

**CITY OF FORT COLLINS
FUTURES COMMITTEE MEETING**

Date: September 13, 2021

Location: Colorado River Room, Zoom

Time: 4:00-6:00pm

Committee Members present:

Mayor Jeni Arndt

Councilmember Susan Gutowsky (District 1)

Councilmember Tricia Canonico (District 3)

Additional Council members present:

City Staff:

Jackie Kozak-Thiel

Kelly DiMartino, Interim City Manager

Presenters:

Jake Dunagan, Institute for the Future

Additional Staff present:

Carrie Daggett, City Attorney

Teresa Roche, Human Resources

Michelle Finchum, Environmental Services

Kevin Wilkins, IT

Claudia Menendez, City Manager's Office

Lindsay Ex, Environmental Services

Caryn Champine, PDT

Community members:

Kevin Jones, FC Chamber

Meeting called to order at 4:04pm

Approval of Minutes:

Councilmember Susan Gutowsky moved to approve July 12 minutes. Councilmember Tricia Canonico seconded. Motion passed unanimously. 3-0-0.

Chairman Comments: None

Summary

- Jake Dunagan from the Institute for the Future shared what it means to think like a futurist
- Jake shared the connection between internal and external futurist thinking
 - Internal—how individuals feel about the future
 - External—how to understand and identify different futures
- Jake shared different strategies for thinking of the Future including using posters of the Future as artifacts to help us imagine what we may want for the Future of Fort Collins
- City of Fort Collins aims to be connected City in the Future which will require communication and working with all members of our community. A connected Fort Collins includes
 - Physically connected
 - Socially connected

- Mayor Arndt provided a Bloomberg update
- **Action:**
 - Commitment to embed futures thinking in this committee and beyond in the work of Council and City organization
 - Suggestion by Interim City Manager Kelly DiMartino to include graphic recording for Futures committee meetings as another artifact of Futures thinking

Think Tank Item 4-2021 How to think like a Futurist

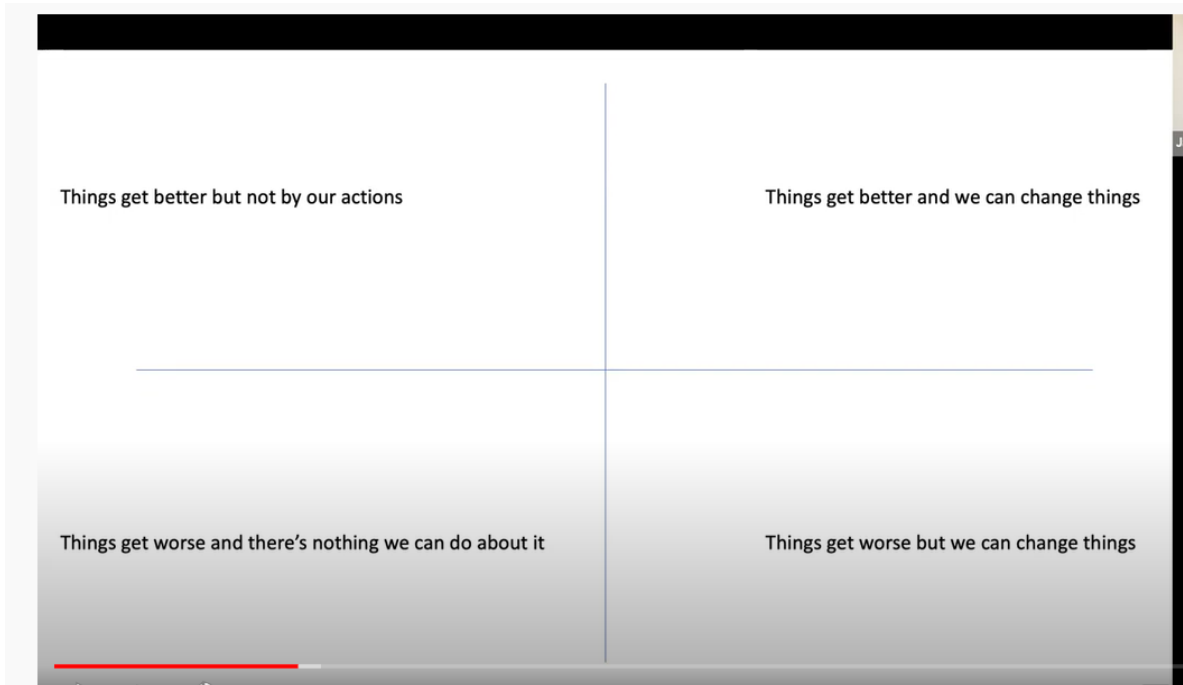
Jake Dunagan, Director of the Governance for the Future lab at the Institute for the Future

- Jake first says he is happy the Futures committee exists and that we are investing time into foresight and Futures thinking
- Futures thinking is an orientation, approach and a capacity
- Jake plans to share some conceptual frameworks for thinking about the future that can help the City of Fort Collins
- Wanted to title this as a way to remember the past “Bridging the gap between the Past, Present and Future(s)”
 - What we do as futurists is try to tell a full story that includes past, present experience and future generations—how events happen now affect our future
 - Work to thread these things together to tell a more holistic story and act accordingly
- Background on the Institute for the Future
 - Been established for 50 years
 - Based in Palo Alto but now international
 - Nonprofit organization that wears many different hats including
 - Think tank
 - Education (offer trainings)
 - Design firm
 - Help people and organizations think about the future more effectively
- Futures thinking is both internal and external
 - Internal thinking occurs at the individual level and is about how we as individuals think about the future
 - External—what are the trends and emerging issues in the world that we need to pay attention to
 - Important to understand the relationship between internal and external—need to understand how we as individuals think about the future, what biases we bring, etc., to understand how we respond to events in the world.

