

**MINUTES OF
ELECTRONIC WORKSHOP –
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SANFORD
SANFORD, NORTH CAROLINA**

The City Council met remotely through an electronic meeting (Office Suite HD) on Tuesday, August 11, 2020, at 6:00 p.m., with the Mayor presiding from Council Chambers of the Sanford Municipal Center, 225 E. Weatherspoon Street. The following people were connected (“present”) and participated remotely in the meeting:

Mayor T. Chet Mann
Council Member Sam Gaskins
Council Member Charles Taylor
Council Member Rebecca Wyhof Salmon
City Manager Hal Hegwer
City Clerk Bonnie Davis

Mayor Pro Tem Byron Buckels
Council Member Jimmy Haire
Council Member Norman Charles Post, III
Council Member James Williams
City Attorney Susan Patterson
Deputy City Clerk Vicki Cannady

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Mann called the meeting to order.

Preliminary Report on Equity and Well-Being in Sanford and Lee County (Exhibit A)

Dr. Hannah Gill, Associate Director of the Institute for the Study of the Americas at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Government (“the Institute”), reviewed information on the attached Exhibit A, which was updated from the department’s Building Integrated Communities (“BIC”) assessment in 2015 and other local government strategies. She noted that the report, which is only an unfinalized draft, focuses on the three most populous groups in Lee County – African-American, Hispanic, and White – and indicates that higher percentages of African-Americans and Hispanics fall below the poverty line, own fewer homes and businesses; have lower median household incomes, life expectancies, and high school graduation rates; fewer bachelor’s degrees; and higher obesity rates. She underscored the importance of these statistics since they are root causes of other disparities and commented that this information is not surprising, considering systemic barriers in the past but fortunately, there are many things cities can do to help. Dr. Gill reviewed possible next steps for immediate action, long-term assessment and planning, or a combination of both, as shown on the exhibit in order to build trust and allow community organizations to seek grants. A stakeholder group could help spearhead a community assessment and we could become a member of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, and appoint a team of City staff to participate in training to implement changes throughout local government. She also explained that we would have to decide whether we want to focus on one issue or take a more comprehensive approach.

Mayor Pro Tem Buckels, who helped initiate this study, agreed that the data wasn’t surprising and commented that the problem didn’t develop overnight nor could it be resolved overnight. He suggested Council appoint stakeholders who could report back with recommendations; noted that much of the data was from 2017; suggested things have not improved since that time, and commented that these disparities eventually affect everyone.

Dr. Gill explained that the City of Durham had a diverse group of about 16 stakeholders (various ages and races) on their task force and encouraged us to include as many people as possible if we appoint a group. Council Member Taylor noted that the Bharat Forge facility is an Indian-owned company and he suggested we include members of their staff. He questioned whether there is a communication

problem since many prominent members of the African-American community were not aware of the Central Carolina Community College program for two years of free tuition to our area's high school graduates and noted that he has suggested that the Sanford Area Growth Alliance ("SAGA") board develop a plan for increasing minority recruitment and representation. SAGA Executive Director Michael Smith explained that SAGA continues to diligently identify people who are interested in becoming involved with leadership, and the challenge is the fact that many small business owners are extremely involved in their businesses and suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic will make it even more difficult for them to serve in a position away from their businesses.

Council Member Gaskins suggested we concentrate on education since lower levels of income and home ownership are directly related to education, and lower high school graduation rates are a large part of that problem. He commented that there are opportunities in our area for skilled workers, with more than 1,300 new jobs coming from new businesses in Sanford and Lee County, and about 700 of them will have an average annual wage of more than \$80,000. Mayor Mann explained that local high schools now have counsellors to help create pathways for students to enroll at CCCC through the Lee County Promise program to gain workforce skills or transfer to a four-year college and suggested that the challenge to Council is to figure how to bring that message to those who need it most.

Council Member Salmon suggested we take action quickly since many of these issues are currently at the forefront. Council Member Williams suggested we share information through local churches and social media, and Brick Capital could help with home ownership issues since they already have programs in place. Mayor Mann suggested we explore whether CCCC or the County would be interested in adding counsellors to focus on minority families, and use the City and County public information officers to make information more readily available. Mayor Pro Tem Buckels suggested we address not only young students but adults who have difficulties due to deep systemic issues and immediately locate experts who can help make recommendations on how to move forward and galvanize resources. Council Member Gaskins noted that with school starting soon, counsellors should adequately communicate all available options to members of the minority community and using the Boys' and Girls' Club to help get information to disadvantaged youth.

Mayor Mann questioned whether there was consensus to consider engaging Dr. Gill and the Institute to explore next steps while Council considers immediate action. Consensus was reached for Dr. Gill to identify a scope of work and requested that data be shared with the public.

