately. While the confrontation of those issues may have occurred early in our term, the processes and their results will be a work in progress for many months.

The first issue to be addressed was to gain a better understanding of the accounting issues that seemed to stem from the use of the Springbrook software that the city had purchased in 2004. Through reviewing documents, interviewing employees and meeting with the city's finance director, Ms. Stringer verified that the problem stemmed from improper conversion and a lack of training and execution on the part of the city finance department.

An analysis of the capabilities of the software package, along with consideration for the time and money already invested in the purchase and conversion, showed that the best option for the city (in our opinion) was to work to correct the deficiencies and move forward as opposed to discontinuing the use of the software package. In order to accomplish those tasks, a huge commitment was required from both the city and Springbrook.

Meetings between Springbrook, my office and representatives of the city finance department followed. Springbrook agreed to make the necessary commitments to servicing and training, and we in turn committed to being trained and making the practical adjustments necessary to comply and utilize the software to its fullest capacity.



Among other recommendations, it was advised early on, and we complied with the hiring of Jack Turner, to designate a city employee to become a local "expert" on the software package; allowing for immediate local support on a variety of applications and issues. This action will, along with the commitments from Springbrook, allow city employees another level of support that will discourage any shortcuts or on-the-spot determinations in the process of accounting.

Numerous practices not adhering to GAAP were discovered and addressed with members of the city's finance department. City Finance Director Jim Barksdale was already aware of and looking for solutions to correct many of these issues. However, the overwhelming workload of an understaffed department, the deficiency in the number of degreed accountants, the volumes of backlogged accounting issues needing to be cleaned up to satisfy legislative audit issues, and the systematic, day to day problems arising from leadership turnover and lack of proper training made for an environment that would be virtually impossible for one man to work out of without additional support.

Following a recommendation from Ms. Stringer, I met with representatives of Alexander, Thompson and Arnold (ATA), a CPA firm known to her to be of impeccable reputation that specializes in municipal and government accounting. Upon meeting with my administrative staff, city finance department employees and the council's finance committee, the firm was retained in January of 2009 to work with the city on a number of fronts.

Among the numerous charges given the firm was to help develop a streamlined chart of accounts within Springbrook, which should lead to a much greater level of efficiencies and generate financial information in a multitude of formats. This will be particularly helpful to my office, the city council, and the multiple departments that need to regularly review their particular operational accounting on a regular basis.

ATA will work directly with the city's finance department throughout the year on a host of specific projects to be identified by Mr. Barksdale and the administration as critical to the proper operation of the finance department going forward.

In summary, as we have learned, our accounting issues are not going to be a quick fix. We have identified and begun several steps to tighten our practices, increase our efficiencies, bring us into compliance, utilize our resources and better serve the citizens and other elected officials of Jonesboro...but it's going to take time to reap the benefits of the work currently being done.

My office will continue to make a concerted effort to daily monitor details and progress of the finance department and their accounting and reporting practices until such a time as all issues have been overcome.

**Harold Perrin - Mayor**  
**Transition Team Report**

*Committee Member: Barry Phillips*

**Barry Phillips** is the President of Phillips Investment and Construction, a local development company with a long history of success and service in Jonesboro and Northeast Arkansas. Barry has served in a number of capacities personally and professionally, including a tenure on the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission. Barry served as a key adviser during my campaign, and even during those months invested himself in meeting with engineers, builders and developers in an attempt to help us clearly understand the challenges being faced both by our city and our citizens.

Naturally, Mr. Phillips was chosen to continue his role with the Transition Team, and given the scope of work, was assigned one of the more time consuming roles of any member. As a builder and developer, Mr. Phillips has a strong working knowledge of many aspects of the city's planning and inspection department, so he was well versed in the process as he took on the responsibility of meeting with key staff and helping evaluate ways to further improve our services to the citizens of Jonesboro.

He systematically met with and worked through almost every process undertaken by the department. He held multiple meetings with representatives from Engineering, Public Works, Planning, Inspections and Fire Marshall's office. Additionally, Mr. Phillips traveled to other communities with administrative and public works personnel, namely North Little Rock, and met with employees of that city's public works department in an attempt to better evaluate their processes, practices and technical support.

Mr. Phillips felt that while much improvement had been made over the past few years, further streamlining of many processes, including uniform usage of support software, could have a significant impact on our ability to better serve our customers.

Mr. Phillips had high praise for our city employees, and indicated that all the personnel he met with had a genuine desire to do their job to the best of their ability. He reported that he found a staff eager to look for new ways to improve services and increase efficiencies in their respective departments.

## **ENGINEERING**

Mr. Phillips had few specific suggestions in engineering, other than to look at staffing levels and try and determine if the addition of some key personnel in surveying and possibly hydrology might not only save the city money in the long run, but increase our ability to handle more projects in a proactive and time-sensitive manner. He feels that while making progress, we can still do a better job of preparing our staff to best interact with the development community and improve our overall customer service.

Specifically, he suggested we might better serve the process if upon discovery of an engineering issue with a particular project, our staff would take a more "hands-on" approach in offering potential suggestions for a remedy. Throughout this transition process, he has observed that this is happening more and more, and feels continuing to focus on improved service as a standard will go a long way to bettering relations and



improving a projects' completion time as the practice becomes a standard operating procedure.

One other specific recommendation would be to make it a standard practice to copy the developer on any correspondence that takes place between our city engineering department and the developer's engineer. Because the developer is the actual client, he contends this extra step of transparency will work to improve relations and make for a more effective process in the long run.

## **PLANNING**

Mr. Phillips had several meetings with employees of the planning department. They spent time reviewing the processes involved in our permitting cycle, with a particular emphasis in how long it took to get permits issued for a variety of applications. Again, Mr. Phillips found that much improvement had been made, but that there is room for even further gains in our quest for exemplary customer service.

