

The Briefing

February 3, 2026

The latest from the government and leadership office of The Chamber

INSIDE

New finds this week

We were there for the Venice City Council Strategic Planning Workshop

Leadership 2026

The roster is almost set for the 2026 adventure

Teen Leadership

Coming up this month - Venice Area History



City of Venice – Council Strategy

Charlie Thorpe

As your new Director of Government and Leadership Programs here at the VACC I will make my way around the area to represent the Chamber and see what might fit the interest of the membership. An easy first visit for me was to make my way to Venice City Hall on February 2nd and listen to the strategic direction of Council.

Around this time each year the Venice City Council works with city staff to update direction and vision for the upcoming fiscal year. Budget proposals for each city operation will be put together by directors in the coming months with plenty of time for discussions with the City Manager and other staff before the June workshops. This strategic planning workshop is the Council's method of giving directions to staff on the mission priorities and these priorities of strategy help focus budgets.

The planning meeting was quite extensive with facilitation provided by SGR (Strategic Government Resources). You can find the PowerPoint presentation by following this wonderful link:

<https://venice.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7858291&GUID=A8EA5A02-F715-4367-981B-DB8F2BAA76F2&Options=&Search=>

There is no video of this session as it was in the community room which is not set up for that. I sat with Bob Mudge of the Gondolier throughout the day, and he will be reporting on the session particulars over the next few weeks.

Take aways: we are a proud and thriving city with concerns like many municipalities such as affordable housing, adequate infrastructure, controlled growth, etc. What keeps this city thriving is indeed the volunteerism that we are lucky to enjoy and the support of a growing residential and business community. Having been on the operation and now business side of our city, I can tell you that the service level that we all enjoy is a standard not taken for granted. If you follow the list of current goals that include the Council's desire to "Keep Venice Beautiful and Eco-Friendly", "Provide Efficient, Responsive Government with High Quality Services", "Ensure a Financially Sound City", "Upgrade and Maintain City Infrastructure and Facilities", "Encourage and Support a Robust and Diverse Economy", and "Preserve the Venice Quality of Life through Proper Planning", you'll like how these basic goals with minor and proper adjustments to policies and objectives to meet the goals can be maintained effectively as the city grows (like it or not) and council seats change. How is that for a run-on sentence?

The point: Our city's goals are well structured and trackable. It was an interesting side note from SGR that only 30% of governments go through this process of keeping their strategies current.

Priorities were many, but progressively thoughtful as they relate to the goals in place. As a business community I believe we should all closely follow the financial questions of how property tax changes that may or may not happen, may or may not affect services and service levels. There are still so many what ifs and maybes on this issue that it is logical for the city staff to research and consider scenarios that may affect the general fund to at least "some degree." A council member mentioned that this was certainly not the time to bring up a new millage rate reduction for consideration, as popular as that may sound.

Information Technology for the City of Venice relies a great deal on a small team of experts on a lean budget to support a working and reliable network. The IT director presented an easily understood account on the City's need to move from reactive to proactive in its technological abilities. The council offered its full support to prioritize this concern.

Venice Airport is growing in popularity significantly and needs a great deal of attention in the coming year(s) relative to hanger construction, a potential control tower, an already planned administration building, and security upgrades. If you are in a business affected by or that affects the airport operations, follow this one closely. Watch for the agenda items that may be related to airport operations. Related to this topic, Lake Venice Golf Club, which is part of the airport domain, will likely be considerably impacted by changes to the airport in the very near future.

There certainly was a lot more covered concerning the strategic future of Venice, including affordable senior housing, and annexation ideas, and we will continue to track it all but for today's last mention, Goal Five: "Encourage and Support a Robust and Diverse Economy" the objective of "support policies that promote economic growth and development consistent with the adopted comprehensive plan", was not a long discussion but it was moved up in the priority ranking.

Feel free to reach out to me at cthorpe@venicechamber.com if you would like more details on what is mentioned or not mentioned here that relates to Chamber members and member needs. I would call this an introduction to what I am certain will be an

interesting few months as legislators, both state and local, wade through processing their priorities.

Leadership 2026

I currently have a roster of twenty-four members set to attend the next rendition of Leadership Venice. I am honored to take over for now retired Barbara Hines, and I look forward to meeting the new group. We will be underway March 4th with orientation. If you are a Leadership Venice Alum, look for an email from me in the next week as I seek out volunteers to help with certain days, including the "famous" SIMSOC.

Teen Leadership

Our group of fifteen teens will be wrapping up soon. Next week is Venice area history, in March we will put together a leadership workshop for them here at the Chamber. April is their leadership program graduation. For the graduation I would like a local leader to be our guest speaker for a maximum twenty-minute presentation on the importance of effective leadership. Send me an email if you have a dynamic, but short, presentation for us.