CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
MOUNT HOLLY CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION

NOVEMBER 1, 2005
CITY HALL

The Work Session of the City Council of Mount Holly was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Mayor Bryan Hough. The following were present:

Mayor Bryan Hough
Mayor Pro-Tem Michael Helms
Councilwoman Phyllis Harris
Councilman Jim Hope
Councilwoman Pat Hubbard
Councilman Frank McLean
Councilman David Moore
City Manager David Kraus
Assistant City Manager Danny Jackson
Assistant City Manager Jamie Guffey
Police Chief Benson Hoyle
Street and Solid Waste Director Mike Santmire
Fire Chief Dale Oplinger
Community Development Planner Greg Beal

The invocation was led by Councilman Moore.

Mrs. Harris **MOVED** to approve the agenda with replacement of item #2 with streetscape update. Motion **SECONDED** by Mrs. Hubbard. All in favor.

1. **To Consider Presentations on Strategic Plan.**

1ST Presentation by Competitive Strategies Group - Steve Stout introduced Jay Garner, President of Competitive Strategies Group. Mr. Garner stated the company is based in Atlanta, Georgia but representative Steve Stout is here in Gaston County. He stated they are engaged in the economic development business. In the past 25 years, he stated he has been in the trenches creating opportunities for the citizens of communities as a practitioner. He has consulted for four years. He continued to state our focus is solely on economic development. Mr. Garner explained their company is often retained by companies asking us to identify where they should locate facilities. Some of our experience includes strategic planning and organizational analyses. He presented a PowerPoint presentation (attached). He explained their focus was a implementation strategy, working in phases. The total fee for this would be $50,000 including expenses. After speaking, he thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak and stated he would enjoy the opportunity to be part of their team. Mayor Hough then directed Council to ask any questions they may have.

Mayor Hough stated, as a city, we are looking to get information about land use. Our city has continued to grow over the last few years. How does your plan address that? Mr. Garner stated that is not part of our strategic plan. After completion of the strategic plan, you would then implement a land use plan. Mayor Hough asked if this plan would direct us in the areas needing redevelopment? Mr. Garner stated it would depend on the project. He stated we offer recommendations but that is out of scope and is a different project in itself.

Mr. Hope asked what attracts you and your firm to our city for an opportunity to work with us. Mr. Garner stated because we feel we could be of help for you and the success you all experience creates a wonderful reference for us.

2nd Presentation by Laramore Incorporated. Mr. Buck Laramore stated Mt. Holly stands at a very crucial time in history. This is a wise time to undertake this project. He gave five reasons why his company should be the chosen group: quality you can trust, responsive local service, regional and national perspective, outstanding value for your investment, and action oriented economic development. He stated his company has worked with Gaston County Economic Development for 12 years. He stated we will provide you with high quality strategy to mesh hand and glove with Gaston County. He stated while another firm may have to spend time figuring about what Mt. Holly is all about, we already are familiar with this. He stated his company is action oriented. He introduced Frank Warren. Mr. Warren stated we really need to look at Mt. Holly in terms of regional context – what is Mt. Holly's position in Charlotte economy, etc. He stated he has been involved in several studies just to maintain balanced tax base for cities, which is a huge issue, and I look forward to working with you on that. He stated we will find out what strategy will transplant into something concrete as well as how land development, new jobs, new citizens, etc will play a role. He passed out informational packets explaining how to create a successful economic strategic plan (attached). Mayor Hough directed Council to ask any questions they may have.

Mrs. Hubbard asked can we be assured that we are not getting a smaller version of the Gaston 20/12, a county plan reduced to a city size. We need to retain our uniqueness. Mr. Laramore stated the process we use involves citizens, leadership in community and we will pick out our best strategies. The process of the plan will be similar to the Gaston County Plan but I can assure you our plan will be unique and authentic and it is our professional commitment to do that. I don't think anyone can be more eager to help than us.

Mr. McLean asked about 20/12 plan with Gaston County. Mr. Laramore stated they went out o9f the chute in the direction they thought best but we have been able to roll with the times. Our process is totally oriented to the real world.

