

PROSPERITY AND LIVABILITY COMMITTEE

Chaired by Chairman Ewing

January 7, 2015 – 9:00 a.m.

City Manager's Conference Room

Present:

Committee Chair Jason Ewing and Committee Members Latimer Alexander (left the meeting at 11:02 a.m.), Alyce Hill and Jay Wagner

Also Present:

Council Member Cynthia Davis

Staff Present:

Randy McCaslin, Interim City Manager; Bob Morgan, Interim Assistant City Manager; Joanne Carlyle, City Attorney; Jeron Hollis, Communications Officer; Wendy Fuscoe, Core City Administrator; Mary Sizemore, Library Director; Keith Pugh, Engineering Services Director; Henry Moon, Right-of-Way Agent; Mark McDonald, Transportation Director; Eric Olmedo, Budget and Performance Manager; Loren Hill, President- High Point Economic Development Corporation; Mike McNair, Director of Community Development; Lorrie Russell, Library; Jeff Moore, Director of Financial Services; Lisa Vierling, City Clerk; Tom Vincent, Deputy City Clerk.

Others Present:

John Stewart (ECS); Brian Maas (ECS); Robert Grill (Moser Mayer Phoenix); Robin Spinks (Greenfield Development); Mary Lilly (Greenfield Development); Dorothy Darr (Southwest Renewal Foundation); David Rosen (Citizen); Gloria Halstead (Citizen and member of Historic Preservation Commission); Richard Wood, City Project; Charles Simmons, Citizen and Downtown Property Owner; Judy Stalder (TREBIC)

Media Present:

Pat Kimbrough – *High Point Enterprise*

AGENDA ITEMS

Brownfield Grant Update

Wendy Fuscoe, Core City Administrator, explained this Brownfield Grant had originally been submitted in 2010. The City of High Point was awarded the grant in the amount of \$400,000, with no cost to the City of High Point, to do Phase 1 and Phase 2 cleanups on properties. When the grant was submitted the focus was on Uptowne, Washington Street and SOSI. Ms. Fuscoe distributed a map included with grant application highlighting potential properties within the Core City. She emphasized the City is not married to these properties and presently there may be other areas to focus on. Ms. Fuscoe distributed a map of a recent survey of Historic Industrial Properties and City-Owned Properties to help identify Brownfield properties.

Ms. Fuscoe explained the reason the City got this grant was to take Brownfield properties which are perceived as contaminated or contaminated properties that are underutilized and unproductive and put them into productive use. The focus area is the Core City Area, but the City is not committed to any specific properties.

Ms. Fuscoe said once the City got the grant, staff did an extensive RFQ and selected ECS, a Greensboro company. ECS has teamed up with Greenfield Development, who comes at the project with an economic focus. She stated the consultants will be working with a Brownfield Advisory Committee and passed out a list of the committee members and said all had agreed to serve. There are bankers and developers on the committee because the goal is to get the land into productive use. Also Dorothy Darr is on the committee because many of these sites are in the southwest part of the City. Rebecca Smothers is on the committee because in 1999 she was instrumental in getting the first pilot Brownfield grant.

John Stewart of ECS introduced his colleague Brian Maas. Mr. Stewart stated he was very familiar with the City of High Point and that ECS was excited to help the City find properties to be developed and bring in jobs and money. Mr. Stewart explained ECS approached the project in two-pronged manner. ECS is looking for underutilized and potentially contaminated properties that developers are skittish of developing. The Brownfields process gives the developers some liability protection. ECS has teamed with Greenfield Development because Greenfield are experts in identifying whether or not pieces of property can be developed.

Robin Spinks of Greenfield Development explained their role was to help identify the sites with committee and ECS. Mr. Stewart will determine if the property is contaminated. Greenfield's role will be to see which properties have development potential. Additional grant money may be available from the State and Federal governments.

