

Prosperity & Livability Committee
Public Forum
Chaired by Council Member Jason Ewing
March 23, 2015 – 6:00 p.m.
High Point Public Library (Morgan Room)

MINUTES

Present:

Jason Ewing, Chairman

Committee Members: Latimer Alexander, Alyce Hill and Jay Wagner

Also Present:

Mayor William S. Bencini, Jr.

Staff Present:

Greg Demko, City Manager; Randy McCaslin, Assistant City Manager; Mary Sizemore, Library Director; Wendy Fuscoe, Core City Administrator; Jeron Hollis, Communications Officer; Keith Pugh, Director of Engineering Services; Lisa Vierling, City Clerk

Others Present:

Tim Ilderton, Aaron Clinard, Richard Wood, David Williams, Warren Lackey, Ross Lackey, David Rosen, Marshall Morgan, Peter Freeman, John Kennett, Gloria Halstead, Stephen Hoskins, Duncan Mitchell, JoAnne Daniell, John Causey, Leslie Moore, Karyn Peters, Paula Soto, Tara Raczenski, June Demko, Taylor West, Monica Peters, Alan Peters, Stephen Scoggins, Larry Diggs, Mary McInerney, Chuck Hall, Paul Siceloff, Charity Jackson, N'gai Dickerson, Nancy Daniel, Sally Rawleigh, Jonathan Seelig, Chris Ryker, Steve Hollingsworth, Ralph Soviero, Tiffany Estep, Briana Strickland, Samuel Ravenel

Chairman Ewing welcomed everyone and opened the floor for comments/concerns.

Steve Hoskins, 224 Edgedale

- Supports beautification of the Library parking lot
- Suggested the “community gathering” place be moved from in front of the Library because it would take up valuable parking spaces being used by elderly. Suggested putting it in the vicinity of the Krispy Kreme
- Did not agree with showing movies because of the amplified sound

Tim Ilderton, 308 Hillcrest

- Supports beautification of the Library parking lot because the Library is a focal point for the City of High Point
- Asked if money has already been allocated for these types of improvements
- Suggested city should purchase the additional two buildings/property to make it all one area

Gloria Halstead, 901 Johnson Street

- Supports the Library parking lot improvements
- Likes the idea of a gathering space, fountain
- If the city is going to do something, should be transformational and this could lead off transformation of High Point in the Core City
- Speeding on Main Street/Johnson Street, etc... creates dangerous situations for pedestrians

Chairman Ewing pointed out the City Council has discussed the possibility of converting some of the one-way streets to two-way. Ms. Halstead felt a majority of the residents on Johnson Street would welcome converting Johnson to two-way traffic.

Aaron Clinard, 803 W. Farriss Ave

- Library Parking lot improvements could be transformational
- Suggested city go all out on this project for the following reasons: 1) synergies (i.e. widespread frequent use of Library from various zip code areas; 2) many folks in North High Point (27265 zip code) do not feel a part of High Point and this would create a pleasant environment to become one; 3) location is perfect (right in the center of the city)
- Broad-based usage all over the community warrants the need for a civic building
- Many visitors in downtown area from HPU and due to proximity of the hospital/doctor's offices-beautification of the Library area would allow hospital employees and visitors get away from the hospital environment to a more pleasant environment.

Larry Diggs, 1127 Biltmore Avenue

- High Point needs transformation
- Agreed with the residents in North High Point not feeling like they are a part of High Point
- Should consider a change in traffic pattern, but not necessarily a street diet
- Questioned why High Point no longer allows show horses in the Annual Christmas Parade

Warren Lackey, 1230 Devonshire

- He came to meeting thinking Library parking lot improvements were a done deal, only to find that is not the case
- Agreed something should be done and this should be a starting place (Duany recommended it when he was here)
- Suggested some flexibility be built into the project to allow connectivity to other city projects as well as other private projects

Marshall Morgan, 810 McNair Court

- Many residents in the 27265 zip code do consider High Point home
- Mentioned recent Food Summit that was held to address hunger in High Point
- It's about creating a synergy in High Point to take care of hunger

David Rosen, 4309 Harden Court

- High Point is stagnant
- Two incredible things happening in High Point (i.e. HPU and Furniture Market)
- Proposed Library parking lot improvements actually increase number of parking spaces
- Imperative that something happen
- One of the biggest hurdles in city is communication
- Encouraged citizens to go to the city's website and sign-up to receive notifications for the meetings
- Encouraged citizens to attend the P & Z public hearing for the MLK street renaming request

Chairman Ewing agreed there is a major need for improvement regarding communication within the city and noted this was why he suggested having this public forum. He noted Council is working with staff to identify potential ways to tap into all communication resources available.

Taylor West, 1201 Johnson Street

- Agreed that speeding creates dangerous situations (especially in Main/Johnson area)
- Chicanes on Johnson not working as designed
- Numerous accidents on Johnson Street
- Connect Greenways

Committee Member Alexander asked City Manager Greg Demko to have the police chief conduct a study on Johnson Street over the past 90 days to determine if speeding has been the cause of the accidents.

