SANFORD CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
Tuesday, January 19, 2016
225 East Weatherspoon Street, Sanford, NC

The City Council held a Work Session on Tuesday, January 19, 2016, at 5:00 p.m. in the West End Conference Room at City Hall. The following people were present:

Mayor T. Chet Mann
Council Member Byron Buckels
Council Member Charles Taylor
Council Member James Williams
City Manager Hal Hegwer
City Clerk Bonnie Davis

Mayor Pro Tem Sam Gaskins
Council Member Jimmy Haire
Council Member Norman "Chas" Post, III
Council Member Rebecca Wyhof
City Attorney Susan Patterson

Work Session

Mayor Chet Mann called the work session to order.

City Manager Hegwer requested that Council allow moving away from the agenda in order to answer several questions and clarify some issues about the streetscape project and related funding.

Streetscape Funding Update (Exhibit A)

City Engineer Paul Weeks explained that the referendum authorized a total of $6,500,000 for the streetscape projects, based on estimated costs of $5,000,000 for Downtown Sanford and $1,500,000 for Jonesboro; however, actual expenses were $6,100,000 for Downtown and $3,700,000 for Jonesboro, totaling $9,800,000 for a shortfall of $3,300,000. After considering options from staff, Council decided to proceed with the project without decreasing scope. Applying the $500,000 bond premium and using $1,300,000 from Fund Balance (available as a result of last year's higher than anticipated revenue) reduced the shortfall to $1,500,000, which Council approved for Installment Purchase financing. Additional expenses were presented to Council last week for several items not anticipated prior to construction and Council approved three of them at a cost of $200,000, which Council also approved for Installment Purchase financing. The total project total cost is now $9,800,000, and the total project shortage is $1,700,000.

Mayor Mann noted that this summary clarified some of the confusion, stating that he had received several phone calls about figures included in a headline and article in *The Sanford Herald.* Many citizens mistakenly thought that an additional $1,700,000 was being borrowed, rather than this amount being the total amount to be borrowed.

Council Member Taylor reminded everyone of the six cent tax increase in 2014 and stated that the $1,300,000 from Fund Balance was taxpayer money. City Manager Hegwer pointed out that taxpayer funds were also saved by delaying the borrowing, which resulted in a lower interest rate and lower debt service over the life of the loan. Finance Director Beth Kelly explained that the tax increase enabled the city to prepare for the annual debt service on all four bonds, noting that two still remained to be issued (for Greenway and for Parks and Recreation). Council Member Gaskins also noted that this tax increase would prevent larger tax increases in the future.

Council Member Taylor stated that he has received questions about bond projects being misrepresented as to which items would be included, specifically the "Splash Park". Mayor Mann

noted that Council decided during last year's retreat meetings to postpone the Splash Park for a more impactful solution, possibly a sports park in the Parks and Recreation portion of the bond projects. Manager Hegwer commented that it appeared no one was ready to move forward with all of the bond projects at once and the plan is to revisit both the Parks and Recreation and Greenway projects.

When asked what lessons had been learned from the streetscape projects so far, Mr. Weeks answered that communication with downtown merchants could have been handled better but the contractor did an excellent job helping merchants keep businesses open and accessible for customers. He also confirmed that DOT has been approached about diagonal parking on a portion of Carthage Street and that additional documentation is being prepared.

Council Member Taylor asked if it would be possible to have meetings between downtown merchants and DSI to better communicate to them what to expect in certain time frames as the project is completed. Mr. Weeks explained that things are moving too quickly for this to be effective: by the time a meeting is scheduled and held, much of the work would have been completed. He gave an example of Duke Energy's installing and switching poles from overhead to underground power. Duke representatives will be going door-to-door, dealing with merchants one-on-one to determine the best time to convert their service. A city inspector also walks through the downtown area and most merchants have his phone number so they can contact him directly. Staff is in contact with DSI on an almost daily basis and DSI sends out emails informing merchants of the schedule. Mr. Weeks also stressed that the schedule changes frequently (sometimes daily), due to utility staffing and equipment issues. Public Works Director Czar confirmed that merchants' ability to approach staff individually has advantages over group meetings. Manager Hegwer confirmed that city staff will work with both DSI and merchants to determine the best method of communication.

