

## **PROSPERITY AND LIVABILITY COMMITTEE**

*Chaired by Council Member Ewing*

**March 4, 2015 – 9:00 a.m.**

**Third Floor Lobby Conference Room (Fishbowl)**

### **Present:**

Committee Chair Jason Ewing (Ward 6) and Committee Members Alyce Hill (Ward 3) and Jay Wagner (Ward 4).

**Absent:** Committee Member Latimer Alexander (At-Large)

### **Also Present:**

Council Member Cynthia Davis (At-Large)

### **Staff Present:**

Randy McCaslin, Assistant City Manager; Jeron Hollis, Communications Officer; Wendy Fuscoe, Core City Administrator; Mark McDonald, Transportation Director; Terry Houk, Director of Public Services; Tyler Berrier, Civil Engineer; Terry Kuneff, Civil Engineer; Mary Sizemore, Library Director; Lorrie Russell, Librarian; Eric Olmedo, Budget and Performance Manager; Loren Hill, President- High Point Economic Development Corporation; Mike McNair, Director of Community Development; Alisha Doulen, Community Resources Specialist; Lisa Vierling, City Clerk; Tom Vincent, Deputy City Clerk.

### **Others Present:**

Dorothy Darr, Southwest Renewal Foundation; Ross Lackey, Citizen; Patrick Harman; citizen and entrepreneur

### **Media Present:**

Pat Kimbrough – *High Point Enterprise*

*Committee Chair Jason Ewing noted the next Prosperity and Livability Committee is scheduled on April 1<sup>st</sup> and since that is the day of the Council Retreat it would need to be rescheduled. The Committee agreed to reschedule the meeting to 9:00 a.m. on April 15<sup>th</sup>.*

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

### **1) Discussion regarding a phase-in plan for converting certain roads from one-way to two-way.**

*Mark McDonald, Transportation Director, said staff did some additional work to update estimates for the conversion of English and Kivett to two-way. He added staff did not do the updates for Green and Russell but the costs would be similar but probably slightly less. A previous study concluded the conversion was possible with a cost estimate of \$3.5 million to \$4 million not including utility work. Mr. McDonald said staff has come up with a new estimate in two phases. Phase 1 would start on the east end from Centennial going through downtown*

*across Main Street to Elm at a cost of \$4.2 million to \$4.4 million not including utility work. Phase 2 would begin just to the west of Elm Street and would cover where English goes out and ties in with Kivett at English Avenue. The cost for Phase 2 would be \$3 million to \$3.2 million and does not include burying utility lines or water/sewer line rehabilitation. Mr. McDonald said 40% of the cost is traffic signal reconstruction. Assistant City Manager Randy McCaslin asked if any of the cost could be covered by the Traffic Signal System Project. Mr. McDonald said only a small part of it. He added the rest of the cost is milling and rehabilitating the existing street, taking out the crown on English, curb and gutter repairs and replacement, sidewalk repairs and replacements, providing ADA acceptable ramps at all intersections and putting in crosswalks.*

*Committee Member Wagner asked if that was work that needed to be done in any case. Mr. McDonald said English and Kivett were both resurfaced in the last five or six years. Mr. Wagner asked if the work on the crown and the sidewalks needed to be done regardless of the direction of the traffic. Mr. McDonald said it could be done that way but to get a clean finished product the street would need to be rebuilt. Committee Chair Ewing asked if the signal work could be done as an immediate phase and then road rehabilitation as a later phase. Mr. McDonald said it could be broken down that way but the old markings would have to ground down and replaced.*

*Committee Chair Ewing asked what was involved in the signal work. Mr. McDonald said design and replacement of existing mast arms or signal spans and replacing underground conduits. He added if the intersections with wooden poles were not upgraded to mast arms the cost would be about \$50,000 less per intersection. Mr. McDonald said the costs included either signaling or constructing a roundabout where the two streets come together at Phillips. He said a roundabout would cost a little more because there needed to be more right-of-way purchased. Council Member Cynthia Davis asked if Mr. McDonald recommended a roundabout or traffic signals. Mr. McDonald said he would like to try a roundabout; it would function very well there. Ms. Davis said there were currently bus stops on these streets that did not have any space for people to stand. She asked if this was something that would be addressed in the project. Mr. McDonald said it could be but that was not included in the estimate.*