Charity Jackson, 226 Hobson Street

- Speeding, blind spots on Washington Avenue during construction is causing unsafe hazards (i.e. Fourth and Washington; Richardson and Hobson)
- Several Breaking/Entering of Vehicles due to the increased foot traffic due to the construction
- Suggested Council record meetings
- Mentioned free WiFi on Main; what about considering to offer free internet in other areas of greater need
- Encouraged residents to look at the inserts included in the utility bills
- Consider using a phone tree to mitigate communication issues
- Suggested Council do more community meetings in wards with updates
- Would be helpful to send out surveys to allow residents to vote via Survey Monkey
- Challenged due to the cultural diversity
- Need to dispel myth that it is not safe to go outside of particular areas; need to encourage those in poverty stricken areas to go outside of those areas

Sally Rawleigh, 1503 Pinehurst Drive

- Concerned about the matter of food deserts
- Suggested High Point change ordinance to allow backyard chickens
- Begged for more communication efforts; Perception in community is that the government is not doing anything
- Would like to see goats allowed
- Questioned how the process works to get things changed
- Felt City Council should trust citizens more by passing some of the projects off as volunteer projects

Ross Lackey, 500 Lindell Drive

- Citizens ideas/suggestions always fall short or get manipulated
- When Council was considering changing the ordinance to allow chicken in the City, Council should have made the effort to talk to those raising chickens
- Need to have more honest dialogue with people that have experience doing these things
- The city still does not allow roosters (can have chickens, but no roosters). He would like to see the rules rewritten so Council cannot dictate what can and can't be done (i.e. mentioned food production, livestock). Rules have to be open to allow anybody to grow food
- Communication/accountability a major issue in High Point.
- Expressed frustration that nothing can get done in High Point and asked about the process to get policy changed
- Need to create a more empowered city with positive energy flow
- Would like to see city facilitate a grant writing process for various organizations to tap into the money that is available
- Would like Council to respond in some visible form when residents approach Council regarding issues

John Seelig, 129 Poe Street, Greensboro

- All about communication, accountability, transparency, and how to effectively use the abilities and resources
- Too many times Council sets in place without fully understanding the situation
- Need to recognize and honor the diverse backgrounds and come up with a solution together

Committee Member Wagner shared that all meetings of the City Council are open to the public, with the exception of Closed Sessions, and informed the residents that they could go on the city's website and subscribe to a link to have meeting notifications, agendas, etc..... sent to them electronically. Regarding the issues with chickens, he pointed out that this was discussed in Committee on several occasions. He also shared that the Council does open the floor for Public Comments at the first meeting of every month.

Samuel Ravenel, 601 W. Parkway

- Council should embrace risk and change (formerly lived in Greensboro, has lived in High Point for 28 years and loves it)

- High Point has one of highest tax rates in the State
- Sees tremendous untapped potential in High Point
- Council should seize the vision of the community

Briana Strickland, 1420 Twelve Oaks Dr., Kernersville

- Need more social platforms (community, food, social engagements)
- Need more involvement, engagement and formation of relationships (getting to know one another)
- Find a way to bridge the gap and stop being competitive
- It's all about connectivity, communication, and accountability

Ralph Soveiro, 3912 Johnson Street

- Has a problem with folks not being able to grow food and sell it on the same plot of land
- Would like to also see a skate park

Mary McInerney, 3118 Log Cabin Cove

- Meetings can be recorded at a minimal cost and put on YouTube for viewing
- Suggested an invaluable resource would be to use an intern from HPU
- Any of the Library parking lot plans would be acceptable
- Need to increase size of the existing Library sign

N'gai Dickerson, 110 Scott Ave., Suite 12B (Professional Chef)

- Passion for the poor
- Education not focused on health and nutrition; need for sponsors to promote; suggested partnering with the Housing Authority
- Would like to use Southside Rec. facility to conduct food education demonstrations for youth; has been trying to use this facility for four years, but has constantly been denied use
- Lack of communication is an issue

Committee Member Alexander advised Mr. Dickerson that one thing that has been discussed in Committee is trying to make dollars available to groups for in-kind services and to promote events.

One concern that Charity Jackson brought forward was that the city does not allow rentals at the Rec Centers for over 12 teenagers at a time and asked Council to consider changing this restriction as well.

Monica Peters, 1410 Trafalgar

- Complimented Jeron Hollis, Communications Officer for the city, for doing a great job
- Suggested city get a marketing director to promote the City of High Point

Tara Raczenski, 508 Birchwood Drive

- Love to see bike lanes
- Love to see a thriving arts community (arts year round- suggested some indoor community spaces that could possibly house arts events)
- Having a community area a great idea to promote residents to gather, talk and get to know each other, and a way to share ideas

Christina Prentzas, 4115 Quarterstaff

- High Point needs a merchant's association

Paul Sicheloff, 210 Turner Place

- Supports the Library parking lot improvements
- Library probably strongest community crossroad
- Investing in one of the Library parking lot improvement plans builds momentum
- Allow opportunity for the Food Summit ideals/goals to be worked out

Steve Hollingsworth, 2205 W. English

- Library plans are awesome
- Common theme: food and transportation
- Suggested putting in bike lanes
- Offered to record Council meetings
- Connect Greenways by connecting parks

At the conclusion of the comments, Chairman Ewing thanked everyone for making the effort to attend the forum and offer comments.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jason Ewing, Chairman

Attest:

Lisa B. Vierling, MMC
City Clerk