He recommends that we study the capacity of our current software and its ability to allow applicants the access to track the progress of their permit in real time. Other communities in Arkansas already have this in place, and it is not only a great tool for both the efficiencies of the department AND the applicant, but it is a great service in that will allow for questions to be answered regarding permit status from an online portal accessed by the applicant from their own workplace or job site. I have already started the process of becoming more familiar with this type of software, and will begin to meet with our city planner in the near future to undertake a more official approach to this study.

This increase in these tracking efficiencies alone could have a significant impact on turn time of various permits. In addition, Mr. Phillips suggested further review of the entire permit cycle with Otis Spriggs and his staff in a brainstorming session to identify any other areas in the process that may be open for improving the overall turnaround time back to the building community. I am fully supportive of any and all collaborative and inclusive efforts to finding ways to improve our service, and this is a process I look forward to beginning very soon.

He also suggested that at some point a comparative study of the various permitting fees comparing Jonesboro to other communities be completed, but recommends that changes in timeliness and efficiencies be improved before any fee adjustments should ever be considered. This process is already currently being undertaken by our revenue enhancement committee.

## **INSPECTIONS**

Mr. Phillips found the inspection department to be eager to carry out their assigned tasks and to be very conscientious in performing their duties. His primary concern for the

overall effectiveness of this department rested in staffing and a focus on customer focus. While inspections and enforcement are of utmost importance to the safety and integrity of our building community, Mr. Phillips feels as though more customer service training would better equip inspectors in dealing with the day to day interactions required by their job. Any concern doesn't stem from a lack of desire on the part of our inspectors, but from a lack of training in best preparing them to carry out their responsibilities.

Mr. Phillips also felt as though we could better service our development and building community if we had more employees available for inspections, particularly during peak building seasons. The fact that much of a builders success depends on the timeliness of permitting and inspections that allow them to work around inclement and non-cooperative weather conditions make service times of the most critical importance. One suggestion he had was that you consider moving Code Enforcement back under the supervision of the Head Building Inspector, and allow for cross training opportunities between the two staffs. This would allow for extra help on inspections during the peak season and when weather during a given week required we be faster than normal, and it would also give code enforcement additional help during off-peak building time in carrying out their duties.

I took this recommendation under advisement early on, and have initially reassigned Code Enforcement to the Inspections office. We continue to work through the procedural changes and are encouraged by the early indications of success.

**Harold Perrin - Mayor**  
**Transition Team Report**

*Committee Member: Elbert Frazier*



**Elbert Frazier** has an impressive background in the management of Information Technology systems. As the former IT Director for Jonesboro Public Schools, Mr. Frazier dealt with a multi-site system, multiple levels of security and a large volume of individual users as well as the need to integrate multi-functioning applications into a single system infrastructure, and a responsibility to the public.

That experience made him an obvious choice to serve on my Transition Team.

Mr. Frazier was assigned the task of evaluating the city's IT infrastructure, primarily focusing on the non-Springbrook software applications, hardware, and the ability of the system to fully integrate all the departments within the administration and to fully utilize technology to best help manage the city's day to day operations.

Mr. Frazier reported that he made several attempts to arrange a meeting with IT management to discuss the scope of his responsibilities and gain access to the information he needed to give us the answers we were looking for. After some time, he met briefly with management and was assigned Dennis Trinidad as his guide for a two-day tour of each department to begin the assessment.

On February 19 & 20, 2009, Mr. Frazier and Mr. Trinidad made a quick-stop tour of all city departments. The result of that tour was a quickly assessed inventory of hardware and a thumbnail inventory of software. Given the parameters and time frame, Mr. Frazier found it difficult to do much more than conduct initial conversations with end-users, which led to an incomplete accounting of what resources were available and utilized. He did ask that it be specifically noted that Mr. Trinidad was most helpful, seemed very knowledgeable and had a good working relationship with every department they visited.

In general, Mr. Frazier found consistencies with what you would expect from an exercise of this type, including multiple requests for upgrades in both hardware and software. While more information will be required before a full slate of recommendations can be made, he did find that there were some areas of deficiency glaring enough to form an opinion that certain action needed to be taken.

The four specific departments that warranted recommendation at this phase included: Police Department Warrants Division, Sanitation Department, JETS and GIS.

Regarding the Warrants Division, Mr. Frazier observed that there is a missing or ineffective module to allow for the automatic transfer of information from other departments into their operating system. This break in the cycle of information forces personnel to have to hand enter much of the data, and the apparent result is that in many cases the system of processing and serving warrants is inhibited and slowed down due to these inefficiencies. It is his recommendation that the availability of a module to correct these issues be addressed with our software vendor. This issue is being discussed with Chief Yates now and further review will follow.

Mr. Frazier stated that he found the most obvious needs on his initial tour to be with the Sanitation Department. He found this department to be in need of both hardware and software updates and replacement. In some instances, he reported that employees have resorted to manufacturing their own systems to track maintenance and repair with individual excel spreadsheets. The biggest concern Mr. Frazier sees with this situation is that those records are then void of any connection to the overall management system, therefore subject to loss or less than secure access. It is his belief that Sanitation may be in need of a complete management system and the new hardware necessary to operate it.

His concern with JETS rested in reports he got from various employees that indicated the fleet management system may not be fully integrated, and it is his understanding that there is the possibility that multiple on-board systems may be in use. While we have yet to verify this, if that is true, then it stands to reason that the flow of accurate information would be impeded and the end result is that proper management will be much more difficult. He did not speak with Mr. Ewart on his visit, and suggests that a follow-up meeting be conducted with him in order to gain a better understanding of the specific issues to be dealt with. My office is in the process of scheduling those follow-ups.

