CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
MOUNT HOLLY CITY COUNCIL
Work Session
January 28, 2008
7:00 pm

Members present: Mayor Robert Whitt, Councilmen David Moore, Jerry Bishop, Frank McLean, Bennie Brookshire, Perry Toomey, and Councilwoman Carolyn Breyare.

Staff present: Eric Davis, City Manager, Jamie Guffey, Assistant City Manager, Danny Jackson, Assistant City Manager, David Belk, Chief of Police, Dale Oplinger, Fire Chief, James Friday, Director of Utilities, and Mike Santmire, Utilities

Others present: Brooke Shephard, Attorney, Kemp Michael's office

CALL TO ORDER BY THE MAYOR

Mayor Whitt called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

INVOCATION

Councilman Moore led the Council, Mayor, staff members and attendees in prayer.

SET THE AGENDA

Mayor Whitt asked for any additions or changes to the agenda. There being none. Mayor Whitt asked that the first item on the agenda will be the Greenway report presented by Robert Suttenfield of the Mount Holly Community Development Foundation. There being no other items to add or discuss, Mayor Whitt entertained a motion to set the agenda as amended.

Motion: Councilman Toomey made a motion to set the agenda as amended. Councilman Bishop seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA

1. Greenway Report, presented by Robert Suttenfield, Greenways Committee, Mount Holly Community Development Foundation

Mr. Suttenfield stated that his report tonight is a follow up to the report as it relates to Greenways presented at the Ida Rankin School on January 17, 2008. Mr. Suttenfield stated at the Council meeting in February, Council will be asked to endorse the Catawba River Corridor and the Mount Holly Greenway Final Design plans through a Resolution.

Mr. Suttenfield stated that this process has encompassed 3 years of work and has incorporated the input of over 500 citizens. He added that we need to move forward on this project and that is why we need the positive endorsement from Council in February.

Mr. Suttenfield stated that Chuck Flink has put together a funding plan for the City and the Foundation by interfacing different North Carolina agency grants for the entire southern leg as well as Linear Park improvements up through and to the Citizens Center. These grants would total $1,750,000, with a local source match of $225,000. He stressed that the Foundation is prepared to underwrite a major portion of the local dollars to insure the success of the project.

Mayor Whitt stated that this item will be on the regular agenda for the Council meeting on February 11, 2008 and there will be opportunity for more discussion at that time. He added that it was nice to see that massive amounts of money would not have to come out of the City's coffers for this project.

On behalf of Council, Mayor Whitt thanked Mr. Suttenfield for his report.

2. Audit Report, presented by Rob Collis, Collis and Associates

Mr. Collis thanked Council and the Mayor for the opportunity to come back to the City to prepare an audit report as Collis and Associates had done in the 1980's. He also stated that he would be available at a future date for any questions or comments if Council should see the need, especially since Council and the Mayor just received the audit report tonight and did not have a chance to review it.

Mr. Collis briefly reviewed some points of the audit and reported that the City is in good financial health. He briefly discussed the Clean Water Management Trust Fund Grant received by the City this year as it caused a State single audit as shown on pages 66 and 67. Another point he highlighted was that the terms, material weakness and deficiencies, are terms that are interchangeable and those findings pertaining to them are discussed on pages 68 and 69.

Mayor Whitt asked Mr. Collis if the City was collecting enough revenue in the water and sewer budget to pay for our expenditures in our water and sewer budget. Mr. Collis stated that the City did collect enough to pay expenditures. Mayor Whitt asked if the City was collecting enough revenues for our General Fund to pay our bills and for debt in the General Fund. Mr. Collis assured him that the City was collecting enough revenue for the General Fund and that the balance has increased in 2007 in the available Fund Balance.

There were no questions of Council. Mayor Whitt thanked Mr. Collis for his presentation.

3. Strategic Vision Plans – Small Area Plans and Design Guidelines for the Downtown and South Gateway, presented by Deb Ryan, Charlotte Community Design Studio and the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute

Mayor Whitt stated that all Council needs to do is to accept the Plan and Guidelines but no vote is required this evening. At the February Council meeting, this item will be placed on the consent agenda and at that time, Council will vote on this plan.

Ms. Ryan began her presentation by stating that there are four areas to be reviewed and highlighted this evening and they are as follows:

- Draft Small Area Plan - South Gateway
- Draft Small Area Plan – Downtown and Riverfront

- Draft Design Guidelines for the Highway 273 Gateway
- Draft Design Guidelines for the Downtown and Riverfront

Ms. Ryan stated that Mount Holly's Community Planning began with the Strategic Vision Plan, then onto the Market Study and Annexation Strategy, to the Gateways and Downtown Plans, and then onto the Design Guidelines presented here tonight. The Implementation Plan Strategy is planned for the next City Council meeting in February. She turned the presentation over to Vickie Bott.