Mrs. Harris asked about community involvement. Does that work better or does a small group work better? Mr. Laramore stated realistically, it is a mid way point. In a democracy, you should give people an opportunity to speak. You should have a leadership forum of people. The act of being open is important. I do think you should allow a town meeting and then form a forum of leadership after that to keep it moving forward.

Mr. Hope asked what attracts your company to our city. Mr. Laramore states it is the incredible potential. You are in a great position but the rest of the world does not even know it. You can leave a legacy for future generations. You have to have tremendous political will to stand up and market forces so they don't take advantage. The point is it is so important to do this now and we would love to be a part of it.

Mrs. Hubbard stated you talked about a branding strategy and general economy strategy. Is this included? Mr. Laramore stated yes. Many decisions will have to be made early in the process.

Mayor Hough asked what do we get in return for the marketing strategy. Land use plan. Mr. Laramore stated that would be a natural progression. We can tackle it from different perspectives. We need to look into what all options could do for the tax base. Mayor Hough stated he just needed to be clear that a land use plan is separate. Mr. Laramore stated yes that would be separate. Mr. Laramore stated you are better off doing a strategic plan first and then a land use plan can come in and support that. Mayor Hough stated in the Gaston 20/ 12 plan, the real catalyst has been the chamber, so it is something to understand as a city, who will be the catalyst. Mr. Laramore stated there has to be one spark plug so to speak to make this work. You need a strong group of people in support of this spark plug.

Mr. Helms asked should the strategic plan be a living document? Mr. Laramore stated it does need to be a flexible, living plan.

3RD Presentation by Image Designs. Mr. Ken Featherstone spoke and introduced the members of his team. He presented a four box tier explaining his plan (attached). Combined, our group has 200 years of experience. The marketing plan is a crucial thing and it will start with building the city visually to the people who do not know who Mt. Holly is. We need to be able to coordinate this project, and pull together youth programs, school programs, etc across the board. One thing I feel is needed is higher end homes with a set designed community. Businesses coming in should tie in. Downtown needs to be revitalized in coordination with this process. You have a unique opportunity to step outside the box and create a truly attractive place to be. The three principles should be addressing what is the service, what is the product, and what is the appeal. You could be a model city for other people to emulate. Mayor Hough directed Council to ask any questions they may have.

Mr. Hope asked what attracts your firm to our city? He stated one reason was that his family has lived in Gaston County for over 100 years. I would like to be a part of where you are going, as well as where you have been.

Five minute recess called by Mayor Hough.

2. **Streetscape Update.** Mr. Kraus stated we need to do some things to spruce up the details. Harry Suddreth, Mike Santmire, John Hope and several council members came to a meeting regarding this. One store owner has requested no Crepe Myrtle trees in front of his store. I would like for Council to direct staff on how to proceed, pull out of landscaping project or change type of plant species being put in. Concern is when pulling out of landscaping portion of contract, we may lose part of the credit due. Currently, we have Red Maples, Lacy Bark Elms, Crepe Myrtles, Monkey Grass, and Daylilies. I would like Council input before proceeding. Mr. Hope stated this project was detailed and had been reviewed, will this present a scheduling problem? Mr. Kraus stated I do not know how Sealand will proceed with this. Sealand stated their sub is willing to change species if needed and work within our budget. I am concerned about the legal portion of this. Mr. Hope stated this is very unusual for this to happen at this stage and this issue should be handled with caution. Mr. McLean asked if we will be ready for the parade on November 30th? Mr. Kraus answered yes. Mr. Santmire stated it is not feasible to pave a road in less than 45 degree weather so that should be held off of until the spring. Mrs. Harris stated the plan we have right now is good but it could be spectacular with a few changes. Mr. Michael stated that Sealand's contract is to do a variety of things downtown and planting is part of that. If Sealand wants to release that part of their contract it would be okay but what I hear from David is that it was referred to a subcontractor and he is not going to bow out. The Council may have to pay for this in full even if you change – therefore you would be paying for it twice. You can be free to bid ongoing maintenance on it, but this particular contract is a done deal. Mr. Hope stated he would suggest putting together a scope of work, present it to Sealand and get a estimate- if it is not satisfactory, then we could bid the changes out to another contractor but then we could run into scheduling problems. Mr. Kraus stated one concern of the