GIS seemed to present somewhat of a "black-hole" of information. The system has obviously yet to be fully implemented, yet every single department who is supposed to interact with it expressed its functionality as of utmost importance. Mr. Frazier stated it seemed to be a general consensus that a tremendous amount of work still needed to be done. It was his recommendation at the time that a new GIS Director be hired as soon as possible in an effort to bring this project into working compliance. That action has already been taken, and I'm happy to report that progress is already being made in this area.

Unfortunately, Mr. Frazier found it exceedingly difficult to gain access to the information needed to provide my office with the comprehensive review I had hoped for. He had requested a copy of the department's plan and strategy for updating and replacing hardware on a regular, cyclical basis. He has yet to receive it. Likewise, he requested a detailed accounting of all the software packages owned by the city, both in use and non-use. Again, he has yet to receive it.

It is my desire to produce those requested documents and call on Mr. Frazier to continue working directly with my office to complete this assessment. He has agreed to extend his task assignment to cover these evaluations even though the Team's official report has now concluded.

**Harold Perrin - Mayor**  
**Transition Team Report**

*Committee Member: Aubrey Scott*



**Aubrey Scott** is former Operations Director for the City of Jonesboro, having served in that capacity for two previous administrations. Mr. Scott has been very active in civic and community affairs, having served on the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission and as the Chair of the Metropolitan Area Traffic Authority, among a host of other contributions.

Mr. Scott's sole responsibility with the team was to evaluate the current job description of the Operations Manager and suggest any operational changes or duty shifts based on the day to day workings of that position. His charge was to utilize his previous experience with the city as well as to take into consideration my personal management style.

Mr. Scott is uniquely qualified for this task because of his unequivocal access to all parts of the process; he is the only person to have ever held this position under two different mayors (Brodell and Formon), so he understands how the job can shift based on the management style and capacity of the city's chief executive. He also served as a member of the Harold Perrin for Mayor Executive Committee, where he spent a considerable amount of time with me as a candidate and was part of several meetings and discussions about my management philosophies and the strong feelings I had about how to best serve the citizens of our city should I be successful in the campaign.

The process undertaken for this task was to first wait until the city's HR department had submitted a revised job description to the Johansen group as a part of the city's ongoing salary administration plan review. The Transition Team was specifically charged with not interacting in any way with the specifics of the job description of the position prior to receiving recommendations back from Johansen. The Johansen study was underway prior to my election, and those job descriptions had already been submitted. It was our desire to not engage in that process at all while it was underway. Once the information from Johansen was in the hands of the city's HR Director and the city council finance committee, a job description as submitted was then secured and Mr. Scott began his review.

Additionally, it was Mr. Scott's desire that I have ample time to fully immerse myself in my duties as mayor; to be able to see the duties I most naturally gravitated to and to get a sense of how to best utilize this position to make my administration run most smoothly.

Mr. Scott reported that all responsibilities in the current job description are pertinent to the position and should definitely remain a part of the charge of that position.

He further suggested that specific responsibility for communications and public relations be put under the charge of this office, whether executed by the person holding the position or having that person responsible for whoever is executing the duties of communication and public relations.

It is Mr. Scott's recommendation that I take full advantage of this position as a direct representative of my office; one that would be responsible directly to me for carrying out both day to day administrative functions as well as someone whose counsel I trust.

He recommends this position have a good understanding of the workings of our city, county, state and federal government and public relations in addition to the duties outlined in the job description. The position should have the capacity to fully participate in the city's budgeting process and be able to assist me in the management of that budget on a day to day basis.

Mr. Scott believes that this position should reflect the beliefs and management style of the mayor. It should give me the flexibility, freedom and luxury of knowing that my office is well represented operationally and politically in a way that best enables me to fully perform my responsibilities as Jonesboro's chief executive.

He believes that the position should function for all practical purposes as a "Chief of Staff". Regardless of the job title, Mr. Scott strongly recommended that I use that functionality as the standard for which I organize my office to best reflect my hands-on management style.

Once organized in this fashion, there should be marked increase in efficiencies and better communication both internally and externally. These recommendations should have a direct bearing on improved working relationships within the city departments, with the city council, the media and the general public.

I am taking Mr. Scott's recommendation under advisement as I continue to evaluate our organization and attempt to make sure I am building the strongest team possible to reflect my goals and ideas for my administration.

**Harold Perrin - Mayor**  
**Transition Team Report**

*Committee Member: Jim Corter*



**Jim Corter** is founder and President of Corter Consulting, a Jonesboro based personal and leadership development firm. Mr. Corter has over 25 years of personal experience in the area of human resource management and personnel development. He served over a decade as HR manager for two Fortune 500 companies. He and his team have over 40 years combined experience providing training and leadership development. Since 1995, Corter Consulting has conducted Performance Improvement Projects for over 70 companies across the United States.

Mr. Corter was assigned the task of evaluating the core management and leadership competencies of the city's department heads. As a part of that evaluation process, my office received an overview binder of identified strengths and weaknesses of each manager, along with insights as to how that person could best serve as a contributing member of my leadership team. Each of the department heads received a copy of their own profile as well.

After an initial meeting with Gloria Roark, the city's Human Resource Director, Jim set out to explain the process to the entire team at one of the first department head meetings of the year. The assessment tool he uses is an online model, allowing for each individual to complete the task at a time and in an environment most conducive to being able to give genuine feedback as they completed the various sections of the profile exercises.

Subsequently, Jim also spent three hours with the department heads as part of a Communications Workshop, where the results of the profiles were discussed. This gave him, as a professional and adviser, additional opportunity to observe and evaluate the strengths of the team as he saw them.