Update from SAGA (Sanford Area Growth Alliance) – Exhibit B

SAGA Existing Industry Development Manager Jimmy Randolph provided an update on local businesses as follows: Moen representatives proactively informed employees that they would be finding another source for its finishing process in the first quarter of 2021. They hope natural attrition will allow some employees to exit instead of being laid off work. Company representatives spoke quite highly of our community, government and labor force, with some employees being with the company for the entire 40 years Moen has been in Sanford. The company would not be leaving Sanford entirely and may expand other assembly aspects, and SAGA would work with them to help make that a reality. Mr. Randolph stated that he had spoken with other local companies who are eager to hire new employees and he has connected them with Moen's Human Resources Department. Once the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notice ("WARN") is issued (about 90 days before jobs are actually eliminated), the State will offer programs through NC Works and job fairs to address needs of impacted workers. Pfizer representatives have indicated that they are focused on the health and well-being of their labor force during the COVID-19 pandemic while work progresses on their new gene therapy project expansion and

other large employers have also indicated that things are going quite well in spite of the pandemic. Mayor Mann suggested Sanford is faring well because of our diverse workforce.

SAGA Economic Development Director Bob Joyce explained that things have slowed down recently, which is typical for this time of year but he continues to working on new prospects. He noted that pandemic-related travel restrictions are contributing to fewer visits. The Bharat Forge project continues to move forward with large presses that are critical to their production due in the next 30 days. Work continues on the Audentes project at Central Carolina Enterprise Park (“CCEP”), with laboratory modules being assembled off-site before they are installed at the shell building. Clearing and grading are underway on the second Spec building at CCEP and they are already receiving inquiries. Three trade shows previously scheduled have been cancelled, so they will re-evaluate marketing strategies but they are still receiving requests for information.

SAGA Executive Director Michael Smith stated that he would attend a virtual conference tomorrow and their staff continues to evolve in an effort to be as effective as possible. He thanked Council for supporting him as CEO for the last two years and announced that he would be focusing on economic development, with Jimmy Randolph to serve as the new CEO beginning August 17.

Update on Kendale Shopping Center (Exhibit C)

Community Development Director Marshall Downey explained that staff is working with MINA school representatives to achieve a better product. They attended a recent Technical Review Committee meeting but do not want to do extensive work on the parking lot in front of the school. They discussed incorporating part of the site into the trail system since it is located between two existing portions but have not been able to move that forward. MINA representatives are not comfortable donating property to the City, which is required before the City can make any improvements, but indicated that they want to work with the City to make improvements other than those originally proposed.

Council Member Byron Buckels reviewed the attached renderings and noted that some features (benches and trees) are for illustrative purposes only, not specific requests. He explained that school representatives are concerned that having a green space or sidepath in front of the school may present security issues but indicate willingness to donate a portion of the property in front to the City to enhance the area. Council Member Gaskins suggested an arborist be consulted about what types of trees to plant and whether to use cherry trees like those already planted at the Municipal Center. Council Member Salmon questioned whether the school would commit to maintaining the space and Mr. Downey indicated that school representatives assumed the City would remove asphalt and sow grass. The MINA board is scheduled to meet August 13, at which time this will be discussed. Ms. Salmon agreed that sidewalk improvements could unify and revitalize the entire strip along Kendale and suggested that work begin on an agreement for easement acquisitions or donations for future improvements would be helpful.

Regarding next steps, Mr. Downey explained that MINA will receive their Certificate of Occupancy soon and MINA will be responsible if trees aren’t installed before then. Council Member Taylor suggested that other nearby areas be considered collectively, along with the Kendale corridor. Mr. Hegwer commented that more information will be available after MINA’s August 13 meeting and Council can determine what, if any, public investment could be considered along the rights-of-way but funds were not included in the current budget. Mr. Buckels complimented MINA for their improvements and citizens can be encouraged with the potential for multi-family housing and retail improvements in the Kendale area.

Information on Automated Mowing (Exhibit D)

Public Works Manager Fedd Walker presented information on robotic lawn care as shown on the attached exhibit and played short video clips showing how they operate. He explained that the mowers work on a continuous basis, approximately 16 to 22 hours daily, and trim rather than cut grass. They can operate in rain but are not recommended for use in standing water; are quieter and safer than traditional mowers; and have no engines to maintain. Various models are available for different terrains and eight mowers are recommended for use at City Hall at an estimated cost of \$65,000 (mowers, charging stations, set up, installation, training). Regarding the return on investment, Public Works Director Victor Czar explained that personnel can be used in other places (particularly useful since inmates from the local prison are not allowed to work with staff during the pandemic) and we would not have to replace the zero-turn mowers currently being used. As the technology evolves, units may be available for use at the water treatment plant and wastewater treatment plant. The units have built-in alarm and GPS systems, so they could be located if stolen and would be inoperable by others. The mowers would also eliminate employees using mowers at isolated locations and reduce workers' compensation insurance costs. Mr. Walker explained they could possibly be used on highway medians but traffic could present a danger. Financial Services Director Beth Kelly explained that savings from capital lines and the parks department (since the pandemic prevented the splash pad from opening this summer) could fund the one-time purchase of the units. Mr. Czar explained that if the robotic mowers prove to be adequate and lawn mowers are no longer needed, they would be sold as surplus.