Martin Luther King Park (Exhibit B)

Public Works Manager Tim Shaw explained that enhancing the Martin Luther King Memorial Park ("MLK Park") has been discussed as a gathering place for families, a site for weddings, or a destination for students studying nature or local history. Among the proposed features are memorial markers for walkways, gazebos, benches, trash can receptacles, walking trails, a clock, a memorial wall or water wall with honorary plaques, and parking. Manager Hegwer stated that DOT would consider closing Washington Avenue on the east side of Horner Boulevard but cost estimates are not available yet since closure would require curb, gutter and sidewalk revisions, and a traffic island in the median for pedestrians crossing Horner Boulevard after one of the turn lanes is removed.

Council Member Buckels reminded everyone that enhancing Depot Park and MLK Park had been identified as short-term goals by Council in February 2014 and after Council Member Walter McNeil's death in March 2014, it appeared that Council wanted to proceed. Since then, the city has purchased the Depot Park property and some work has been done. He hopes to further Dr. King's vision of uniting communities and sees a memorial in the center of the city, right off the main corridor, as a great opportunity to show unity and urged Council to move forward.

Public contributions were also discussed, including a recent request that the City fund half the cost for a park in the Rosemount-McIver area if citizens contribute half. Council Member Wyhof explained that this situation is different than the MLK Park: that property had already been donated to the city and it had been identified as a city project. Council Member Williams also noted that Coty donated land for the park on Mt. Pisgah Church Road.

Council Member Taylor cautioned against using the work "park" for the MLK property, stating that it is a "memorial". Council Member Buckels stated that it is a "memorial park". Mr. Taylor noted that when the project was initially constructed, *The Sanford Herald* called the project "complete". Mr. Taylor stated that Council Member McNeil had originally suggested that horseshoes and grills could be placed on adjacent property and that Mr. McNeil later acknowledged that public participation had not been what was hoped for. Mr. Shaw stated that the original cost was approximately $140,000, with about one-third of that contributed privately (through "in kind" contributions and approximately $5,000 to $6,000 in private sales of commemorative bricks).

Council Member Buckels stated that a cost estimate from February, 2014 (based on previous drawings of proposed enhancements) was approximately $166,000. Mr. Taylor expressed his opinion that these funds would be better spent on three pocket parks in areas currently underserved by parks.

Mayor Mann noted these were all good discussion points and while it is good to put them all on the table, no decisions were to be made tonight.

Review of City Council Short-Term and Long-Term Priorities and Council Visions/Initiatives (Exhibit C)

Mayor Mann led discussion on priorities identified by Council during last year's Workshops meetings. Short-term priorities were updated as follows:

1. Create a policy and code that befits an urban community under revitalization:
    - The Commercial Maintenance Code and nuisance ordinances have been updated.
    - Council Member Haire requested additional research on boarding-up vacant properties (being done by City Attorney Patterson).

2. Create a master plan that addresses short-term redevelopment and long-term smart, equitable, urban growth:
    - Council agreed that the 2020 Land Use Plan and updated Waste Water Master Plan should be addressed this year. Several items on the "to do" list were discussed, along with sidewalk dining and a parking/pedestrian movement plan.
    - Mayor Mann suggested adding an alleyway plan to the list of short-term priorities.
    - Mayor Mann suggested adding a comprehensive signage plan, including wayfinding and directional signs. Council Member Taylor would also like to address signage in general, including business signage and LED billboard requirements.
    - Council Member Taylor suggested adding a lighting program for Horner Boulevard as a short- or long-term priority.
    - Council Member Buckels suggested addressing the need for additional lighting on top of buildings.
    - Council Member Post stated that while overall parking strategy is a long-term priority, parking should also be addressed as a short-term priority.

3. Increase community/civic education and engagement through on-and off-line channels:
    - The Citizens Academy program has been instituted and has been successful.
    - Council Member Wyhof restated her request for a Citizens' Handbook.
    - Council Member Taylor noted it is extremely hot when the National Night Out ("NNO") event is held in August so perhaps another event could be held in the spring. The NNO event could also be expanded to cover an entire week.

4. Support Community Policing and consider new tools/programs:
    - "Project Safe Neighborhood" has been very successful in reducing violent crime and there is even consideration of turning this mission toward drug intervention and remediation.
    - Council Member Taylor suggested putting the mobile unit in various neighborhoods occasionally and offering DNA kits.