His evaluation has led to the conclusion that the team as a whole tends to be more "task oriented" than "relationship oriented". This type of environment can lead to what Mr. Corter terms as a "Silo/Turf" mentality, rather than that of a "Common Purpose" mentality. It was my position during the campaign and with transition team members as part of their charge that our goal was to create a "customer friendly" environment within city government that focused on serving the needs of the citizens. This led Jim to make the following recommendations for future strategy & training:

First and foremost, he recommended that we schedule a Team Leadership/Culture Retreat to establish and Common Purpose and Strategy for our administration's leadership team. We believe this retreat to be of the highest priority, and that the outcomes of those sessions can help drive the success of all other training and work related activities to follow. That is why we are in the process of finalizing the details of the first phase of that exercise in mid-June. We are planning a day of training, vision casting and team building to initiate our efforts.

Mr. Corter also identified four other critical areas of training that need to be implemented, but their order of importance may or may not change, depending in part on the outcomes of our Leadership/Culture retreat.

Those four areas of training include:

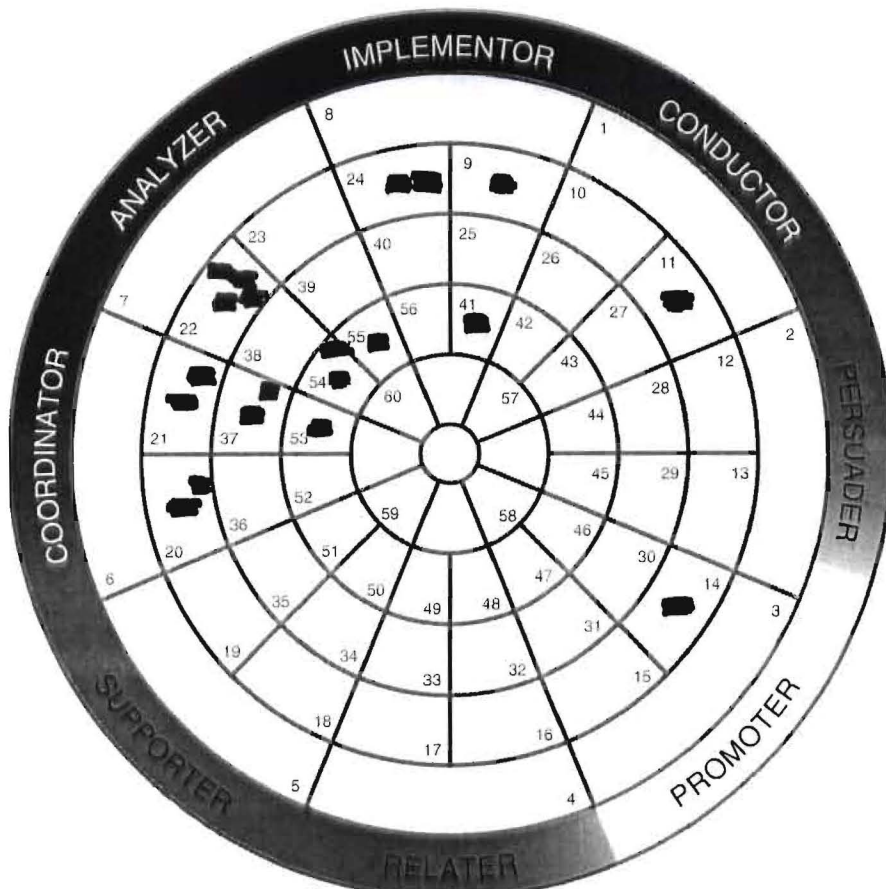
- Training: The Five Most Admired Traits of a Leader
- Customer Service: Internal AND External Customer Service Training
- Training: Personal Accountability
- Project: Measuring Performance for Organizational Success

Attached in this report is a copy of the Team Wheels that Mr. Corter used in determining his suggestions for training priorities (specific names have been redacted), as well as a summary sheet of the five training recommendations currently under consideration.

I cannot stress with enough emphasis the commitment of my administration to improving the levels of customer service, leadership and overall accountability within our city government. These issues permeate every fiber of our government and have a ripple effect in our ability to best serve the needs of our citizens.

# THE SUCCESS INSIGHTS® WHEEL

City of Jonesboro - Team Wheel  
January 5, 2009



- TA: Terry Adams
- JB: Jim Barksdale
- SE: Steve Ewart
- LJ: Leonard Jadrich
- WJ: William Jenkins
- RL: Royce Leonard
- WL: William Light
- HP: Harold Perrin
- JP: Jeff Presley
- GR: Gloria Roark
- LR: Larry Rogers
- KS: Keith Sanders
- OS: Otis Spriggs
- TT: Tony Thomas
- MU: Muhammad Amin Ulkarim
- GV: Gayle Vickers
- AW: Allison Whitley
- JW: Jason Wilkie
- EW: Erick Woodruff
- MY: Michael Yates