Vickie Bott, of the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute Land Use Environmental Planning Division, began the presentation on the Small Area Plan for the South Gateway by highlighting some key points. They were as follows:

1. *Welcoming City entrance with landscape buffer, buildings set back from the street and wayfinding signage program.*
2. *Wood and Waters Open Space – making open space an integral part and destination as well as to establish the Woods and Waters District and Greenways.*
3. *Expanded Employment Base – pedestrian-oriented Gateway Retail Village, light industrial along I-85, and medical and professional offices on 273.*
4. *Transportation Network – expanded street network, enhancing traffic flow and slowing it down in some areas, pedestrian safety, improved pedestrian streetscapes, more connectivity through neighborhoods to the Greenway, sidewalks, and parallel roads to take the traffic burden off 273.*
5. *Growth in Housing – more opportunity for single family and owner occupied multi-family use. They would be a buffer for the Greenway and the light industrial park.*
6. *Catalyst Project – Gateway Retail Village – pedestrian friendly and mixed use facility with shops and offices, Gateway Street/Network Improvements, South End Greenway and Boat House, and South Gateway Business Park.*

Ms. Bott continued with the Small Area Plan, Downtown and Riverfront. Some of the highlights were as follows:

1. *Woods and Waters District – acquire land and build the Greenways. Establish zoning overlay and design requirement for the Woods and Waters District.*
2. *Linking Downtown to River Gateway – create a more welcoming entrance into Mount Holly via Highway 27 Bridge, extend Main Street's brick streetscaping along East Central Avenue and Lee Street to the river.*
3. *Downtown Character – supplement the existing zoning overlay and design requirements for the Downtown district, provide greenspaces throughout and preserve the City's historic legacy and character of contributing buildings.*
4. *Transportation Network and Wayfinding – emphasize important neighborhood connections with landscaped sidewalk planting strips, wayfinding signage for important sights and destinations, and increased connectivity with 3 connections into Riverstreet Park.*
5. *Catalyst Projects – encourage public and private projects that will develop or re-develop areas key to the City's long-term strategic plan. The revitalizing of the Mount Holly Cotton Mill is a good example.*

Mayor Whitt asked Ms. Ryan what she thought about having a one way street versus a two way street in front of the Citizens Center. Ms. Ryan stated that it would be a problem and provided a solution sketch with a two way street, parallel parking, and not going to the railway easement so that the City doesn't have to bargain with the railroad.

Ms. Ryan highlighted Design Guidelines stating that they are very similar to those presented in the Small Area Plans, South Gateway. She encouraged that each project be "incentivevised" and done selectively at a time.

Mayor Whitt stated that the Strategic Vision Plans will be put on consent agenda for the City Council meeting on February 11, 2008. If Council approves to accept the plans, then we will go back to the table to finds ways to implement certain aspects of these plans.

Mayor Whitt thanked Ms. Ryan and Ms. Bott for their presentations.

4. Discussion regarding the Proposed Elevated Water Tank, presented by Eric Davis, City Manager

Mayor Whitt stated that during previous meetings, Council has been discussing whether to have a 1 million or a 1.5 million gallon water tank installed on Huitt Street. Mr. Davis stated that the City Attorney is waiting on easement acquisition and the decision of the size of the water tank is up to Council.

Because the consensus of Council was leaning more toward a 1 million gallon water tank, Mayor Whitt asked their permission to put this item on the consent agenda for the City Council meeting on February 11, 2008.

Councilman McLean was still concerned that the City was going down the wrong road at this time and that other locations for the site need to be investigated as he was concerned with the proposed current site. Councilman Moore stated that with the smaller tank, we have more room on the current site, that the City owns the current site, and there is just one property owner to deal with regarding the easement. With this information, Councilman McLean stated that this item should be placed on the consent agenda. It was the consensus of other members of Council that this item be placed on the consent agenda for the February 11, 2008 City Council meeting as well.

Mayor Whitt called for a 5 minutes break at 8:00 pm.

After the five minute break, Mayor Whitt called the meeting back to order at 8:05 pm.

5. Discussion regarding leased space in the Citizens Center, presented by Edna Chirico, Sperry Van Ness Commercial Real Estate

Ms. Chirico referred to two reports -- the first report dealt with general lease rates and leasing space in the Citizens Center, and the second report which showed the estimated costs for multiple tenant up fit for the Citizens Center prepared by The Linda Construction Company. Ms. Chirico added that she received an email from a **Subway** franchise owner who determined that if a **Subway** sandwich shop would want to locate to the Citizens Center. **Subway** would not locate

there due to the lack of visibility and the lack of traffic. She stated that this is one business' opinion but it may also reflect opinions of other businesses looking into this area.