Mayor Mann commented that there appeared to be consensus to include a budget amendment for the purchase of robotic mowers on the next Council agenda.

Update on Parks Advisory Committee (Exhibit E)

Parks Director Don Reuter reminded Council that a parks citizen advisory committee had been discussed at the Council retreat. An advisory committee could analyze issues (such as the property around the MINA school discussed in the previous item), and make recommendations and suggest direction to help with the City's vision for our park system but final decision-making authority belongs to Council. He reviewed information on the attached exhibit, encouraged Council to develop a comprehensive plan for our parks, and to work with the county and state since parks are a vital part of any community. Public Works Director Vic Czar requested consensus from Council to move forward and develop an application for citizens interested in serving on the committee. Council Member Taylor requested that local home school groups be included since they have no on-site facilities and Mr. Reuter noted that school athletes often use local parks for training. Mayor Mann stated there was consensus to move forward with forming a Parks Advisory Committee, instructed Mr. Reuter to move forward, and encouraged Council to provide feedback to Mr. Reuter, along with names of potential members.

Update on Farmers Market (Exhibit F)

Downtown Sanford, Inc. Director Kelli Laudate explained that the recent relocation of the Farmers' Market from the Agricultural Center to the downtown area has been very successful and there have been discussions about housing a permanent agricultural marketplace in the downtown area, perhaps at the former King Roofing building, which is owned by the City. Joni Martin, with Progressive Development Contracting, explained that the building has historical significance, having been dismantled from a military base in South Carolina and reassembled at its current site right after World War II. It has hardwood floors, exposed beams and trusses, and a second level that could be used as a mezzanine. Dr. Bill Stone, Director of the McSwain Agricultural Center, indicated that local citizens have already offered to donate old agricultural tools and machines that would highlight our area's rich agricultural history. Ms. Martin suggested the space could be used for events other than the Farmers

Market, including a restaurant with outdoor seating, music events, a demo kitchen, would provide fresh, nutritious food in an area currently lacking a grocery store, and serve as a showcase for Sanford. Ms. Laudate requested Council's blessing to investigate this potential project and stated that it may have a contributor.

Council Member Taylor commented that there have been previous discussions about the King Roofing building and downtown parking, and requested minutes from previous Council meetings regarding this. He stated that Council shied away from demolishing the building due to concerns about asbestos and questioned the potential project costs, and commented that the attached exhibit includes improvements to the area around the building but that property is not owned by the City. Ms. Laudate explained that no funds were being requested from the City and they were only asking that Council allow them to investigate this potential project, especially since there is a strong chance that someone may fund it. Council Member Salmon agreed that she wasn't comfortable guaranteeing support without investigating the issues raised by Mr. Taylor. City Manager Hegwer agreed to have staff investigate minutes from prior meetings and Mayor Mann suggested this issue be included on the next Council agenda. Ms. Martin explained that the attached illustration was used only to identify the King Roofing Building, not as an illustration for any potential project and if this property were restored, it would increase interest in this area. Ms. Salmon explained that she misconstrued the level of commitment being requested and approved investigating the potential for such a project. Mayor Mann noted that there appeared to be consensus to pursue investigating the potential to use the King Roofing Building as an agricultural marketplace and it would be included as an agenda item at Council's next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Council Member Haire commented that it was the anniversary of the Social Security program, which began on August 12, 1935.

Mayor Pro Tem Buckels suggested there will likely be major problems when the moratorium on evictions is lifted and with experts forecasting an eviction crisis, he suggested that staff consider holding conversations on this issue.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Buckels made the motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Council Member Gaskins, the vote carried unanimously through a roll call vote.

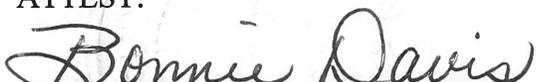
ALL EXHIBITS CONTAINED HEREIN ARE HEREBY INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE AND MADE A PART OF THESE MINUTES.

Respectfully Submitted,



T. CHET MANN, MAYOR

ATTEST:



BONNIE DAVIS, CITY CLERK