Mr. Stewart said once the initial study was completed they would have community meetings and perhaps create a web site or utilize other social media. It will be a collaboration between ECS, Greenfields, the City of High Point, community leaders and people from the community. Once the sites are identified ECS will assess the contamination. Depending on the types of contamination, the EPA has grants to pay for the cleanup.

Committee Chair Ewing inquired what the timeline for the project was.

Mr. Stewart said this was a three year process that began in October. ECS will meet with the committee this month, then meet with the EPA and local State Brownfield staff. Hopefully by February or so, ECS will be meeting with Greenfield to look at the properties and identify them. Mr. Stewart stated by early spring they hope to have boots on the ground, having meetings and culling the list down. Mr. Stewart explained once the properties are identified the first step is a Phase 1 environmental assessment which is going in and seeing if there is any potential environmental impact. By spring there will be a list of sites available with information about the individual properties.

Committee Member Alexander asked when in this process the owner of the property is contacted.

Mr. Stewart replied this would happen early in the process. Mary Lily of Greenfields said they would look at properties and then contact the property owners. Robin Spinks said the initial effort will be data gathering. Ms. Spinks added they had to do some evaluation of the property before contacting the owner so they can give the property owner a reasonable idea of what could happen with the property.

Committee Member Alexander inquired if they would check on the title for the property. He also asked if the buildings would be assessed as to what they would be useful for. Ms. Spinks assured that would be done.

Committee Member Alexander mentioned that PTRC had Brownfield Grant and asked if there was going to be any interfacing with PTRC. Ms. Spinks and Mr. Stewart said they planned to do that.

Mr. Stewart said this grant covers Phase 1 and Phase 2. Phase 1 is just looking at the properties. \$200,000 of the grant is for petroleum related such as gas stations and bulk storage facilities that sell petroleum and there is \$200,000 for hazardous material sites such as old factories or old chemical plants. If a site has both types of contamination the money can be allocated from the different funds. Phase 2 includes drilling holes and testing building materials. Mr. Stewart explained if it becomes a Brownfield Property there will be a Brownfield agreement. This gives the developer, not the property owner, liability protection and potential tax credits.

Ms. Spinks said there are many companies that can clean up Brownfields now.

Committee Member Alexander observed one site was Thomas Bus and wanted to know if active manufacturing would be considered. Ms. Spinks said that would not be a candidate for redevelopment. Sites such as that would be pared off the list. Interim City Manager Randy McCaslin asked when the pared down list would be available. John Stewart said that would be available in the spring.

Committee Chair Ewing expressed hope to have a presentation in April.

Mr. McCaslin asked if the City surveyed these sites and did some Phase 1 and maybe Phase 2 work, if that would place the City on a list for remediation money to take care of these sites. Ms. Spinks that would definitely be the first step. Mr. Stewart said if the site shows good development potential that helps to get the additional funding.

Library Parking Lot Update

Interim Assistant Manager Bob Morgan distributed handouts and explained he had been tasked to work with Robert Grill of Moser Mayer Phoenix to come up with some options for beautification of the library. Mr. Morgan said they had come up with two options: Option A and Option D.

Option A: Cost is \$440,000 and provides 166 parking spaces. This is the more modest of the two options. This option keeps all the entrances with the exception of M Street. This option has a

covered entranceway a brick sidewalk. There is an outdoor program space with a raised platform and trellis. On the Main Street side is a fenced-in children's area for outdoor children's programming.

Option D: Cost is \$750,000 and provides 153 parking spaces. This option closes the entrance on Main Street closest to the library uses the second entrance off of Main Street. Option D also includes the outdoor programming area and an expanded outdoor children's area with a gazebo. Option D has a brick plaza between the two areas. This option is more expensive because a lot of curbing and guttering will be changed. Option D especially improves the appearance of Main Street, which is the purpose of the two-thirds bond money.

Both options completely resurface the parking lot.