Ms. Chirico stated that when a potential business looks at a retail or office space locations, they look at how much will the space cost them, what is the condition of the space, can people get to the space easily, and what are the other location choices for their businesses.

Ms. Chirico stated that presently in Mount Holly, there is a $10 square foot lease rate. For the Citizens Center space, the City would hope to expect a $12 - $13 a square foot lease rate as it is a freshly renovated space. She wasn't sure if there is a market for a $12 - $13 a square foot space now as we need more energy in downtown for that building space in the Citizens Center to succeed. The City of Belmont's initial square foot leasing rate at one time was $12 - $13 per square foot. Once businesses and restaurants became established, then the leasing rate went to $16 - $17 per square foot. Asking for a $16 – $17 per square foot leasing rate for Mt. Holly just won't happen now as the City is just not there yet.

Mayor Whitt asked if Mount Holly could collect upfront from a leased tenant to do renovations or up fitting. Ms. Chirico stated this is not an option at this time.

Mr. Davis asked Council and the Mayor to think about what type of businesses – retail, restaurants - should be at this location. Mayor Whitt stated that there has been some discussion at other meetings about types of businesses and at one time, there was discussion about the library being located there. He asked that staff find out more information on whether the library is interested in locating to the Citizens Center.

It was the consensus of Council and the Mayor to discuss leasing options and types of tenants at another meeting.

Mayor Whitt thanked Ms. Chirico for her candid presentation.

6. Discussion regarding sale of City Owned Property, presented by Eric Davis, City Manager

Mr. Davis discussed the options of disposing City owned property as we move into the Citizens Center. In reviewing the budget and the condition of City finances, he determined that the City does not have to sell these buildings quickly for funds. He added that at this time, Mr. Michael is working on a contract with Ms. Chirico to market our properties but the contract is not yet completed.

Mr. Davis asked for direction from Council and the Mayor on how they would like to move on these properties.

Councilwoman Breyare wanted to see some type of control regarding the City Hall property whether it be leased or sold as it is part of the heart of the City. Councilman Bishop agreed with Councilwoman Breyare and wished that the Police Department building and the property by the Holiday Inn be put on the market to sell. Councilmen Toomey, Brookshire, and Moore agreed and Councilman Moore added that perhaps the library would like to locate to City Hall. Councilman McLean reminded Council and the Mayor that the original price for City Hall was

bought and paid for with $1.00 and that the City has certainly benefitted from its use and there was no need to rush on it.

Mayor Whitt stated that the consensus of Council was that the leasing or selling of City Hall was not to be rushed, and that the Police Department building and the property located by the Holiday Inn should be put on the market and sold. He recognized that leasing will be slow at the Citizens Center but that it will come with time.

7. Discussion of a Proposed Engineering Contract with Pease & Associates, presented by Eric Davis, City Manager

Mr. Davis stated that the City must look at waste water treatment options and their associated costs because our current system is almost at capacity. The City has been looking at CMUD (Charlotte Mecklenburg Utility Department) and neighboring communities for solutions, or to expand our current treatment plant. All of these options will be costly.

Because time is at an essence and because the State is going to evaluate the environmental study provided by CMUD, Mr. Davis thought that an engineering perspective would be beneficial at this point. Mr. Davis introduced Don Garbrick with Pease and Associates, an Engineering firm in Charlotte, who has provided a proposal for our Waste Water Treatment situation.

Mr. Garbrick stated that he has been with Pease and Associates for 30 years and that the company is a 70 year old company. The decision the Council will make regarding the City's waste water treatment options is one of the biggest for the present and for future generations and it is important that the City have the right information and the best options to proceed.

Mr. Garbrick stated that Pease and Associates looks at all the facts. We would look at the environmental assessment by CMUD to see what the actual cost would be with CMUD. Pease and Associates excels at project cost estimating. The company would look at City's existing facility and review the existing tank to determine what is still good, and determine what can be reused, and build upon that information. The company will determine what it would take to go to another neighboring community such as the City of Belmont for waste water treatment. We determine that some aspects of the project do not need to be done all at once and can be done in phases.

Mr. Garbrick pointed out that the City has a very important and valuable asset – a Discharge Permit. The City can maintain its Discharge, known as poundage, and it can become more efficient with increased capacity. Mr. Garbrick stated that currently, the City's allocated permit flow is at 80%. At 90%, construction will have to be done to make improvements to the plant if the City does not rely on outside processing.

Mr. Davis stated that the City should look at the different cost options – how much will it cost to go with CMUD, the cost to go with Belmont, and what would the cost be if we improved our own system.

Mayor Whitt asked Mr. Garbrick what is the estimated cost to perform the work. Mr. Garbrick stated that it would cost $63,000.

Mr. Davis stated that once we have the information the City needs from CMUD and from the City of Belmont, the City may decide to stay in the waste water business. This decision will kick off a 2 year process for Requests for Proposals and Qualifications. There will be a number of engineering firms who will wish to bid but those firms with experience would be the better choice to get the job done correctly.