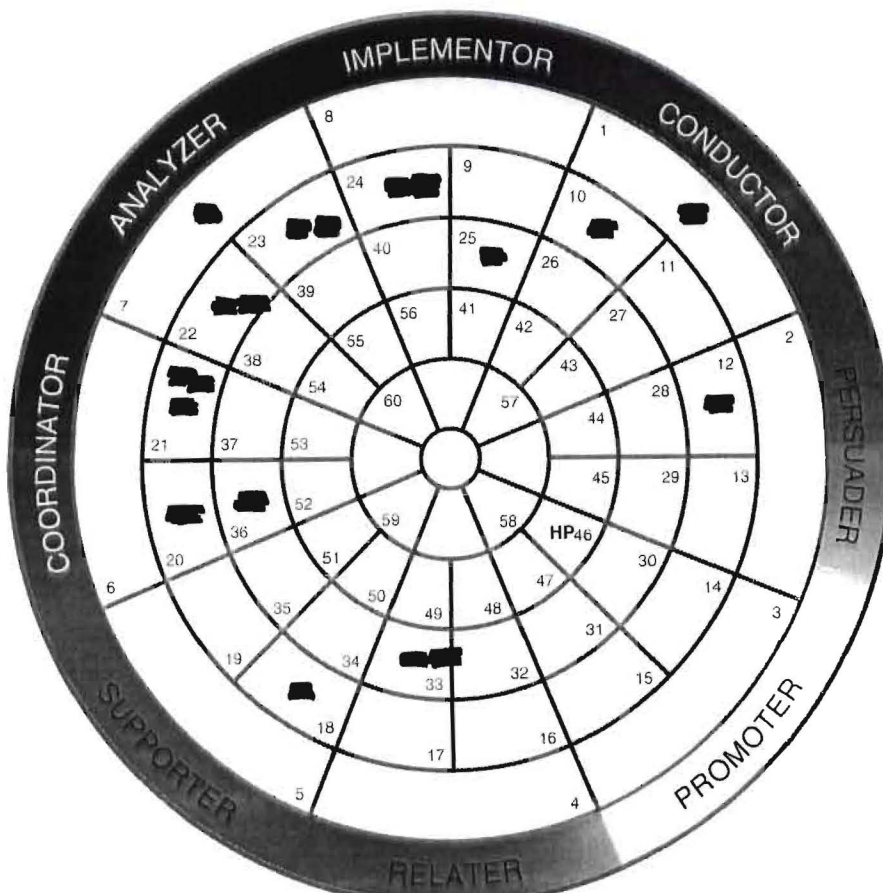
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Natural



# THE SUCCESS INSIGHTS® WHEEL

City of Jonesboro - Team Wheel  
January 5, 2009



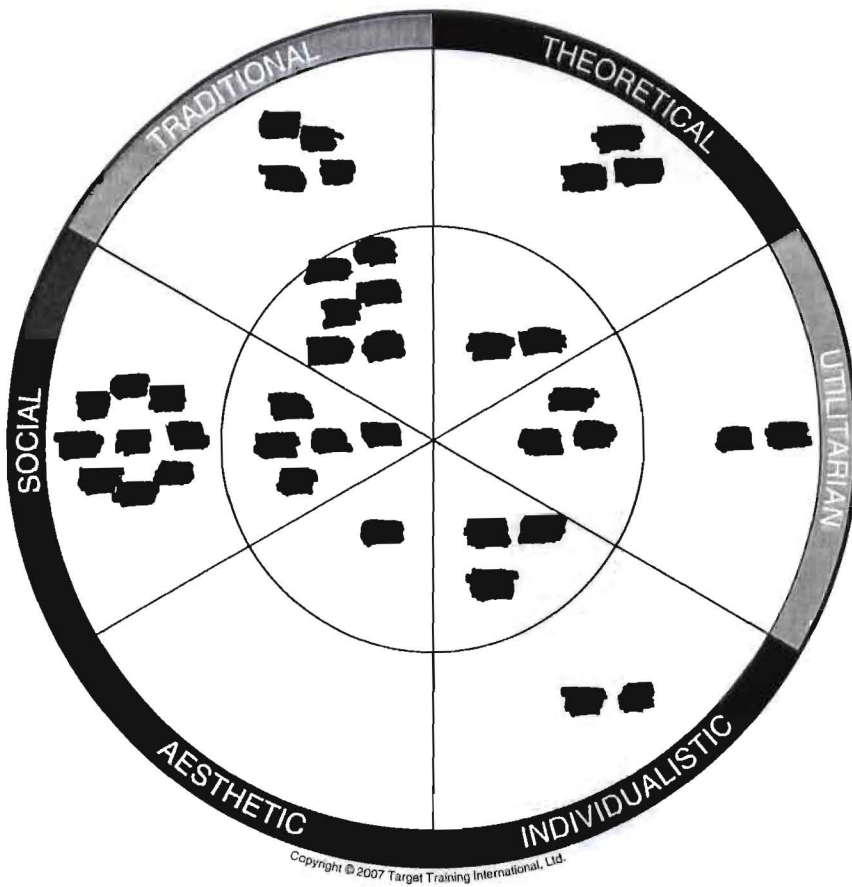
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- AW: Allison Whitley
- JW: Jason Wilkie
- EW: Erick Woodruff
- MY: Michael Yates

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Adapted

# MOTIVATORS WHEEL™

City of Jonesboro - Motivator Wheel  
January 5, 2009



- TA: Terry Adams
- JB: Jim Barksdale
- SE: Steve Ewart
- LJ: Leonard Jadrich
- WJ: William Jenkins
- RL: Royce Leonard
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- MY: Michael Yates

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Outside ring = #1 attitude    Inside ring = #2 attitude

- **Team Leadership/Culture Retreat to establish a common Purpose and Strategy**
  - Determine Mission of the Team
  - Determine the Customers of the Team
  - Where have we been?
  - Where are we now?
  - Where do we need to go?
  - S.W.O.T. Analysis
    - Strengths
    - Weaknesses
    - Opportunities
    - Threats
  - Determine Critical Job Functions of Team Members
  - Establish a Code of Conduct
  - Establish the Measurements of Success
- **Training: The 5 most admired traits of a Leader**
  - Honesty
  - Forward-looking
  - Inspiring
  - Competent
  - Straight-forward
- **Customer Service Training: Internal Customer and External Customer**
  - Know who's the boss
  - Be a good listener
  - Identify and anticipate customers needs
  - Make customers feel important and appreciated
  - Help your customer understand your systems
  - Appreciate the power of YES
  - Know how to apologize
  - Give more than is expected
  - Get regular feedback
  - Treat employees with Respect and Dignity (internal customers)
- **Training: Personal Accountability**
  - Be impeccable with your words
  - Don't take things personal
  - Don't make assumptions but use Open Dialog
  - Set the example for Excellence
- **Project: Measuring Performance for Organizational Success**
  - Focus – Why do we exist
  - Accountability – Who will do What by When and How will we Measure it
  - Involvement – Who, When, and How
  - Recognition – Catching people doing things right