Committee Chair Ewing explained this started over a year ago and costs were much higher than Council had an appetite to do. In the fall, staff was asked to go to a landscape architect to try to dress it up without major infrastructural changes. Interim City Manager Randy McCaslin added some of those cost estimates ranged up to \$2 million and this is a much pared down version. Committee Chair Ewing said this dressed up the large concrete slab. He also stated there concerns about safety and lighting. Mr. Morgan said there is added ground lighting in the budget and the lights are very similar to what the city provides. Once the landscape plan is finalized the lighting can be addressed.

Due to the close proximity of the area proposed for the outdoor programming, Committee Member Alexander asked if traffic noise would be an issue. Mr. Morgan said noise is an issue the library presently deals with and suggested a wall could be put up. He emphasized the library had been built in phases and the purpose of this project was an attempt to tie it all together. Mr. Morgan said the bulk of the children's programming would take place in the children's area which is more protected from the street. David Rosen suggested hidden speakers playing music could help dampen some of the traffic noise.

Committee Member Alexander inquired about what considerations had been made for senior citizens visiting the library. Mr. Morgan pointed out the covered entrance where people could be dropped off as a benefit and stated handicapped spaces were also available.

Library Director Mary Sizemore said library staff envisioned using the outdoor children's area as an interactive area with gardens and maybe some sand. The library tries to do programming to support the STEM curriculum in local schools.

Mr. Morgan said the Library Foundation had pledged \$15,000 and the Friends of the Library have pledged \$10,000. The price range for the children's area is \$27,000 in the first plan and the larger one is \$37,000. Mr. Morgan suggested it may be possible to get Kiwanis or Rotary to sponsor part of it.

Council Member Davis asked what the price was for the decorative wall which might help with the noise issue. Robert Grill said the wall was included in the estimate.

Mr. McCaslin said the City had talked to the Rotary Club in the past about sponsoring a clock tower outside the library, which was part of the original plan. Chairman Ewing felt with the prominence of the library on Main Street it would not be difficult to pursue sponsorship opportunities from the community.

Committee Member Hill inquired how many people the outdoor gathering spaces would accommodate. Mr. Morgan estimated it to be around 75 – 100 people depending on the programming. Option D would accommodate more people.

Committee Member Alexander asked what the cost of the repaving was since this would probably have to be done in the future anyway. Mr. Morgan replied the cost of the resurfacing was estimated at \$115,000.

Gloria Halstead questioned safety issues and the amount of homeless people at the First Presbyterian Church. Mr. Morgan explained vegetation was being considered that did not provide cover.

Committee Member Alexander said he would like to see a presentation made to the public so the City could solicit citizens input. Committee Member Wagner felt the first two plans should be included in any public presentation that takes place. He stated the first plan was to create a space for interpersonal reaction a place designed for people that accommodates cars. Committee Member Wagner said these plans submitted today were places for cars that accommodate people.

Committee Member Alexander inquired how the first two plans would be funded. Committee Member Wagner said there was still \$2.1 million dollars available. Mr. McCaslin advised two-thirds bond money could be used for the library since the bond funds were earmarked for Main Street improvements. Committee Member Wagner noted the original plan was part of a larger vision to tie the area together and later Councils had decided to just do the parking lot.

Committee Member Hill stated that if the City was going to invest meaningful money in this, the Council should do something that is really going to be impactful and substantial. Committee Member Hill requested that the public comment effort reach beyond regular library users since part of the point of the project is to get more people using that facility and that area.

Committee Chair Ewing suggested Council determine a proposed budget plan for this project before putting it out for public comment. Committee Member Wagner pointed out this could be done in phases. Council Member C. Davis felt Council should be prudent when spending taxpayer money. Committee Member Wagner said \$3 million dollars phased in over ten years would not have a huge impact on the City budget. Committee Member Hill pointed out investing in the community is fiscally responsible.

Council Member C. Davis said there were other wards that have been neglected over the years that could benefit from some of that same money. The first plan had the City buying two buildings for \$450,000 and demolition of those buildings, however Council Member Davis C. Davis felt it might be better to utilize those buildings.

Committee Chair Ewing said the building purchases were in Phase 2 or 3 of the project and while a ten-year plan is great, the citizens may be impatient to see the project completed.

