



Prosperity & Livability Committee

Chaired by Council Member Ewing

Members: Ewing, Alexander, Hill and Wagner

3rd Floor Lobby Conference Room

January 6, 2016 – 9:00 A.M.

MEETING MINUTES

Present:

Committee Chair Jason Ewing, and Committee Members Latimer Alexander (joined the meeting at 9:18 a.m.), Alyce Hill, and Jay Wagner

Staff Present:

Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager; Randy Hemann, Assistant City Manager; Mark McDonald, Director of Transportation; Ryan Ferguson, Marketing Manager; Mike McNair, Director of Community Development; Richard Fuquay, Affordable Housing Manager; JoAnne Carlyle, City Attorney; Brent Cole, Assistant City Attorney; Wendy Fuscoe, Core City Administrator; Thanena Wilson, Community Development Administrator; Maria Smith, Deputy City Clerk

Others Present:

Victoria Binder, AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer with HPU; and Jerry Mingo

News Media:

Pat Kimbrough, High Point Enterprise

Handouts:

- *Lease Agreement*
- *City of High Point Historic Marker Policy*
- *Downtown High Point Master Plan/Small Area Plan Proposal*

Note: These handouts will be attached as a permanent part of these proceedings.

Chairman Ewing called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

1. Presentation- Downtown High Point Master Plan/Small Area Plan Proposal

Randy Hemann, Assistant City Manager, reported that this map/information was also presented during the Planning & Development Committee meeting on January 5th. He shared a very rough map for a proposed small area plan study for Downtown and noted the City has a number of plans that are at the 60,000 foot level (i.e. Core City Plan (2007); IGNITE High Point Plan). He noted that there seems to be an agreement that when looking at the Furniture Market that we have the ability to create some new downtown between the railroad tracks and the Library. He expressed the need for a much more detailed plan than what the City currently has and this proposal would be to create that plan.

He pointed out that there are other things on the fringe of the downtown such as Centennial Station, Washington Street, some arts things going on and these need to be considered and tied into this. He stated the end goal is to come up with a more detailed plan. He advised that he worked on two plans while in Salisbury (2001; with an update in 2010) that resulted in an estimated \$80 million in investment, which included a defined Entertainment District, an Arts Technology District, etc..... He pointed out that the City of Salisbury invested around \$750,000 to put in the brick street to create a special area that gets closed off during certain events. He noted these are some of the concepts and broad terms that need to make their way into our proposed plan with a big question of how we can do that and tie these concepts into it to promote the Arts in an even greater way.

Mr. Hemann commented that this would be staff steered/driven, but would have components receiving a lot of public input. He is proposing to take components in previous plans and insert those components in the proposed small area plan for downtown. He noted there have been some discussions in the past regarding the possibility of getting rid of one-way streets in some areas and he agreed that the Core City Plan was a very good plan at a higher level and those things would stay in there. Mr. Hemann shared that he has talked to some staff people and they seemed excited to be able to help and push this idea forward.

He called Council's attention to the questions/concepts in the back of the "Downtown High Point Master Plan/Small Area Plan Proposal" that require further discussion/definition/prioritization and encouraged Council to start thinking about these. He advised this is simply a means to get ideas out on the table. He noted that there are three or four design firms that the City has on call that staff may utilize at some point in an effort to work with the committee from a design standpoint.

Chairman Ewing inquired about the expected timeline for having a rough plan ready to present. Mr. Hemann anticipates this to be about a three to four month process, but could take up to a year. He hoped to cast some vision prior to the Council's Retreat and start sharing some information for planning purposes. He explained he is trying to streamline this due to some things that are going on now that may need to be pushed ahead.

At this time, Mr. Hemann entertained questions and thoughts from Council and encouraged anybody with any thoughts to please share them with him.