**Harold Perrin - Mayor**  
**Transition Team Report**

*Committee Member: Dr. Glen Jones*

**Dr. Glen Jones** is the senior associate vice chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research and Arkansas State University. He holds a Business Administration degree from Henderson State University, a Juris Doctorate from the University of Arkansas School of Law, a Master of Laws in Taxation from the University of Florida College of Law, and completed the Institute for Educational Management at Harvard University.

He has held numerous leadership positions professionally and civically in the areas of diversity and organizational management, and is a respected presenter and published author of countless journal and publication articles.

Dr. Jones was given the charge of evaluating the organizational structure of the administration and to observe the metamorphosis of that administration over the course of the first 100 days. At the end of that period, he was to give any recommendations, broad or specific; that he felt would benefit my management style to be most effective as CEO of the City of Jonesboro.

His past experience in organizational management, diversity and leadership both on-campus in Jonesboro and system-wide at Arkansas State University gave Dr. Jones a unique perspective on these specific charges. As a member of my Harold Perrin for Mayor Executive Committee, he also had the opportunity to become intimately acquainted with my strategies and philosophies concerning government and management, as well as getting to know my heart as it related to the task I was about to undertake.

Dr. Jones' first input into the transition team in December of 2008 was to advise me to slow down the process to give myself ample time to learn more about the job and my leadership team; and to give them more time to adjust to my management style. We took a slower and more methodical approach in evaluating current staff and made no immediate determinations in reorganizing or reassigning personnel. His counsel over the course of these first 100 days has proven to be invaluable.

Over the course of some four months, I have been given the opportunity to assess to some degree the commitment, skill level, personality and performance of my current management team. To compliment the skills assessment testing administered early on by Mr. Corter, I have been able to combine that data with a real life assessment of how each department head has applied their strengths and overcame their weaknesses.

Upon discussing the recommendations of Mr. Corter, Dr. Jones supports the recommendation of further training in a variety of management and leadership areas for the entire team, with a particular emphasis on communication, media skills, accountability/performance and loyalty. He also supports the need for an increased structure in our approach to communications in an effort to make sure that responsible persons are well versed in the challenges, opportunities, policies and expectations of performing their duties on behalf of the citizens of Jonesboro.

Dr. Jones communicated through this process that he believes the foundation of any organization rests on the clearly communicated goals of the leader and a straightforward

set of expectations. He strongly supports the concept of our mid-year leadership retreat, but in addition to specific training modules as determined by the group skills assessment, he further recommends that a session of identifying goals & strategies, coupled with easy to understand expectations from my office to the members of my leadership team.

Upon his recommendations, we are implementing team-building exercises aimed at promoting loyalty between the team and the administration; and a real commitment to shared goals and objectives.

We have entered an environment where many of our team members are serving not just their second, but for some, their third administration. It is my undeniable priority that all our first loyalties lie to the citizens of Jonesboro. We cannot take for granted that this citizen service loyalty will automatically transcend administrations. Therefore, we will go to great lengths to guarantee as best we can that every member of our team has been given every resource and opportunity to succeed...and among those resources are clear communication from my administration to them individually as well as their departments.

Dr. Jones has suggested I consider "flat-lining" our organizational structure as much as feasibly possible. Recognizing that I prefer to be a "hands on" manager opens the potential for an organization free of any unnecessary layers of bureaucracy between my office and the persons ultimately responsible for carrying out the tasks of getting the job done.

Lastly, Dr. Jones believes that once these steps are taken, the most effective thing we as an administration can do is to make sure we have the most talented people on our team; positioned to deliver the best results by ensuring that they are placed where they can best utilize their skills to improve the quality of life for those living in our community.

Moving forward, we are taking specific care to ensure that all members of our executive team: (1) Have the skill sets necessary to perform their tasks to our satisfactions; (2) Share our commitment to servant leadership; (3) Possess the character and integrity deserving of the public trust; and (4) Share our passion for the task they have been tapped to perform.



**Harold Perrin - Mayor**  
**Transition Team Report**

*Committee Member: Gary Harpole*

**Gary Harpole** is local businessman and former Jonesboro City Councilman. Mr. Harpole served two terms on the city council, where he served as the city's vice-mayor, and on the finance, personnel, insurance, parks, industrial, sanitation, and fire committees. He was co-chair of the Jonesboro Interim Traffic Authority, and was appointed by the county judge to serve on the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission. He has held numerous civic leadership positions, including the Board of Directors for the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Northeast Arkansas District Fair Board and President of the Jonesboro Jaycees.

In addition to serving as Chairman of the Transition Team, it was Mr. Harpole's specific responsibility to assess any areas where there may be potential to improve overall communication between the mayor's office and the citizens, department heads, media, and city council.

In order to accomplish this task, Mr. Harpole studied the adopted communication plans of communities around the country, and conducted several interviews with private citizens, members of my administration, other government leaders both locally and throughout the country, communication specialists, and members of the media.

Specific to this task, he interviewed representatives of both the Jonesboro Sun and KAIT-TV. During those interviews, there were specific discussions about tools and resources that would increase the media's access and ability to accurately cover events pertaining to the city, and how they could best relay that information to their respective readers and viewers.