Committee Member Wagner suggested to meet with Peter Freeman and go over his plans. Committee Member Alexander was receptive to meeting with Mr. Freeman but was concerned with soliciting public comment at some point in time. Committee Member Alexander stressed it was important to find out what citizens want.

Mr. McCaslin said staff would schedule two or three drop-in sessions to solicit public comment and schedule a meeting with Peter Freeman. He stated these meetings would not be held until February.

One-Way Pairs to Two-Way Discussion

Transportation Director Mark McDonald said this project has been stored on the shelf for approximately six years. The City received a Federal CMAQ (Congestion Management Air Quality) Grant in 2004 or 2005. The City hired Wilbur Smith Associates to study the feasibility of converting English and Kivett; and Russell and Green back to two-way operation. Mr. McDonald focused on Kivett and English but invited questions about Russell and Green if necessary. Mr. McDonald passed out a summary that had been produced in 2009. For Kivett and English the study starts at the east end at Centennial Street and goes through the downtown area out to where Kivett and English merge back together at Phillips. There were three different options:

First option: road dieting. This retained the one-way pair option but reduced the capacity on the street to allow additional on-street parking, widening of sidewalks and other amenities.

Second option: Combination of the above in some areas along with converting portions of these streets to two-way operations.

Third option: Convert both back to two-way. This could or could not include on-street parking.

Mr. McDonald stated all the options require a significant level of street reconstruction and up to twelve signalized intersections to be completely rebuilt, resurfaced and remarked. The two-way option is the one that was recommended. It would allow for two lanes going westbound on English and one lane coming back in and the opposite of that on Kivett Drive. Mr. McDonald stated that for some of the tighter intersections to work, there would need to be some peak hour turn restrictions.

Mr. McDonald reported the cost for the complete conversion on Kivett ranged from \$3.5 million to \$4.7 million. That was in 2008 and 2009 dollars, costs now would be an additional 10 to 15%. He pointed out these figures are just for Kivett and English and does not include burying utility lines. The cost for Green and Russell was \$3 million to \$4.1 million. To do the Kivett and English pair would require \$4 million to \$5.5 million range depending on the level of amenities. A big part of the cost is traffic signal reconstruction.

Interim City Manager McCaslin said the City was getting ready to go through a major traffic signal update and inquired if that would have any impact on this. Mr. McDonald said the City would have had to have started the one-way to two-way project last week for the traffic signal update to have any impact.

Committee Member Alexander said historically this was a passion of Chris Whitley's and Mayor Bill Bencini's and they wanted to get rid of all one-way pairs.

Dorothy Darr pointed out this is City Revitalization 101. The Director of City and Regional Planning from UNC-Chapel Hill visited the City recommended this. Ms. Darr stated Winston-Salem had this as part of their long range plan and would do it when money became available. She also stated that Green and Russell were one way for only three blocks and suggested perhaps the west side could be done as one phase.

Mr. McDonald agreed phasing the various pieces would be possible.

Committee Member Alexander noted 50% of one stretch was railroad tracks and was not developable.

Committee Chair Ewing pointed out this came out of the Core City Incentive. The bus station, the train depot and the North State facility are all in the same area. Council authorized on-street parking along Kivett so this was seen as a potential opportunity to get English running two ways as a thruway with an opportunity for redevelopment in this immediate area adjacent to the bus depot, the train depot and the Pit. Committee Chair Ewing said there is a lot in that 1 to 2 block area the City could grow upon. That is what brought this back, the concept of focusing on a smaller area for development.

Jay Wagner stated there are legitimate benefits to two-way traffic both on the safety side and on the economic development side. He pointed out many studies pointed out that one-way traffic is bad for business. Committee Chair Ewing asked if there was any current or near-future initiative that we could piggy back on that would help mitigate some of the cost. Mr. McDonald said there was nothing that he was aware of.

Committee Member Alexander said this would have to be funded with a local transportation bond and it would have to be sold to the community. He felt there were other higher priorities that would have a greater impact on the City and be easier to sell.