5. Make the new SAGA as competitive as possible and consider contribution level:
    - Mayor Mann requested that Council find a way to continue funding, noting that the tax base will be expanded as projects come to fruition. He stated that SAGA is currently working on 20 projects, compared to an average of four before the recession. The Mayor suggested adding a long-range priority for continued funding of SAGA as necessary, with the County's cooperation.
    - Council Member Wyhof suggested that an annual update be given to Council so that local citizens are aware of SAGA's progress.

6. Encourage and promote Sanford/Lee County's businesses and restaurants in anticipation of and during the U.S. Open:
    - Although SAGA's marketing staff was not in place for the 2015 U.S. Open, they will be available to provide marketing services for future events.

7. Improve and upgrade pocket parks and public areas, including MLK Park, and long-term preservation of the Depot Building:
    - Mayor Mann requested that an item be added to study our pocket parks and to develop a revised plan, including plans for MLK Memorial Park.

Mayor Mann requested adding a short-term item for continued support of the Sister City Project Initiative, including construction of a display case and a small amount of funding to be used as seed money for a non-profit corporate arm that would allow for private fundraising. Many cities with successful Sister City projects have used this model since it could serve functions outside those served through taxpayer funds from the City, such as meals, entertainment and travelling when the Chinese delegations visit Sanford.

Council Member Taylor stated his opposition to using taxpayer dollars as seed money for a non-profit. Mayor Mann stated that he would get more information on specific templates and procedures used by many other cities. He also stressed that nothing will be done without Council approval on the Sister City project and the goal is continued support and funding for the project, especially with the early success of the project here. He noted that representatives from one company have already visited Sanford from China, and that several potters and one of the most revered painters have visited Central Carolina Community College.

Long-range priorities were reviewed and updated as follows:

1. Consider a 21st century multi-sports complex:
    - Mayor Mann explained that final plans have been received from the consultant. The process took longer than originally anticipated due to much input from citizens who requested that fields be expanded to allow for adequate practice space and to develop an overall plan for a first-class facility to draw recurring revenue. A recommendation and proposal will be made soon. He also noted that if Council elects not to proceed with this, other park and recreation options include a splash park and/or a bike trail.
    - Council Member Taylor requested that an item be added to address improvements to Depot Park. Mayor Mann stated that SAGA CEO Joy Thrash will be approaching Council soon to request funding for a Visitors Center at Depot Park. He also noted that Sen. Rabin, Rep. Reives and Rep. Salmon support the proposed Occupancy Tax, which could help funding.
    - Council Member Wyhof commented on a billboard she had seen, "Come Visit our Visitors' Center", describing attractions (splash park, dog park, swings, etc.) and suggested something similar could draw travelers to our downtown area instead of stopping at a rest area.

2. Incremental long-range parking plan:
    - Mayor Mann explained that this item will remain as a long-term priority.

3. Evaluate existing relationships and consider service consolidation:
    - Mayor Mann stated that this has been accomplished with the recent opening of the Buggy Factory Building, which is a one-stop shop for community development, planning, inspections and economic development, noting that Sanford is the only community of its size with such a setup.

4. Consider needs for a public safety facility:
    - Mayor Mann explained that staff will be presenting proposals on this soon.

5. Create a cultural arts district around the Temple Theatre:
    - Mayor Mann stated that he would like for this to remain as a long-term priority but with so many other projects ongoing, it is not the time to address it now.

Mayor Mann suggested adding a plan for connecting Horner Boulevard to Steele Street as a long-term priority, noting that if the streetscape projects are successful, parking and directional foot traffic will need to be addressed.

Council Member Taylor requested adding a long-term priority item to address properties on First Street in connection with the greenway bond project, but noted that some decisions impacting this in the long-term should be made short-term.

Council Member Taylor requested that a long-term priority item be added to address the Capital Improvement Plan, including a breakdown of recurring costs.

Mayor Mann thanked Council for being receptive to a review and restatement of goals and priorities, since documenting them helps with accountability and also helps staff to plan.

Council Member Haire informed Council of recent staff changes at *The Sanford Herald* and noted that the City Public Information Officer Kelly Miller will be working with them.

After discussion, Council set the next workshop meeting for Tuesday, January 26, 2015, at 5:00 p.m. to discuss bond projects and economic development planning.

Adjournment

Council Member Wyhof made the motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Council Member Post, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

T. Chet Mann, Mayor

Attest:

Bonnie Davis, City Clerk