Mr. Harpole and I had discussed at length that communication would be a key element in achieving our organizational objectives. Communications is more than just marketing and public relations; it's rising to the task of soliciting input, identifying goals and concerns, building strong relationships, and responding to the appropriate parties through appropriate channels.

A good Communications Plan can be an invaluable tool for highlighting all that is good within a community. I have always embraced the value of citizen involvement and the important contributions that those citizens can make to our administration. I believe it is imperative that we do a better job than any administration in the history of our city in understanding the needs and concerns of our citizens, their ideas and values; and to utilize that information to make the best decisions possible in providing for their peace, health and safety.

## **Foundational Principals**

*Open Two-Way Communication* – Our goal should be to ensure that information flows two ways in every relationship that we encounter. Whether within the administration, interdepartmentally, with other elected officials or with the general public, each element of our Plan should contain processes where we are soliciting input at the same level we are working to disseminate information. Active, open two-way communication will only enhance our ability to make sound decisions, gain the public trust, and govern with confidence.

*Community Problem Solving* – Citizens understand that there will be challenges, whether they involve city services, potential governance, zoning, etc. Being able to provide the public with timely, accurate and complete information will enable them to make informed judgments and provide the best feedback.

*Proactive* – A process that embraces the proactive distribution of information will help to ensure that the city is using every available resource to make sure our citizens have timely information about city actions, issues and decisions. This reduces the risk that others are forced to rely on inaccurate information or worse yet, to jump to their own conclusions without enough facts to form a rational judgment.

*Centralized Organization/Decentralized Access* – This will prove to be a balancing act between managing our resources to their fullest potential, while providing the media and the public the full access they deserve and I demand. This element of our Plan will make sure that all affected parties are informed with the most accurate information possible, that time and productivity are being managed responsibly, and that communication and accountability between all parties will be strengthened.

*Inclusive* – In order to accomplish the aforementioned principals, we must be inclusive in the development of our message. We should include all responsible and affected parties, and that inclusion will work toward building a sense of belonging and promote teamwork within the organization. The ultimate goal would be to include everyone who cares to participate in the process, and to motivate those who are not currently engaged. The more people are involved, the greater their level of pride. The greater their level of pride, the better their performance. Ultimately, this will lead to better service to the citizens of Jonesboro on multiple levels.

*Strong and Consistent Message* – We will be most successful when our message is built on strong themes, rather than unrelated or scattered messages. Our Communication Plan should reinforce and reflect the goals of our administration and our entire city government, including the City Council. Effectively managed, this will underscore the idea of a government with one common purpose: serving the citizens of Jonesboro to the best of our ability with the full resources we have at our disposal.



## Target Audiences

In order to be most effective, we should identify all our target audiences in advance, and devise specific strategies for each of those groups. This will work to ensure that our message and methods are more likely to achieve success by clearly communicating in a manner most likely to resonate with the audience we're targeting. Our primary target audiences will include:

*Citizens of Jonesboro* – This audience is obviously our highest priority. If we strengthen the relationship between our local government and the residents we serve, we will enjoy a much higher rate of success. By placing the citizens as our highest communications priority we are working to create a true sense of involvement, ownership and pride. Sub-groups within this audience include specific neighborhoods and council wards, business clubs, professional and civic organizations, schools, various demographic groups, churches, etc.

*Members of City Boards, Commissions and Committees* – While everyone in this audience is also a citizen of Jonesboro, this audience has different and distinct needs based on their level of service and involvement. As non-elected citizens involved in local governance, we have a responsibility to provide them with an unparalleled level of information and support.

*City Employees* – Integral to every part of our success is our city employees. These are the men and women who strive everyday on the front lines of service within our various departments. Everything they do, every day they do it; is a direct reflection on our administration and our city government. They are in many cases our front line of communication, each with their own personal network of friends, family members, fellow members of churches and organizations, and the host of private citizens they encounter on a regular basis as they fulfill their duties. Making sure they are involved and informed can be a key element in creating a sense of community and in any grass-roots efforts of communication.

*News Media* – The media is one of our most significant target audiences. Their unfettered access to the public and their ability to influence opinion is of paramount importance. Any part of our plan with the media must include accessibility, transparency and timeliness.

*Secondary Audiences* – This group includes a host of persons or entities with a vested interest in our city, but they do not fall into any of the aforementioned categories. These can include persons who live outside the city of Jonesboro but work, conduct business in or visit here; other elected officials or governmental agencies in the county, region, state or federal government; economic development professionals; prospective industry; vendors, etc.

## **Goals of the Communication Plan**

The underlying principal of this Communication Plan is to present strategies to impact our target audiences in a manner that will change, develop or enhance their perceptions and understanding of our city government and its services, issues, projects, challenges and opportunities.

In order to accomplish this principal, we have to do several things. Those include:

- Ensuring the Mayor's Office and City Council are active, integral parts of any overall City Communication Strategy.
- Improve the overall level of communication between our local government and our citizens, businesses and organizations.
- Improve two-way communication within our city organization.
- Enhance and improve community and media relations.
- Increase the awareness, interest and participation of Jonesboro residents in our local government goals and activities.
- Increase the awareness, interest and participation of city employees in our local government goals and activities.
- Build more organizational pride among employees and positive identification with the city government as a whole; including both the administration and the city council.

## **Strategies and Actions**

### ***Strategies***

- Expanding our research to use both qualitative and quantitative research on a regular basis to better gauge and understand attitudes, opinions and perceptions.
- Develop a multi-media and multi-level process of communication.
- Fine tune existing resources for better utilization.
- Identify untapped resources that can help us improve our efforts.
- Use interactive methods of communication whenever possible to help better involve target audiences in the entire process and increase both their ability and commitment to the idea of participating in community problem solving.