Jay Wagner inquired about a future bond referendum package and whether or not this could be included. Mr. McDonald replied that it was possible, but there already was a long list.

Committee Chair Ewing asked if there was any appetite from the Committee for staff to devise anything further. Committee Member Wagner said he thought this was worth doing; this was one more piece of the puzzle and at least worth exploring further. Committee Chair Ewing inquired if Council would like to see a progressive schedule of how many phases and what the cost could potentially be. Committee Member Wagner said it was worth looking at to get a cost update and to look at West Green also.

Committee Member Wagner made a motion, seconded by Committee Member Hill, to ask staff to reevaluate Russell/Green and Kivett/English and identify how could price it out and do it in phases. The motion passed 3-1. Voting Aye: Committee Chair Ewing, Committee Members Hill and Wagner. Voting No: Committee Member Alexander.

South Main Street Streetscape Project Update

Interim City Manager Randy McCaslin said staff were instructed by Council to look at South Main Street from Business I-85 all the way in to Russell Street and come up with a landscaping/streetscaping plan for the area starting at the lower end at Business I-85 and working north. He said Engineering originally came up with a plan that just handled the outside edges and were looking at street trees and decorative benches. When staff brought that plan to an earlier version of this Committee, the Committee said they want to see more and look at the median in addition to the edges.

Keith Pugh, Engineering Services Director, said one of the options staff looked at was a raised median on South Main Street (mound type medians and street trees.) The option staff was getting guidance to pursue involved a product made by Paveway Systems, this is on a crosswalk on Hamilton just north of Commerce. Mr. Pugh explained with this product the company comes in and in 20 minutes they can do half a crosswalk and 2 hours later they can do the other half. He pointed out the reason that timing is significant is the crosswalks at Centennial and Kivett or Main and Hartley those were very labor intensive process to put those crosswalks in. The City had the company do one as a trial to gauge durability. It is just north of the transportation terminal and is holding up real well. Chairman Ewing inquired about the cost; Mr. Pugh replied it is \$10 a square foot. Mr. McCaslin said this could be used on a raised curb or raised median and this would be a little more business friendly. Mr. Pugh added this product can be repaired quickly. Mr. Pugh pointed out planters that could be placed in the median.

Committee Member Alexander pointed out potential issues safety and maintenance of the planters.

Mr. Pugh pointed out if the City puts in a median the street would have to be cut and drainage features would have to be added. Mr. McCaslin felt this would be a better alternative. Committee Chair Ewing inquired about the cost and if would be covered with the \$600,000 allocated for this project. Mr. McCaslin replied that would not be adequate if the City went with a center median and landscaping.

Committee Member Wagner asked about the State's plans for I-85. Mr. McDonald replied that the State was going to replace the bridge in 2016-17 or 2017-18. Mr. McCaslin said the project would start far enough north of the bridge this would not interfere.

Dorothy Darr mentioned that Alta Greenways is doing a design at this time at the Core City Greenway will come across Main at some point. Those recommendations will be done by May. Committee Member Alexander asked if anything could be done about the properties east of the bridge. Mr. McDonald pointed out the planters would require DOT approval. Mr. McCaslin said maintenance would be required. Committee Member Alexander brought up problems with

snow removal. Committee Member Ewing asked about the funding and Mr. McCaslin said the \$600,000 has been set aside.

Mr. Pugh stated many of the trees in the plans were outside of any publicly owned right-of-way so permission would have to be obtained from property owners.

Committee Member Alexander inquired if there was any urgency to spend this money, Mr. McCaslin said there was not. Committee Chair Ewing suggested this could be phased in since the original plan already had funds allocated. He felt the outside of the roads should be the priority. Committee Member Wagner noted that if a long term plan was to bury power lines the trees would have to come out and if that is the long term plan, perhaps the City should focus on the median.

