CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING – CITY COUNCIL RETREAT
February 17, 2006

CALL TO ORDER BY THE MAYOR

The annual City Council retreat was called to order at the Grandover Conference Center in Greensboro, North Carolina at 1:30 p.m. by Mayor Robert Whitt. The following were present:

Mayor Robert Whitt
Mayor Pro-Tem Phyllis Harris
Council Member Jim Hope
Council Member Frank McLean
Council Member Pat Hubbard
Council Member David Moore
Council Member Jerry Bishop

City Manager David Kraus

(Eric Burris from the Mountain Island Monitor was in attendance)

Opening remarks by Mayor Whitt

City Council quiz on City services

City Council Discussion on Development:

City Council discussed the difference between applying conditions on zoning requests and applying conditions as part of an annexation agreement. City Council reviewed the proposed conditional uses for the Broadleaf Development looking for changes they would have made. City Council considered lot size, slab construction, requiring ball fields and density.

City Council, by consensus decided to work on rules and regulations during moratorium by working through the Planning Commission and the Land Use Committee. Moratorium also chance to "catch breath". City Council discussed need to accomplish revising the Subdivision Ordinance and Zoning Ordinance during this time.

City Council discussed the capacity of the Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants and the impact on future development. City Council directed City Manager to pursue acquiring land from A&E for an elevated water tank and wastewater treatment plant expansion.

City Council discussed other wastewater treatment capacity options including working with Charlotte- Mecklenburg Utilities Department (CMUD) or working toward a Gaston County-wide unified utility. City Council consensus was for "controlling our own destiny". City Council will review Black and Vietch study sponsored by CMUD.

System Development Fees

Council Member Jerry Bishop, chair of the Water and Sewer Committee, presented the original W K Dickson study of system development fees. Council Member Bishop discussed that the current fees are less than those recommended by W. K. Dickson in the original study. City Council discussed the current grand fathering of subdivisions. City Council, by consensus, decides to let the Water and Sewer Committee check on the fees that other towns charge and make recommendations to City Council at a later time.

Adequate Facilities Ordinances

Mayor Robert Whitt discussed adequate facilities ordinances and promised to bring information back to the City Council. City Council asked to see this ordinance as an option during the consideration of the 2006-2007 Budget.

Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ)

City Council discussed the original purpose of the ETJ and if the ETJ were still needed today. City Council made no decision. Council Member Pat Hubbard asked for staff to prepare a presentation showing the development patterns in Mount Holly's existing ETJ for information before the issue would be considered.

Annexation

City Council discussed the City's philosophy on involuntary annexation and on assessments. Council Member Phyllis Harris stated that City Council would need more information on assessments before they could consider the issue and that Council has more important issues.

Regionalism

City Council discussed recent efforts at regional cooperation and felt that the City has too much on its plate to focus on regionalism.

Financial Overview

City Manager Kraus presented an overview of the City's financial picture and on the City's potential debt load. City Council discussed potential capital projects and priorities. City Council discussed conducting a Capital Improvement Plan Update.

City Council, by consensus, decided to delay building a new Street Department Facility until a developer shows interest in purchasing or developing the existing site.

Council Member Jim Hope listed deficiencies that he has spotted in the streetscape project and asked for the City Manager to set a meeting with the project engineer, W. K. Dickson.

Mayor Robert Whitt recessed the meeting until February 18, 2006 at 8:00 a.m.

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Mayor Pro Tem Phyllis Harris reconvened the meeting at 8:00 a.m. Mayor Robert Whitt arrived momentarily and assumed the gavel.

2006-2007 Budget and Capital Projects

City Council discussed the River Town Green project and the Gateway Park. City Council, by consensus, decided to no longer actively pursue the acquisition of the Boat Landing site.

City Manager David Kraus and City Council discussed the completion of the streetscape project. City Council decided to delay the streetscape ribbon cutting ceremony until the project is completed. City Council deferred the planning for the event to the Special Events Committee.

City Council reviewed the cost estimates for the Mount Holly Citizen's Center project, also known as the A & E Building. City Council, by consensus, decided not to phase in the project but to pursue the renovations to the entire building. City Council also decided, by consensus to drop the landscaping portion of the project from the budget. City Council stated that they wanted local landscaping firms to bid on the plantings in the site work.

City Council discussed construction of the ABC Store project. Council Member Jim Hope added that the City needs to recoup all of the expenses to date. City Council decided, by consensus, to not spend any additional funds until after meeting with the Chairman of the ABC Commission.

City Council discussed the Tuckaseege Park Expansion project. Mayor Pro-Tem Phyllis Harris expressed that this project is vital to the community. City Council directed the City Manager to pursue the park expansion project and to spread the cost over 2 to 3 fiscal years.

