

Town Council outlines top goals

By [Frank Morris](#)

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“Celebrate the May River” was picked as the top town goal for 2015 in a draft strategy plan fashioned by the Town Council in a two-day retreat that concluded Saturday.

The exercise at a conference room at The Inn at Palmetto Bluff was led by a paid facilitator, Lyle Sumek, and included participation by top town staff members.

The May River goal comes with a set of objectives. They include quality water with opportunities for oystering and fishing, continuing viable commercial activities including oystering and fishing, increased public access and use, expanded activities for residents to enjoy the river, and preservation of the river’s history and heritage as a major asset.

Other 2015 goals council members picked, in order of importance and also with sets of objectives and top priorities, include:

- A livable, sustainable community
- A town government with excellent services that is financially responsible
- Local economic expansion and diversification
- Upgraded town infrastructure and facilities.



Sulka



Hamilton

Sumek had already listed the proposed goals on a worksheet, drawing from preparation including his individual interviews of council members and staff Wednesday and a staff workshop on Thursday, according to the strategic planning and leadership retreat schedule.

Mayor Lisa Sulka, Mayor Pro Tem Fred Hamilton Jr., and council members Oliver Brown, Alynne Mitchell and Mike Raymond agreed on the goals Saturday. They ranked them with a straw poll system used throughout the event for fashioning goals, accomplishment objectives and top priorities for the year ahead.

The retreat also included drafting a set of town “core beliefs” for elected leaders, administrators and other employees to follow in providing outstanding service.

“I was surprised and pleased that all of the council is still thinking of the May River as its top priority,” Hamilton said after the session. He said he was surprised because he wasn’t sure after all members but he recently voted to spend \$6.3 million to build a law enforcement center.

The rules for the public meeting allowed observation by the press and public. No private citizens attended the session. The estimated \$15,000 cost including the facilitator, the conference room, lodging and meals, Town Manager Anthony Barrett said.

Mitchell and Brown opted to sleep at home instead of in one of the cottages reserved for council members and Barrett.

Saturday’s session started at about 8:40 a.m. after a continental breakfast and wrapped up at about 3:30 p.m., the scheduled time. A concluding session will be scheduled to complete the agenda of narrowing down top priority actions and reviewing governance issues.

Friday’s session ran from noon to almost 6 p.m. and was followed by a casual dinner at the inn. No formal votes were taken.

Officials also plan to schedule a follow-up citizens’ forum to get constituents’ input before the council formalizes the plan. “I want it to be a citizens’ summit,” Sulka said.

Sulka said Saturday that Palmetto Bluff showed how development can be good and more town residents should take advantage of it.

“If you go to the front gate and say ‘I want to go sit on a bench by the river and read a book,’ they’ll let you in,” she said. “Where else in the town do we have this much open space on the river?”

Hamilton said, “Folks need to look at the gate access. Last night I had a rough time getting in here. The (guard) drilled me to death.” He was returning to the inn Friday after leaving the development following dinner.

Police Chief David McAllister said the Palmetto Bluff development agreement does not allow stopping entry to the Village area, including the inn.

For seven “Celebrate the May River” goals with majority council support, a straw poll included promoting and looking into public access to Palmetto Bluff.