Council Member C. Davis questioned if there will be the ability in the other areas to create similar duplicates (such as Arts in some of those other areas) so they do not have to travel to the area. She was not sure if we were going to make exclusive Arts in this period with that being it, or if there would be the ability for somebody that does not want to be downtown to do what they want to do in one of the other plans. Mr. Hemann replied that the City would not discourage that kind of development anywhere in the community. Council Member C. Davis agreed with the Arts thing due to where Centennial Station is located, and asked if somebody that does not want to be there in that area, if it might be possible for them to have what they want and maybe create a small nook. Mr. Hemann replied that it would be possible and noted the plans are fluid and would evolve some. He mentioned the group of art/antique/design types of things presently in the N. Elm District and pointed out these are the types of things that need to be part of the plan. He stated that if groups of artists come in anywhere, the City should support that.

Council Member C. Davis felt there is a lot of potential for this on Green where there is plenty of space for things like this to happen. Chairman Ewing also agreed that businesses will go where they want to go and if the City shows an interest in an Arts district or a Food district, people will start finding where they think the best place/best area is. Chairman Ewing stated it would be exciting to see how all of this evolves in the next few months.

2. Update- "Adopt-a-Lot" (Urban Agriculture) Program

Brent Cole, Assistant City Attorney, shared a project initiative that initially came from Wendy Fuscoe, Core City Administrator, and her group that recognized vacant city-owned properties that could be used as community garden spaces. He noted the 34 properties were identified on an exhibit and these properties would be leased with the idea that it becomes a community garden space. He advised that the lessee would be responsible for maintaining the property and that this lease was very similar to the West End Ministries lease that Council approved several months ago.

Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager, shared that most of these properties were purchased with Community Development money and Mike McNair, Director of Community Development, noted that some were right-of-way purchases. Mr. Cole further advised that this would be a year-long lease and if successful, the City would approach it again after the year is up. Council Member C. Davis pointed out there were several lots on White Oak Street and asked if it might be more appropriate to do something housing related in this area. Mr. McNair agreed, but explained right now there is a shortage of developers and Mr. McCaslin added that the City has not been able to get developers to look at these properties. Chairman Ewing agreed this is a good way to use the city-owned property for community gardens because it could still be developed later on.

Mr. McCaslin shared that Mr. Mingo approached the City last summer to start this program, but they were not able to meet last year's growing cycle. Committee Member Hill asked if these are clusters of lots and Mr. McCaslin conveyed that some lots may be together, some may be spread out throughout the neighborhood with the hopes that we can get more interest in numerous neighborhoods for these community based gardens. Committee Member Alexander asked about the City's liability should someone get hurt while on these properties. Mr. Cole advised that there were hold harmless provisions in the lease that would address this and explained the lessee

would be taking on a significant amount of that liability under the lease. He pointed out there is a provision in the lease that requires liability insurance in the amount of \$1,000,000.00. Mr. McCaslin explained this is what prompted Patrick Harmon to get involved because of the difficulty for Mr. Mingo and the other lessees to get that amount of liability insurance, so it was suggested to put the lots under one lease to be able to meet the insurance requirements for the City.

Committee Member Alexander inquired as to if water would be available on the lot. Mr. Cole shared that the lessee would be required to set up an account for water. He reiterated that the people that come along would actually be guests of Hayden-Harmon and would be responsible for the maintenance of the property, but it would be a community atmosphere. City Attorney JoAnne Carlyle advised there would be less exposure with this lease than the lease Council entered into with West End Ministries due to the playground equipment that they wanted to put in.

Chairman Ewing stated he likes the concept, especially with one entity assuming the responsibility for all these properties. Mr. McCaslin noted that they were very fortunate to have Mr. Harmon step up and take this on. He explained that this matter would be on the Council's next agenda and staff would like a recommendation from the Committee in regards to the lease.

Chairman Ewing moved to forward this matter to Council with a favorable recommendation. Committee Member Hill made a second. The motion carried unanimously. [4-0 vote]

3. Presentation- "Historical Marker" Policy

Randy Hemann, Assistant City Manager, noted there are a number of State historical markers on the roadsides throughout the State and a few in High Point. He explained that due to some recent requests that have come in, staff feels there is a need for a policy. He noted that originally, the proposal called for a separate committee to review these requests, but Legal recommended having this fall under the Historic Preservation Commission's purview for them to review the potential historic marker requests. Mr. Hemann stressed the importance of continuity, verbiage and accuracy when reviewing these. He then shared a photo of an existing historical marker located a few blocks away in the downtown area.