Internal

- Discusses neuroscience research and futures thinking
 - Key finding is human beings think about the future with the same parts of the brain that recall the past.
 - Think about the future in relation to things we have experienced before
 - When blindsided by certain futures it is because we haven’t thought about them before and haven’t laid the tracks for them in the brain
 - Big part of Future work is to pre-see patterns so certain things are able to be visualized and thought about so that we are not blindsided
- “You cannot build what you cannot imagine” – Walidah Imarisha
 - If we cannot imagine a future beyond the world we have now than we cannot have it
 - Examples of this include the Arab Spring
 - Need to actively imagine and visualize the world and future that we want

- Fred Polak shares core anchoring for Futures thinking in his research on how regimes come and go
 - Findings were looking at images of the future within historical images rise and fall of certain images precede the rise and fall of cultures
 - Flourish culture—expressions of futures tended to be positive
 - Cultures declining images of the future also declined
 - Correlation between images of the future and what came—9images matter
- Jake runs the committee through the Polak game—an exercise to orient the committee to think about the future (see example below):
 - First question: assess what you feel about your orientation to the future (or essence of the world)—is it better or worse?
 - Second question: Does the group feel that people are able to impact the world? Move to one side if they believe that people have a high degree of influence and move the other direction if they believe that there is a low degree of influence
- Jake asks committee members and participants to share which quadrant they believe they are in and why



- Some considerations for the upper right quadrant: Things get better and we can change things
 - What they really believe and what they need to believe/have hope about to move forward
 - When thinking about what it means for something to be better, important questions to ask include
 - Better for who?
 - Better during what time in a person's life
 - Key thing is that “better” is situational
- Discussion about the bottom left quadrant: Things get worse and there's nothing we can do about it
 - It seems negative but it lets loose of all of the weight of the world
 - Allows people to be “free” and light and let go of misery of trying to make the world better and accept what is.

- Polak’s game is valuable because it helps people to see their own views and also where others may land, allows for playing and imagining what other quadrants are as well
 - allows for thinking on how to make collective decisions if we live in different quadrants
- Consider how agency and situation also influences how different people may experience thoughts about the Future
 - For example, how do different community members think about the future? And are they able to take the time to imagine the future?

External

- Moving to the external world it is used to identify and understand alternative futures
- Any complex system there are events that we cannot predict where they are going
- There are many mitigating factors—to predicting a specific future, rather look at change in a systematic way
 - Find a useful middle—look at different archetypes of change
 - Scenarios that help to reduce complexity without oversimplifying
 - Goal is to make more informed decisions
- Edge of possibility: phenomena that we may think aren’t possible but could be possible
 - i.e. Universal basic income
- Dreaming comes in when we look for signals right at the edge of possibility
 - Could be a catalyzing event, but the seeds of change were there all along
- Recognize that change occurs at different paces
- Governance is in the middle of various types of change because it helps to modulate speed of change
- Jake shares the “Laws of the Future”
 - “The ‘future’ cannot be predicted, because the future does not exist”
 - “Any useful statement about the future should appear to be ridiculous”
 - “There is a tendency to overestimate the impact of a phenomenon in the short-run, and underestimate it in the long run”
- Futurists believe it is better to be surprised, provoked by future forecasts, rather than be blindsided by reality
- Jake goes through several examples of how scenarios can be used strategically
 - Shares the playbook for ethical technology governance as an example
 - Various “risk” zones that city leaders will have discussions about
 - Artificial Intelligence
 - Climate
 - Law Enforcement
 - Public Health
 - Equity and Inclusion
- Foresight for City Leaders
 - IFTF has done foresight training with US conference for Mayors
 - Shares Posters from the Future—American Cities 2030
 - Austin as an example: goal to grow without losing its “weirdness”, how to not just consume music but create it, etc.—Mayor had a fear that Barton Springs pool would one day be filled with trash
 - Imagined that in 2020 Austin granted personhood to Barton Springs
 - Artifacts of the future are useful aid for the imagination to think about the future in different and useful ways
 - Other examples include Anaheim, Tempe Arizona, and Findlay Ohio
- Jake then asks “What would be on a poster representing your preferred future for Fort Collins in 2030?”

- Image on intergenerational power—where all ages are connected to the community—this touches on issues of housing affordability in Fort Collins
- General theme of connectivity
 - Physical—though biking, transit
 - Social—inclusivity, affordability,
 - Mental
- The 15 minute City
 - Connect while also addressing environmental issues

Discussion

- Is there anything happening with our generation (school age children) and is it influencing their ability to have hope?
 - Jake shares that there is a lot of negativity out there with current events, but there is a lot of momentum with young people—young people like Greta Thunberg taking up Climate change is an example of this
 - So much can happen in a short period of time which is another call for foresight to get ahead of some of these major challenges
- Recognition that globalism has activated so many of the variables that are influencing change
 - This is in part a challenge for government: do you slow change/innovation or do we need some brakes in the system
- Discussion about the rise of social media, and money and how it can help spread misinformation
- Part of difficulty is that problems continue to arise when other problems haven't been solved
 - Cognitive Inoculation: May not solve the problem but can mitigate some of the worse
- As we think about the Fort Collins of the future, it is important to recognize that it is not possible without communication
 - Consider the role of leaders to communicate all
- Also consider what it means to be connected in Fort Collins for all community members

Bloomberg Updates from the Mayor

- Mayor Arndt shared that in her first two meetings for Bloomberg they shared some scenarios and did some onboarding for her upcoming trip to New York
- The City will be able to choose from 3 different strands:
 - Collaboration
 - Innovation
 - Public participation

Additional Discussion:

- Discussion on upcoming topics

Meeting adjourned by Mayor Arndt at 5:46pm