

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY



MOUNT HOLLY CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2004
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 Attorney Kemp Michael

City Manager David Kraus
Assistant to the City Manager Jamie Guffey
Assistant to the City Manager Danny Jackson
Utilities Director Don Price
Police Chief Benson Hoyle
Street and Solid Waste Director Mike Santmire
Fire Chief Dale Oplinger
Communication Director Megan Hanks

The invocation was led by Councilman Jim Hope.

#1: To Consider Allowing Signs for East Gaston High School Fundraiser.

Mayor Hough recognized Julia Benfield.

Mrs. Benfield introduced herself as a parent from East Gaston High School. She would like to put up signs at the overpass, at NC 273 & Main Street, and at Westland Farm Road and NC 27. The signs are for a barbecue benefit for East Gaston High School.

Councilwoman Harris MOVED to allow the signs at the places mentioned, two weeks before the event, and to be removed the following weekend. The motion was seconded by Councilman Moore and was approved unanimously.

#2: To Discuss the Development of the A&E Building.

Mayor Hough recognized Mr. Kraus.

Mr. Kraus introduced Scott Leo, who is present to discuss the City's legal situation in proceeding with the development of the A&E building. Mr. Kraus pointed out that Mr. Leo also serves as the City's bond counsel.

Mr. Leo stated that he has spoken with Mr. Kraus and Mr. Michael about the City's current situation. He understands that the City is considering different options for the development, and particularly the financing of the project, of the A&E building as the future location of City Hall. He stated that the City's major hurdles would be the public bidding laws and the conveyance of property. He understands that Mr. Michael has talked to the Institute of Government, which gave warning to be careful with the bidding laws. Mr. Leo said the relevant state statutes were amended a few years ago, which allows for a construction manager at risk scenario. This situation allows for the City to prequalify subcontractors, allowing the City to judge those companies based upon expertise and qualifications. This scenario also allows the City to do the financing, allowing the City to take advantage of the tax benefits not available to a private developer.

Mayor Hough asked, in this situation, would the City own the building?

Mr. Kraus said yes. He also stated that he has spoken with the developer. They do not want the responsibility of going to bid on the project. They want to choose the subcontractors.

Mr. Michael stated that these are new statutes, and they have not been in effect very long. They were approved since the last construction project the City did.

Councilman Hope stated that we need a special meeting to discuss what we can do—what we can afford to do—with everything else we have going on.

Mr. Michael spoke with Professor Bluestein of the Institute of Government. He says we would have to seek special legislation to allow us to work with a nonprofit organization as a third party.

Mayor Hough stated that this is a good topic for our potential mid-year retreat.

#3: To Discuss Economic Development Proposals.

Mayor Hough recognized Mr. Kraus.

Mr. Kraus stated that the City was approached by Ken Featherstone, who is interested in working with local downtown businesses to fund reconstruction of building facades.

Mr. Kraus introduced Edna Chirico, of Chirico-Huber Properties, who introduced John Huber, John Costner, Phil Brawley, and Dan DuVall.

Ms. Chirico stated that she has worked within the University Area, where she helped create University City Partners, a municipal service district that lobbied for the needs of people in the University Area. University City Partners is approaching their first year of existence. That area

is seeing a tremendous growth and increase in traffic and development. The Partners help to foster economic vitality and to prevent "leapfrogging" in development. The community is now pedestrian-friendly and eco-sensitive.

Ms. Chirico stated that she and the other individuals present have looked to Worthington, Ohio, as a community that is similar to Mount Holly. The community leaders there enhanced the appearance of the downtown--to draw people in--and created a family-friendly setting.

Ms. Chirico stated that she has lived in the Mountain Island Lake area for three years. She would like to see Mount Holly identify and understand our demographics, and to create an image.

Ms. Chirico stated that Mount Holly has three major zones for development: Highway 27, Main Street, and the riverfront. She stated that wide greenways could connect all three. She suggests targeting downtown as the financial district. Residential development will be key. She recommends encouraging lower income housing around the A&E Building, with higher income housing along Dutchman's Creek.