*Mr. McCaslin asked once Council decides if they want to proceed with this project and the scope of the project, how long would it take to do the engineering work. Mr. McDonald said the entire project would probably take about one year or a little longer to get the approvals necessary. All the traffic signals have to be approved by the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT). Committee Chair Ewing asked where the potential funds were for this project. Mr. McCaslin said given the scope of this project it would likely require two-thirds bonds, there was no money currently available for this project and he did not foresee any grant money being available. Committee Chair Ewing said he had an interest in seeing a breakdown of the bare minimum requirement to convert from one-way to two-way as compared to the milling and other things to make it a truly finished work. Mr. McDonald said what they would be doing is removing existing pavement markings, remarking the pavement, working intersection to intersection and leaving gaps as far as reconstruction. Committee Chair Ewing said changing it to two-way streets may encourage development. Mr. McDonald asked if the Committee wanted him to look at the Green and Russell pair also. Committee Chair Ewing said an approximate figure would be useful. Mr. Ewing asked to have this available for the May Committee meeting.*

**2) Discussion regarding streetscape plans for various phases of South Main Street.**

*Terry Kuneff, Civil Engineer, said this project extends from Business I-85 to Russell. He said City Management and Council asked staff to break it down in to four phases. The first phase is from Business I-85 to South College. He added the consensus was a brick paver median with planters in the median and trees along the outside. The cost estimate is broken down into four phases; the first phase is just under \$600,000 at a \$579,000. Assistant City Manager Randy McCaslin added that this included the median and the trees, benches and bus stops along the sides. The total distance was approximately three-quarters of a mile. Mr. Kuneff said staff looked at an option of doing curb and gutter for the median and adding soil and grass. Mr. McCaslin pointed out that the planters are less expensive than planting in the medians.*

*Committee Chair Ewing asked who would maintain the planters. Mr. McCaslin said the Parks and Recreation Department would take care of them. He added that planters are more labor-intensive and this may require Parks and Rec to add another crew at some point. Committee Hill wondered if the extra cost for maintenance would balance out with planting in the median. Mr. McCaslin noted the plans would need NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) approval, which would be the next step in this process. Mr. Kuneff said the planters cost \$1200 each and were three feet in diameter. Dorothy Darr of the Southwest Renewal Foundation pointed out the difficulty of maintaining plants in containers. Committee Chair Ewing asked how many total containers there were for this phase. Mr. Kuneff said there are 57 of the small planters, 80 of the five foot diameter planters and 10 of the seven foot diameter planters.*

*Ross Lackey, a citizen, said he would like the City to take into consideration other modes of transportation and making room for bike lanes. Council Member Cynthia Davis asked about planting trees in the median. Mr. Kuneff said the concrete and asphalt would have to be removed to get to the soil. He said staff worked up an estimate with no planters in the median with vegetation and trees along the sidewalks. The cost for the first phase was \$21,000. Mr. McCaslin pointed out there is no right-of-way and individual property owners would have to be dealt with to put trees in the sidewalk. Committee Member Wagner asked if there was anyone in the Parks and Recreation Department who has a horticulture degree. He suggested they be consulted about what types of plants would do best on South Main Street. Dorothy Darr suggested Council make a larger policy and street plan and phase it in. Committee Chair Ewing said the City was trying to stretch the money available for this project and suggested Parks and Recreation should be consulted on the types of plants. Assistant City Manager McCaslin asked if the Committee decides not to use the planters, would they want to plant in the median. Committee Member Wagner noted that digging in the median would be very expensive. Ms. Darr said the original object of this project was to spend \$600,000 to improve a gateway into the City.*

*Committee Chair Ewing asked what was the Committee's desire on this project. Council Member Cynthia Davis pointed out the difficulty of maintaining the planters in the median. She suggested making a bed in the middle of the median and not worry about the ends for now.*

*Committee Chair Ewing said the intent was to create something continuous. Committee Chair Ewing said the original plan was to improve the gateway to the City and his opinion the improvements needed to be continuous from Business I-85 up through Eastchester. Mr. Ewing suggested the Committee look at what they could do that would not affect the street itself but still improve the gateway and utilize a bigger plan for the larger stretch. Mr. Ewing said at the Council Retreat they could look at their larger goal of what they want to do for the next three years. He asked the Committee's thoughts on doing minimal beautification until the Council makes a decision on the larger plan for Main Street. Mr. Ewing stressed something needed to be done to address the image of that corridor. Council Member Davis said the plan should encompass all of Main Street and not just up to Eastchester.*