Mayor Robert Whitt began a discussion of service levels. City Council directed City Manager to look at contracting City services as part of the budget.

Council Member David Moore discussed the idea of setting aside a penny for recreation. City Council asked to see a scenario for $.01 for recreation as part of the budget. Council Member Jerry Bishop asked to look at taking penny from cuts to the existing Departmental budgets.

City Council discussed storm water projects on private property and the impact this change in policy would have on the budget. City Council decided, by consensus, to keep current policy of not working on private property.

City Council looked at service levels in Fire and Police Departments. City Council discussed ambulance and rescue service. City Council discussed Police Department staffing size. City Council directed the Public Safety Committee to investigate the current service levels and make recommendations for the Budget.

City Council discussed the idea of Municipal Service Districts and decided to include the investigation of Municipal Service Districts as part of the Strategic Plan.

Mayor Robert Whitt discussed a request by the Mayor of Stanley to reconsider the past due amount on the Stanley water bill. City Council, by consensus, decided not to reconsider Stanley water service bill. City Council then discussed Mount Holly's water billing practices. Council Member Jerry Bishop discussed that the City of Belmont did not bill in 1000 gallons and that it eliminated many complaints. City Council directed City Manager to investigate the City's ability to bill in actual gallons consumed and not in 1000 gallons. City Council discussed that Mount Holly includes tipping fees on the water bills with no resolution.

Tuckaseege Recreation Center Fees

City Council discussed the user fees charged for the Tuckaseege Recreation Center. City Council discussed which events to sponsor, waiving the fees. City Council decided to enforce current fee schedule and waive fees only for City sponsored events. ***Council Member Jim Hope moved to make the Community Dinner part of the City sponsored Spring Fest. Mayor Pro-Tem Phyllis Harris seconded. Council voted unanimously.***

System Development Fees (continued)

City Council discussed reconsidering the grand fathering of the system development fees. ***Council Member Pat Hubbard moved to rescind the grand fathering of system development fees effective 12:01 a.m. on February 19, 2006. Council Member Jerry Bishop seconded. Council voted unanimously.***

City Council Practices and Proceedures

City Council discussed making the City Council Work Session more informal in order to promote discussion. City Council stated a preference for a round conference table for the work sessions. City Council directed the Mayor to work on this issue.

City Council discussed Council procedures and rules of order, as well as the format for the Agenda. City Council decided to keep the City's current practices on procedural issues. City Council decided to list scheduled and unscheduled public comment on the agenda and to place a time limit on presentations.

City Council discussed the role of the Committees. City Council decided, by consensus, to have Committee Presentations placed on every work session agenda with each committee reporting at least once per quarter.

City Council discussed the relationship between City Council and the Mount Holly Community Development Foundation. All council members found it beneficial.

Council Member David Moore discussed Council efforts concerning employee appreciation. City Council discussed holding appreciation events for each Department individually. City Council desired additional consideration for this issue in the future.

Council discussed voting districts. By consensus, City Council decided to take no action and continue to allow anyone to run for any seat.

Council discussed a desired level for Fund Balance. Council Member Jim Hope suggested 24%. City Council, by consensus, set the policy to keep at least 24% in Fund Balance.

City Council Priorities

City Council, by consensus, set the capital project priorities for the General Fund: 1 Streetscapes, 2 Mount Holly Citizen's Center or A&E Building and 3 Tuckaseege Park Expansion. Council set the capital project priority for the Utility Fund as the construction of an elevated water tank near the Food Lion.

City Council Roundtable

City Manager Kraus stated that it was a good retreat and the need for this type of discussion. City Manager Kraus appreciated the direction provided by City Council.

Council Member Frank McLean discussed an offer of land for a park, placing rock at the railroad bank on West Central instead of dirt, drainage problems at the Family Video Store, and Mr. Lee Talent's concerns about J P Development.

Council Member Pat Hubbard asked for the Manager to place funds in the upcoming budget for a similar council retreat in 2007.

Council Member Jerry Bishop stated that Council should have a goal of never letting the Mayor vote because Council was divided on an issue.

Mayor Pro-Tem Phyllis Harris stated that this was the best retreat in years and that City Council needs to remain focused on the issues.

Council Member Jim Hope stated that 33% of employees do 90% of the work. Council Member Hope requested a productive job description of all employees as part of the budget to evaluate each position. Council Member Hope stated the Mayor has united the Council.

Mayor Robert Whitt stated that he felt it was a good retreat and that the City Council made good decisions by having an understanding of the priorities and limitations. Mayor Whitt hoped that Council would come together and not split down the middle. Mayor Whitt discussed a news article on Lincoln County's adequate facilities ordinance.

Council Member Frank McLean moved to adjourn, Seconded by Council Member Jerry Bishop. Council voted unanimously to adjourn at 12:30 p.m.