the city of Doraville

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MEMO **JANUARY 28, 2010**

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR & COUNCIL

FROM: LUKE HOWE

RE: STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT

Annual retreats are quite common in Georgia and throughout the country for both business and governing bodies. These strategic planning sessions create the opportunity to resolve complicated issues away from the usual daily distractions, which allows for more effective long-range planning.

Council retreats are generally held over the course of a weekend and typically include the mayor, council, key staff and a professional facilitator. Agendas are published in advance and summary minutes are produced after the retreat. All retreats, of course, are considered public meetings.

Who facilitates?
Typically, a Public Service Associate from the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government. Because this is a popular time of year for council/ commission retreats, all facilitators are booked until the weekend of March 6.

How much does a retreat cost?
The average cost of a retreat varies depending on the location, number of participating staff and the length of the retreat (usually two days). The fee for a Carl Vinson facilitator is $1,050 per day plus expenses.

For instance, the City of Dunwoody is holding a retreat 1/31-2/1 in Franklin, Tennessee at a cost of ($6,500)[1]. The City of Marietta held their annual retreat 1/9-10 at the Hilton Atlanta-Marietta Conference Center (a small board room costs $225 per day). Alpharetta's leadership held their retreat 1/11-12 at the Forrest Hills Lodge in Dahlonega for $2,500. Woodstock, on the other

[1] On Friday, January 29, the City of Dunwoody's leadership announced they would be holding their retreat at Embassy Suites Perimeter instead of Franklin, TN due to weather advisories from the National Weather Service. Their site visit to Franklin is being rescheduled for the spring.

hand, will hold their retreat 2/5-2/6 at their own community center. Last year (3/18-20), the City of Covington held their retreat at Brasstown Valley Resort and Spa in Young Harris for $8,500.

Who Attends?

The Dunwoody retreat will include the mayor, council, city clerk and city attorney. For Alpharetta, attendees included the mayor, council, city administrator, assistant city administrator and finance director with department heads providing one-day presentations. In all cases, key staff members participate in the process.

Staff recommends a two-day retreat in a nearby city that exemplifies quality growth and design. Key staff could attend for one day or provide a detailed presentation for the leadership to save on expenses. At least one staff member, such as the Clerk or Assistant Clerk, would need to record summary minutes. A maximum budget of $3,500, originating from the training fund, is recommended.

LBH