Mr. Davis asked Mr. Garbrick to list what projects Pease and Associates have done in North Carolina. Mr. Garbrick stated that some of the projects are the Thomasville facility at $27 million, the Southern Rowan upgrade at $8 million, City of Cramerton at $5 million, and other facilities such as Long Creek, Catawba Creek, Crowders Creek, City of Charlotte, City of Lexington, and City of Elizabeth City - around 20 plants in this area.

Mr. Davis stated that the City is using about 2.5 million gallons a day out of our 4 million gallon plant. Flow wise, the City is good though for future growth, the City would be allocated to almost capacity.

Mr. Davis asked Council and the Mayor to allow Pease and Associates to do the work that they have outlined and to place this item on the consent agenda for the February 11, 2008 Council meeting. For the Council Retreat in March, we will be provided with numbers to discuss from Pease and Associates.

Mr. Garbrick stated that if Pease and Associates should be placed on the consent agenda for the February Council meeting, that they will begin work tomorrow without any obligation to the City.

It was the consensus of Council and the Mayor that Pease and Associates be placed on the consent agenda for the February 11, 2008 Council meeting. Mayor Whitt stated that at that time, and upon the approval of Council, that the City will begin to enter into a contract with Pease and Associates.

Mayor Whitt thanked Mr. Garbrick for his presentation.

8. Discussion regarding City Public Relations/Marketing, presented by Leslie Shiel and Aletha Hart, H&S Media

Ms. Shiel stated that Public Relations and Marketing for Mount Holly is a way of communicating with the public to gain public understanding and support. It is an important tool in that it allows the community to be well-informed with timely, accurate information about key issues, it results in greater public participation in special events and programs, and it heightens the positive public visibility of Mount Holly.

Ms. Shiel stated H&S Media can provide PR/Marketing press releases to the public by the City website, by linking up to websites such as neighborhood homeowners associations and businesses, by establishing relationships with editorial staffs of local publications and with TV stations, by round ups to reporters for special stories of interest, and by establishing an email database of interested Mt. Holly residents and businesses. She discussed media training for staff,

Council, and the Mayor, helping with speech writing, and preparation for media interviews. Ms. Shiel added that H&S Media will also run interference for staff, Council and the Mayor by taking calls from reporters, finding out what information the reporter needs, researching it and conveying that information to the reporter.

Mr. Davis asked Council and the Mayor if they wished to explore this Public Relations/Marketing service. It was the consensus of Council and the Mayor that there was a need for this type of service for the City. Mr. Davis stated that he will start working on a proposal for H&S Media.

Mayor Whitt thanked Ms. Shiel and Ms. Hart for the presentation.

9. Discussion of Dedication Ceremony for Clean Water Management Trust Fund Properties, presented by Eric Davis, City Manager

Mayor Whitt stated that this item concerns property that the City has acquired and has turned into a conservation easement up the Catawba River. He added that we need to have press releases on the Dedication Ceremony and we need to thank the legislators who helped us secure the funds to purchase this land.

Mr. Davis asked Council for their input in having a public dedication for this event in the spring. It was the consensus of Council and the Mayor to proceed with this event and that former Mayors and Council members should be invited to the event.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Brookshire stated that there will be an Archives Committee meeting Tuesday night. He requested a $5,000 budget for the Archives Committee for lighting, shelving, framing, and fixtures in the Great Hall.

Councilman Bishop stated that in most towns and cities, non-profit committees perform archive work. They also go out to citizens and see if they can get donations of items and try to secure funds from other sources rather than to use City funds.

Mr. Guffey stated that originally there were supposed to be built in cabinets and display cases but they were taken out of the plans to be replaced by having pictures and other items hung on the walls.

Mayor Whitt suggested that perhaps we can appropriate some funds if we could get a match from some of the local industries. He added that we have time before the dedication of the building to get this work done.

A brief discussion ensued.

Mayor Whitt asked Councilman Brookshire to request from the Archives Committee a "wish list" of things they would need and bring it back to Council. It was the consensus that the need

for funding was not immediate and could be handled with options such as possible local matches or by other means for the present time.

Mr. Davis stated that Councilman Moore will be attending the Main Street Conference in Rocky Mount with several members of the Foundation and two staff members.

10. Closed Session – Attorney/Client matters

Mayor Whitt entertained a motion to go into closed session for the purpose of Attorney/Client matters.

Motion: Councilman McLean made a motion to go into closed session with Councilwoman Breyare seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: Council Bishop made a motion to come out of closed session. Councilman Toomey seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Whitt announced that no action was taken while the Council was in closed session.

Motion: Councilman Bishop made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Moore seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 pm

Robert Whitt
Mayor

Eric Davis
City Manager