Committee Chair Ewing asked staff to come up with a revised cost just for the median. Keith Pugh responded that the median, ten to sixteen feet wide, at \$10 a square foot it would \$120 to \$160 a foot. Mr. McCaslin asked if Council would like staff to do it by phases with a price tag per phase. Council Members were in agreement with Mr. McCaslin's proposal.

Core City Incentive Policy

Committee Chair Ewing explained he and Committee Member Wagner wanted to look at the potential of a business improvement district so the City could focus on redevelopment and commercial growth to tie in to the Ignite plan with more walkability and livability in the downtown area. They examined the original Core City Incentive Policy and identified a few pieces that may be pertinent to bring back to Council. Committee Chair Ewing identified areas on the map with vacant structures. Mr. Ewing said the hope was to bridge the Uptowne area and their successes with the Market District.

Core City Administrator Wendy Fuscoe said Council had also expressed interest in what the City of Hickory had done with their Vacant Building Rehab Incentive. Ms. Fuscoe pointed the blue areas on the map indicate what properties are vacant. She passed out a draft of the Core City Incentive Policy and explained the different sections: page 1 is almost a verbatim from the 2011 committee; page 2, a summary of the City's Façade Grant; page 3.1; section 4.1 the Building Revitalization and Demolition Grant, largely patterned after what the City of Hickory did (it provides up to \$30,000 or 15% for interior improvements and \$20,000 for demolition); 4.2 other cities use this as well, it is to encourage infill.

Committee Member Alexander asked if this would only be for empty properties or for an existing property that wanted to make an improvement and if occupancy would be required. Interim City Manager McCaslin replied that it would require a lease on the property. Chairman Ewing pointed out these incentives would not apply to a market facility, it would have to be something that is open year round. Ms. Fuscoe pointed out the details have not yet been fleshed out and if the committee likes the concept, she would add details. Committee Member Alexander inquired how would this be funded. Ms. Fuscoe said there were different options, some cities have a Municipal Service District Tax. Mr. McCaslin said the City had some one-time money that the Council set aside for this purpose.

Committee Chair Ewing said this was a great target area between Uptowne and the Market District and if there was great successes in this program we could expand to other areas. Committee Member Alexander it would be important to require the businesses to open certain hours. Committee Member Wagner pointed out the biggest missed economic opportunity in this City is that essentially the City hosts the Super Bowl and the City has nowhere downtown for people to walk and spend money. He felt this was a great opportunity for the City, with the sky being the limit, and this is the best opportunity for High Point to have a downtown for residents.

Chairman Ewing suggested the City try to identify smaller areas that could amplify the effects of these incentives. One of the areas is the Kivett Drive area: the bus terminal and the North State properties, the blocks between Commerce and English are the City's best opportunity to focus on some heavy development and improvement and if that happens that growth will spill onward. Ms. Fuscoe pointed out the block of Hayden Place and Kivett and Elm is totally owned by North State and since they are not occupying the buildings, she would love to see Council find the money to take control of that block and do something like Southside did in Greensboro. Chairman Ewing agreed and said it would be a good kickstart.

Mr. McCaslin proposed to flesh this out and get it before Council for approval. Committee Member Wagner pointed out if this is successful the City should consider a special taxation district because the demand will be greater for City services.

Committee Member Wagner made a motion, seconded by Committee Member Hill, to put the Core City Incentive Policy on the agenda for the first City Council meeting in February with revisions from staff between now and then. The motion passed unanimously 3-0.

North Main Street (Ray to Parkwood) Renovation Project Update

Interim City Manager Randy McCaslin said the previous Council directed staff to move forward with this project, since it would take staff six months to complete the engineering work; he wanted to make sure this was a priority of this Council.

Committee Chair Ewing said because of the cost and the time involved, he would like to push it out for at least a month so Council can come together at their retreat and identify priorities. The Committee was in agreement. Mr. McCaslin reminded the Committee this was two-thirds bond money that could only be used for this purpose.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m. upon motion duly made and seconded.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jason Ewing, Chairman

Attest:

Tom Vincent, Deputy City Clerk