Dan DuVall stated that the Catawba River is what sets Mount Holly apart, and what makes it unique. Growth can change a community forever. Many small towns in this region are facing difficult times. Mount Holly has a unique opportunity to capitalize on the River and to become a destination for nature-based tourism. Mount Holly could provide artists in the Catawba River Basic with a place to display and exercise their talents. He cited the Virginia Ecotourism Association, or VETA, as an organization that reaches out to younger generations that want to live downtown, be outdoors, and enjoy the environment. He mentioned the idea of a Mount Holly Trading Company, a modern version of an old trading post, that could be located downtown, serving as the hub of the financial district. Mount Holly could offer recreational activities for the entire family, along with the activities offered at the US National Whitewater Center across the river.

Mr. DuVall described a Waterford Village at Mount Holly. The Village would feature Charleston-style single family homes along Dutchman's Creek. The homes would be 2-story, front-porch homes, within walking distance of downtown Mount Holly. This plan will sell the Mount Holly lifestyle.

Mayor Hough asked about the environmental impact on the watershed?

Ms. Chirico stated that a large master plan such as this can be clustered. The greenways can be considered when calculating pervious surface.

Mr. DuVall stated that the cost involved are as follows: a \$50,000 payout the first year (which is about a quarter of the cost of a similar commercial project), \$100,000 payout during each of the next four years, within an approved contract. Their profit would come from commissions and fees.

Councilwoman Hubbard asked if profits from the proposed half-cent sales tax could go to this project?

Mayor Hough said yes, it is economic development.

Councilwoman Hubbard asked if there is grant money available to help with a project like this?

Ms. Chirico mentioned the International Society of Ecotourism. She has already spoken to various Foundations about funding.

Councilman Hope stated he was concerned regarding traffic.

Mr. Duvall stated that such traffic would translate into more traffic for Mount Holly businesses.

Mayor Hough thanked the group for attending and for their presentation. He asked that they submit a proposal to staff, who would get it to Council.

The City Council moved into a joint session with the Mount Holly Planning Commission.

#4: To Discuss the Proposed Manual of Development Standards.

Hazel Michael stated that the Commission has some questions about the Manual, related to property ownership.

Jack Stevenson mentioned the voluntary historic designation. The way the manual is written it's mandatory, under Section 8.3.

Councilwoman Hubbard stated that the destruction should not be prohibited. Any new construction would simply have to be in keeping with the manual's guidelines.

Mr. Stevenson stated that a lot of the manual is subject to interpretation.

Joel Hubbard stated that several buildings in downtown Mount Holly would be cheaper to demolish and rebuild.

Mrs. Michael stated that the current City Hall building is an example of that.

Mayor Hough said that the point of this manual is not to discourage development.

Councilman McLean stated that the builder or the property owner should have to put up a bond when they demolish a building, so that they will build something back. Plans should be approved by Mr. Jackson's department in advance.

Carlton Broome said he thinks a bond is unfair to property owners.

Councilman Moore thinks as long as Council and the Planning Commission approve the plans, then it is okay for a property owner or a developer to proceed with those plans.

Bill Gary asked about an Architectural Review Committee?

Mr. Jackson stated that a mechanism is in place, which has never been used. We would have to establish a district of what is considered historic.

Councilwoman Harris stated that this is getting too complicated. We all want the same thing. How did Christian Sottile get the idea to add this demolition section?

Mayor Hough suggested that the Planning Commission and Mr. Jackson meet with Mr. Sottile to amend the document, and bring it back to Council for review.

#5: To Discuss ETJ.

Mr. Jackson stated that John Hoard, the summer intern, helped to analyze this information. Residents of the ETJ call for help with code enforcement and zoning—code enforcement especially causes problems. This costs the City time and money. The County has had zoning since 1992. County residents deserve county services. He recommends the City abolish the ETJ in developed areas.

Mayor Pro Tem Helms stated that in his personal opinion, we should abolish the ETJ.

Councilwoman Hubbard asked if we need the County's permission to do this?

Mr. Jackson stated that there is a certain time-frame by which we would do this, and the County would be involved throughout that process.

Councilman Hope stated that the purpose of the ETJ is to protect our infrastructure, to prepare those areas for annexation.

Mr. Kraus stated that he spoke with Jan Winters (Gaston County Manager) today. He suggested an interlocal agreement with the County for planning zones.