### ***Actions***

- *Market Research*  
The ability to partner with Arkansas State University is an option we need to explore in an attempt to conduct this research. We should utilize both traditional telephone survey methodology, as well as conduct focus groups when feasible. The reach should encompass as broad a cross-section of citizens as possible so the results accurately reflect the feelings of the demographics of our city.

- *Communications Training*

This action, to some degree, was addressed in other parts of the Transition Team Report. Dr. Jones alluded to the need for more of it, and Mr. Corter presented the basis for a foundational training model to address it initially with key members of the administration and department heads.

It would be my desire that additional evaluations be conducted and communication training modules be designed to include members of the city council, city clerk and city attorney's offices, as well as interdepartmental exercises aimed at improving communication efforts within specific departments.

- *External Communication Implementation*

The specifics of this plan should be created as part of the interactive involvement process between the professional community, media, employees and private citizens. However, for the purpose of initiating dialogue, some examples of elements utilized by other entities have been included in this report, and they include:

- *City Newsletter* – Could be published monthly or quarterly and distributed throughout the community in an effort to provide information on a variety of topics including proposed governance, planning, capital improvement projects, budget information, recreation programs, conservation efforts, etc. This could be direct mailed, inserted in city zones in the Jonesboro Sun, and/or distributed in high traffic public locations throughout the city.
- *E-mail Distribution Lists* – Create a portal where interested parties could sign up for a free distribution service to receive electronic notifications and updates on a variety of services and actions. This could grow to include specific proposed action of committees, special studies, street & traffic projects, workings of a particular department, etc.
- *Budget in Brief* – An eight to twelve page booklet created after the passage of the annual city budget to provide a basic overview to citizens. Some successful examples include pages called “Where the money comes from” and “Where the money goes”. While it may be difficult to simplify a complex budget, creatively done it could provide a simple approach to educating the general public about the stewardship of their tax dollars.
- *Enhanced Web Site* – We need to evaluate the “user-friendliness” of our current city site and study the functionality, interactivity and aesthetics of other municipal sites around the country. In the current



age of high technology and instant information, a properly designed and managed web site can become a 24 hour/7 day per week communications hub; complete with audio, video, text, graphics, photography, etc.

- *Web Survey Tool* – This can be a less scientific supplement to our market research, but nonetheless an effective way to gauge public opinion and interest on specific issues. The instantaneous feedback and ability to monitor the results could prove to be most helpful under the right circumstances. This could be one more useful tool in keeping our citizens actively engaged in dialogue with our administration.
- *Enhanced Use of Public Access TV* – While some steps have been taken to broaden the scope and production value of the channel already, this is a project that could literally take on a life of its own. The ability to communicate via this medium is limited only by our own imagination and the resources we are willing to commit to it.
- *Brochures* – A variety of brochures, common in theme and appearance yet distinct and detailed for specific departments, could be created as a way of communicating specific processes involved in dealing with various city departments. They could also be used to promote activities, programs and resources available to citizens. Specific examples could include various amenities in our Parks and Recreation system, what to do if you're a new business, how to apply for permits, how to rezone property, etc.
- *News Releases* – We are blessed with an interested media that is anxious to help educate and inform our constituents on matters of city business. While we are in no position to decide for them what is or isn't news, they have expressed an acceptance to the free flow of proactive information in the form of news releases on a variety of topics. Some suggested that this process might make it easier to help them better promote positive actions undertaken on a daily basis within our departments, or possibly even to help promote our employees who celebrate training achievements, success on the job, newly employed by the city, etc.

In addition, it has been suggested that we consider providing a weekly forecast of activities supported by our weekly department head reports to better help the media determine what may be pertinent within their respective news cycles for the upcoming week. This extra effort would prove to strengthen media relations as well as provide more resources to them in delivering information to the general public.

- *Advertisements* – While not often used, paid advertising is an effective method of helping promote programs, meetings, etc. In order to most effectively manage this process, care should be given to help develop a template for city advertising that utilizes our seal and any other specific insignia's (Sesquicentennial logo, etc.) in a manner that is easily recognizable and achieves consistency and recall.
- *Public Meetings* – All council, committee and commission meetings are open to the public and already encourage public comment and participation. However, we should look at utilizing this open forum of communication when the topic is of such interest as to warrant public involvement on an enhanced level. The format for these meetings should be consistent and developed as to promote the optimum amount of interaction and input from the community. Specific training for moderators and officials would help make these forums most productive.

- **Internal Communication Implementation**

In an effort to maximize to the fullest potential the ability of our employees to be active ambassadors of the city, we must go to extra effort to keep them best informed and a fully functioning part of the communication process. While many specific methods can be developed following exercises with our team, some ideas used successfully in other organizations include:

- *Employee E-News* – An electronic newsletter distributed on a regular basis that includes information on benefits, network and computer tips, new employee hires, retirements, and other news of interest.
- *Mayor's Activity Report* – This report would be prepared for members of the City Council would serve as a weekly update to members of the council that would include information on key issues and projects undertaken by the mayor's office.
- *E-mail Blasts To Employees* – This would keep employees informed of updates to Legistar and other tools containing information on meeting agendas, ordinances, programs, etc.
- *Department Meetings* – In addition to our weekly department head meeting, this would be a regular rotation of specific department meetings with key members of the mayor's staff to better facilitate a more in-depth understanding of the challenges and opportunities they face, and will better allow for two-way communication.
- *Enhanced Role of the Employee Advisory Committee* – Look for better ways to utilize these departmental representatives in the transfer of information between the administration and the various departments.