landscaper is that he has already put in the irrigation system and another contractor may damage his work. Mr. Hough stated with the scope of the project, we had to trust architect, staff, etc. Now, Sealand picks who they work with and it is hard to get around this. Every person on this Council would like to find a better way to incorporate our citizens to have a change to bid and work for the city, etc. Ms. Harris stated we have to trust that the landscaper is putting in the correct species, etc. We need to find these things out before planting takes place. Mayor Hough stated I know we have a good architect, the question is what we want. Mr. Kraus stated the real issue was the items chosen did not have a lot of color. Mr. Hough stated the bottom line is we can't do a thing with that contract, we will just have to deal with paying extra to change. Mr. Hough asked Ms. Harris to handle talking to the landscaper, etc. Mr. Hope stated the landscape architect should be involved. Mr. Kraus stated he will set that up. Aaron Suttenfield, RDS landscaper, stated it is the best idea to continue with the current landscaper under his contract. I think he could work within his budget to make these changes. His suggestion is to change the species now. He stated he will be happy to help.

3. **To Consider Moratorium on Annexations.** Mr. Hough stated we had a public hearing about this and we have heard from the strategic planning individuals. Mr. Hope stated we have a great opportunity to put in place a moratorium in order to be successful with out strategic plan. I think we should not exclude the ETJ at this point. Mr. McLean stated we have 2000 homes on the schedule to be built now. That is scary to me. Mr. Hope stated personally he would like to see it on the schedule for the 14th. All in agreement.

4. **To Consider Presentation of Rotary Club on Proposed Donation.** Bill Lineberger, president of rotary club stated they would like to present donation of a bench to the city. The club is 100 years old this month. The Board of Directors of our club would like to entertain a proposal to look at a solid marble bench, black in color with arms. It can be moved at a later date if needed. It is heavy enough that no one individual should be able to lift it. It is a quality marble bench that would be an additive to the City. Mrs. Harris **MOVES** to accept the donation of a bench, **SECONDED** by Ms. Hubbard. All in favor.

5. **Deleted from Agenda.**

6. **To Consider Changes to Maple Street Project.** Mr. Michael stated the situation that Council described is to have property owners sign agreement and have plumber to come on to property and bring new service laterals for waste and sewer. I did not say anything then because I was unsure of the project scope. Since then, David and I have talked and we feel it would be wiser to have quotes from several plumbers and then agree with owners that when it the work is completed by licensed plumber, the city will reimburse them up to the agreed amount. That way, if the property owner has problems, etc, then it is between the contractor and the owner and the city is out of that loop. We are asking Council to allow City Manager to come up with figures and offer that amount to property owners. It will have to be done within a stated time, allowed amount, and licensed plumber and has to have a City of Mt. Holly privilege license. Mrs. Harris stated she agrees with this. There will be an agreement. If they don't agree to it then they will not have water and sewer eventually. Proposal is to take water and sewer lines out next July. Mr. Kraus stated so far the max was $2600 per household.

7. **To Consider Proposed Lease of City Land.** Mr. Michael stated I am going to talk to you about a work session we had earlier this year. The council discussed upon acquisition of land around the river they would want someone to live in the existing house to prevent vandalism etc. I have prepared a lease . This property has been leased by the Wester brothers for 40 years or more. It covered 14 acres initially. The Wester brothers owned 80 acres that they sold to Duke Power and then leased 14 acres back. At this point, Jack Setzer resides there. All boat landings, house, etc were