*Committee Chair Ewing asked what direction the Committee wanted to give staff. Mr. McCaslin said the money has been appropriated for this project by the previous Council. He inquired if the Committee wanted to take it to the full Council or move forward. Council Member Cynthia Davis said the full Council should vote although the money has already been appropriated. She added the Council should be a part in the decision making process about what the City is going to look like. Committee Member Wagner stressed the scope of a plan for the entirety of Main Street and money and commitment that would involve. Mr. Kuneff pointed out where the City could start and spend just a little bit of money. He clarified that the \$21,000 estimate for this plan does not include any right-of-way—only plantings.*

*Committee Chair Ewing agreed that was a good start and examine the whole stretch up to Russell and see what could be done without affecting the street itself. He added that Council would look at the larger issue of Main Street rehabilitation at their retreat. The Committee was in agreement for staff to move forward with looking at this option and bring it back to the Committee for further discussion and/or a recommendation. Mr. McCaslin clarified what the Committee wants was to essentially go back to the original version of the plan for this section.*

### **3) Discussion regarding various Transportation Ordinances.**

*Transportation Director Mark McDonald said the Removal of the One-Way Restriction on Long Street was ready for the next Council meeting. He said there were some other speed limit ordinances and turn restriction ordinances staff wanted to bring to the Committee's attention. Mr. McDonald stated that Johnson Street from Parris Avenue out to Oakview Road has a speed limit of 50 mph. When that speed limit was originally determined there were no streets intersecting with Johnson Street along that part of the road. Mr. McDonald said he would like Council to consider reducing the speed limit on that section of Johnson Street from 50 mph to 45 mph. He added that would make an easier transition down to the 35 mph section of Johnson Street and matches with the 45 mph speed limit on other parts of Johnson Street. The Committee discussed the numbers and types of accidents that occur at Johnson Street and Lakecrest. Mr. McDonald said the replacement cost of the signs would be \$100 a sign.*

*Mr. McDonald said staff has some concurrences from the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT). NCDOT was looking at a crash issue where Tarrant comes into Wendover. NCDOT recommends reducing the speed limit to 35 mph from the current 45 mph.*

*Mr. McDonald said the next speed limit change to consider was Piedmont Parkway between Guilford College Road and Wendover. Currently the speed limits on Piedmont Parkway go from 40 mph to 35 mph to 45 mph. He stated that for consistency staff would like to increase the speed limit on the section between Guilford College Road and Wendover Avenue from 35 mph to 40 mph to make it more consistent. Mr. McDonald added that on the part of Piedmont Parkway that is posted to 45 mph NCDOT never adopted that speed limit so they needed a concurring ordinance to adopt the 45 mph speed limit that is already there.*

*Mr. McDonald explained that in the 1970's the City implemented a lot of no right on turn on red light restrictions. He said staff recommended rescinding the right turn restrictions at the following intersections: Johnson and Hamilton, Eastbound Lexington at Johnston, Westbound Lexington at Hamilton, Montlieu and Centennial, Southbound Main at English, Southbound Elm at English, Northbound Russell at Elm, Northbound Main at Grimes, Northbound Main at Kearns, Westbound Centennial at South Main, and South Main at Archdale Road.*

*Committee Member Wagner said he gets lots of calls about the speeds on Rotary. Mr. McDonald said his department just prepared a report on Rotary. Mr. Wagner noted the speed limit is 35 mph, then 25 mph, and then back up to 35 mph. He said the City should look at it for consistency. Mr. McDonald said it would be a tough enforcement issue. He said he would bring the report to the next Committee meeting.*

*Committee Chairman Ewing made a motion to forward items 2 -6 to Council with a favorable recommendation. The motion died for lack of a second.*

**A motion was then made by Committee Member Wagner, seconded by Committee Member Hill to forward all the Transportation Ordinances/Items to Council to be placed on the March 16<sup>th</sup> Agenda with a favorable recommendation for approval. Motion passed by the following 2 – 1 vote: Voting yea: Committee Members Hill and Wagner. Voting no: Committee Chairman Ewing. [Committee Member Alexander was absent]**