Mr. Gary stated that it is the undeveloped area that we are still concerned with. The developed areas are where the problems are.

Mayor Hough stated that it appears that Mr. Jackson has the direction he needs to move forward with plans to give up the ETJ areas.

Mayor Hough thanked the Planning Commission for meeting with City Council about these issues.

The City Council continued the Work Session.

#6: To Discuss the East Gaston Water & Sewer Line.

Mayor Hough recognized Mr. Kraus.

Mr. Kraus stated that the County Commissioners took up the agreement that Council sent to them, with Mr. Michael's amendment. They would like us to offer individuals the opportunity to use a financing mechanism similar to the one used by the City of Gastonia (20% down, 10% interest rate). In addition, the City could charge a 10% administrative fee. The tap fee would be \$800 for new construction, \$400 for existing construction. The details will be in this week's memo packet.

#7: To Discuss Council Retreat.

Mayor Hough mentioned that the idea has come up for a mid-year retreat to discuss the items that the City has going on right now. The suggestion has been to hold the retreat at Kemp Michael's lake house on October 22, at around noon. Reeves McGlohon may serve as moderator again.

#8: To Discuss Agenda Items.

Mr. Kraus stated that the proclamation for Mount Holly Furniture Company and unfinished item for East Gaston Water and Sewer Line would be added.

ROUNDTABLE

Councilman Moore stated that the Business Association wants a sing for the Community Dinner.

Councilwoman Harris stated that she saw a sign for a Stanley activity on Hawthorne. We should only allow Mount Holly signs.

Councilwoman Harris MOVED that the Mount Holly Business Association would be allowed permission to post signs for the Community Dinner. The motion was seconded by Councilman Hope and was approved unanimously.

Councilwoman Harris stated that the bridge ceremony will be on tomorrow, rain or shine. Mr. Santmire's guys did a great job. Mayor Hough will welcome everyone. Mr. Guffey has the programs.

Councilman Moore suggested that Council also recognize Julian Chapel with a proclamation.

Councilman Hope stated that he would like the City to send a congratulatory letter to the Morganton All-Stars.

Councilwoman Hubbard stated that the stoplight at Lee Street is not working correctly.

Mr. Guffey stated that it is an electrical problem and is being fixed.

Mr. Michael stated that he may have a meeting regarding the boat landing tomorrow.

Mr. Michael stated that regarding the ABC site, the principal suggested a complementary contract. Our contract is with Maya Lodging, LLC, the Hotel is owned by Maya Holly, LLC.

Mr. Kraus stated that we will add an increase in water/sewer fes to Monday's agenda.

Mr. Santmire discussed the loose leaf pickup.

Mr. Kraus also stated that the A&E Building would be on the October work session agenda.

Mr. Kraus stated that Chief Oplinger would like to present an item to Council.

Chief Oplinger discussed the SeaDoos, which are on loan and were due back to the dealership today. The dealership has offered a deal for us to purchase them now. He would like to take the money allocated for ambulance lease purchases to buy the two Waverunners. He mentioned that they could be maintained at the City's garage.

Councilwoman Harris MOVED to spend lease purchase money on the SeaDoos. The motion was seconded by Councilman Hope and was approved unanimously.

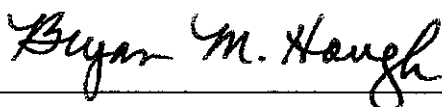
Mayor Hough reminded Council that the Gaston Chamber is holding a meeting at City Hall on September 28. Mayor Hough spoke with Senator Hoyle. All of the parkland money will be made available to us.

Councilwoman Harris MOVED to enter executive session to discuss personnel issues. The motion was seconded by Councilman Moore and was approved unanimously.

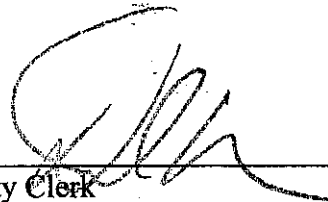
Councilwoman Hubbard MOVED to adjourn at 9:30 pm. The motion was seconded by Councilman Moore and was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Megan Hanks
Communication Director



Mayor



City Clerk