built by tenants. Jack Setzer indicates he would like to remain there and he has been paying the property taxes and 700 dollars per year. That comes to about 300 dollars per month. He also had maintenance responsibility, insurance, utilities, etc. Under this lease, there would only be approximately 4 acres, the main house, garage, covered picnic area and boat landing. There is a small unoccupied house that is not included. The city then could build any buildings they want on surrounding land. Also driveway into property and boat landing would be used in common by tenant and City. The City could terminate this lease with 11 months notice or change lease with 6 months notice to tenant. The City will own the house so the city will want to insure the house and there will be no property tax. The lease requires Jack to pay the first $1000 of repairs during the 12 month period. After that, the City will pay any amount over $1000 in said year. There is an issue about the boat dock. It was washed away partially last year during a storm. The posts that hold up the stationary part have been totally destroyed. Jack has not repaired it because he did not know if he would be there. Jack is willing to repair this if he is going to be allowed to stay. If the city becomes owner and it is not repaired, then a permit would be required and create a lot of red tape and possibly may not get a boat dock. The lease states that the City will reimburse Jack up to 2000 dollars for work done on the boat dock prior to City owning property. (Copy of Memo and lease attached). I feel this will accomplish what the City wants. Mr. Hope asked what is the responsibility of the city to advertise leased property. Mr. Michal stated if the City lease is for more than a year you have to provide a public notice. Mr. Helms stated as far as the dock, we are going about this the right way. Mrs. Harris agreed. Mrs. Hubbard **MOVES** to approve lease as approved by Mr. Michael, **SECONDED** by Mrs. Harris. All in favor.

8. **To Discuss Agenda Items.** Mrs. Hubbard stated a situation has come up with MHO Jr. Pee Wee Cheerleaders wining a competition and they are going to regional's in Alabama. I would like to deliver a proclamation for them at our Nov 14th meeting. All in favor. Mr. Helms asked about sidewalk on Smith Street as it is so narrow. Mr. Santmire stated provisions will be made to widen a little. Mr. Hough stated we do not have executive session need tonight. Mr. Hough asked council about strategic proposals and what Council's thoughts were on the speakers. How do you want to proceed? Do you want to call in one speaker to hear additional ideas, etc. Ms. Hubbard states I like Laramore. Mrs. Harris stated I agree and she liked the fact that he spelled out the different things he wanted to do. Mrs. Harris stated our greatest assets are our citizens and what they have to say for us. Mr. Hope stated I don't want to see a generic plan or cookie-cutter that they take from another municipality and bring it in for us. I want to be separated from Belmont , and Gaston County. I want us to be set apart. Mr. Hope and Mr. Hough discussed the land use being an issue with strategic plan and that Laramore was the only one willing to address this. Discussion was held about continuing with strategic plan and then following up with land use plan. Mr. Hough stated Mr. Laramore had more land use incorporated in his plan because he knew more about the area already. In the interim, we need to get a price for land use plan. Council decided to set up a meeting to talk to Mr. Laramore on Thursday, November 10th at 6:30. Mr. Hough stated this would be great and the 14th would be a great time to vote on this.

ROUND TABLE.

Mr. Moore – Asked for preference of date for WK Dickson Party , either December 1st or 15th at Downtown Charlotte City Club. Council decided on December 15th.

Mr. McLean - Stated we need temporary light in front of our building on meeting nights, etc. Mr. Santmire says we have none currently. Mr. Hope suggested a type of light to put on outside of building.

Mr. Hope - stated if there is not any change with the "llama farm", I have nothing further.

Mrs. Hubbard – Stated the East Gaston Band Booster Club would like to sell fruit for a long period of time. Can they put up signs in MH for a little longer than 30 days. Mrs. Hubbard **MOVES** to allow this, **SECONDED** by Mr. Helms. All in favor.

Mayor Hough – Stated I have a couple things for Council to think about . The Mayor term should be four years like Council terms, you can change that. Second, I think Council should consider voting districts. Is there anything the Council wants to do about the blue tarps on cars that came up during the last mayors' term. Mr. Kraus stated blue tarp issue needs to be directed to Danny Jackson.

Mr. Helms - Stated some cars can be old but antiques and can be worth a lot of money even though they are not restored.

Mr. McLean – Asked does the tarp ruin an antique car? What about a car cover?. Mr. Helms stated car covers are better but cost a lot more.

Mrs. Hubbard **MOVES** to adjourn. **SECONDED** by Mr. McLean Motion carries.
Meeting adjourned by Mayor Hough at 9:23 P.M.

Clerk ______________________ Mayor Bryan M. Hough ______________________

jmb