**4) Discussion regarding potential new water rate structure for high water users, where water is consumed in the manufacture of a product.**

*Terry Houk, Director of Public Services, explained the department was tasked by Assistant City Manager Randy McCaslin and Core City Administrator Wendy Fuscoe to look at high water users. Ms. Fuscoe concentrated on breweries and the Public Services Department looked at manufacturers. Mr. Houk explained they looked at three cities: Greensboro, Asheville and Winston-Salem. Asheville has a two-tiered rate, they rank breweries with dairies and soft drink bottlers. High Point has four tiers that gets less expensive the more water is used. Mr. Houk said the issue his department looked at was some kind of incentive to help bring business in to the City. He said they also examined the ten highest water users and the revenue for them is approximately \$1.9 million at the current rate. The sewer revenue is \$4 million. Mr. Houk said if the City modified their rate schedule and added more tiers the City would have to reevaluate their high water users. Mr. Houk said there was no special incentive for the water rate for breweries. He added that while High Point has plenty of water, the City also has to take care of the discharge. Mr. Houk asked if the Council wanted a more in-depth study and run a cost*

analysis. Committee Member Wagner said he would like to know what the tiers are. Mr. Wagner said one way to be more accommodating to a brewery is on the sewer side because so much of what they use goes out in bottles. Mr. Houk said two entities in the City of High Point got special sewer rates: Hunter Farms and Dairy Fresh. Council Member Cynthia Davis said if there is already a process then the City does not need to change anything. Committee Member Wagner suggested the City compile these benefits (water/sewer and logistics) in concise documents the City can use to attract businesses. Assistant City Manager Randy McCaslin asked if the Committee wanted Mr. Houk, Ms. Fuscoe and Jeron Hollis to compile this information and disseminate it. The Committee had no objections to this.

## **5) Discussion of City-support of urban agriculture and the Greater High Point Hunger Alliance.**

Core City Administrator Wendy Fuscoe said she had been selected to represent the City on the Greater High Point Hunger Alliance. One subcommittee is Urban Agriculture and Ms. Fuscoe was tasked with finding a place for a food garden. She and Mike McNair, Director of Community Development, looked at city-owner parcels and narrowed it down to five places. Ms. Fuscoe and Mr. McNair invited Ralph Soviero and Ross Lackey, citizens, to look at a parcel they liked which is a Southside area adjacent to the river. Mr. Lackey had his permaculture group develop a plan as to how this area could be planted. Ms. Fuscoe explained this would be a food park with blueberries, blackberries and chestnut trees and not an urban garden.

Mr. Lackey presented photos of the proposed site and explained where different plants and trees could be planted. Committee Chairman Ewing asked what the City needed to do to support this initiative. Mike McNair said this was one of the Neighborhood Stabilization Projects (NSP) on the drawing board. Mr. Ewing asked if these were things that could be done with Neighborhood Stabilization Project funds. Mr. McNair said they could and Assistant City Manager Randy McCaslin added they needed State approval. Mr. McCaslin said this was being brought to the Committee for their information. Committee Member Wagner asked if the City merely needed to provide the land or if the City had to provide grading and purchase the trees that would be planted. Wendy said Scott in Engineering Services offered to assist with any grading that might be necessary as part of this project.. Committee Chair Ewing said this looked good from a conceptual standpoint and if they needed money from the City to come to the Committee. Anything done with NSP funds would need to come before the Council. Mr. Lackey noted it might be possible to develop a full design and a primary design that would be low maintenance, low cost.

The Committee favorably supports the concept of this initiative and asked if any additional resources are needed it could come back to the Committee for consideration.

## **6) Discussion Regarding Library Parking Lot Plans- Public Comments**

Committee Chairman Ewing said he would like to leave the Library Parking Lot Plans on display in the third floor lobby. He noted the Committee has scheduled a public forum on March 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Library to take public comment about anything in the City, but with a focus on feedback on the Library plans. Mr. Ewing said at the April Committee meeting they discuss the feedback about the Library plans and decide what recommendation to make to Council.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Jason Ewing, Chairman

Attest:

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Tom Vincent, Deputy City Clerk