He advised that this sets up a review process whereby anyone wanting to request one could do the research on it and bring the information forward. He clarified that this would not commit the City to budget for and erect a bunch of these, but encouraged it be handled like Highland Mills (Dorothy Darr approached the City about putting a historical marker up and provided the funding).

Mr. Hemann explained this process is similar to the State's process in many ways, but has been customized to fit High Point. It requires that things be 50 years old and the Historical Preservation Commission would receive, review and check the historical accuracy of each request. He explained the reason the marker is black with silver print is because the State has a disdain for people that put up signs that look like theirs, but are not distinguished. He added the

reason the City wanted to set a standard and put a policy in place was not to upset the State because the State determines who gets the new markers.

Committee Member Alexander shared that Bill Blair approached him about recognizing the High Point Speedway, which the Museum had presented that information in a display and it was one of the most visited displays several years ago. The High Point Speedway was one of two racetracks near the Johnson/Skeet Club intersection. He explained when he was contacted by Mr. Blair, they met with Mayor Bencini and discussed ideas, verbiage, then followed up with Edith Brady at the Museum and there was a question of whether to go with a local historical marker or a state historical marker. Committee Member Alexander shared that Bill Phillips, a local historian, felt this was a good idea and that there were lots of communities that have this in place.

Committee Member Alexander inquired about the cost of these markers. Mr. McCaslin replied that the cost, depending on the wording, would be approximately \$4,000-\$5,000 per marker and it would take approximately 8-10 weeks to cast the markers. He asked who would be responsible for replacing a marker if it gets hit and damaged by a vehicle. Mr. McCaslin noted that in the case of an accident, the markers would be replaced by an insurance claim. Chairman Ewing acknowledged that the City has had miscellaneous requests over the years to acknowledge certain local events at places that did not meet the State's criteria and felt this was a good idea.

Committee Member Wagner moved to forward this matter to Council with a favorable recommendation. Committee Member Alexander made a second. The motion carried unanimously. [4-0 vote]

Recommended Topics for Future Committee Meetings

Mr. McCaslin solicited ideas from the Committee for topics for future meetings.

Committee Member Alexander shared that he continues to hear from citizens that desire more pedestrian friendly crosswalks and would like to take a look at this as Council and staff look at the small area plans. He also inquired about the status of the Lexington and North Main intersection area and Mr. McCaslin confirmed that the bids would be received in January with anticipation that the work would start in the spring.

Committee Member Hill pointed out the Committee still needs to address and discuss speeding concerns and the traffic calming policy.

Committee Member Alexander agreed that speeding is an issue in the residential areas and commented that our police officers have been hesitant to write speeding tickets because of the court system discouraging them from writing tickets unless it is 10 mph or more over the posted speed limit. Committee Member Wagner suggested putting a traffic calming policy in place would help. Council Member C. Davis suggested putting runner strips a little farther back before getting to Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) with words on the street that actually say, "Crosswalk ahead." Mark McDonald, Director of Transportation, noted the City could certainly do anything, but pointed out it is a matter of determining what those priorities are and

funding those priorities. He felt enforcement of the speed limit is the key to addressing the speeding issues.

Chairman Ewing mentioned that in the next three months Council will be discussing preliminary budget priorities and would be discussing the traffic calming policy in February to see if the Committee can come up with any recommendations based on the report received in December on traffic calming. Based on Mr. Fritz's comments during the Public Comment Period at the last Council meeting, Chairman Ewing asked if there was a desire to look into reducing the speed limit along Main Street in certain areas. Committee Member Hill stated if you are going 40 mph, the police officers will not write a ticket if the speed limit is 35 mph, but a 25 mph speed limit changes the threshold. Mr. McCaslin remarked that lowering the speed limit and signage would not resolve the speeding issues because people drive the speed they are comfortable with. Committee Member Alexander noted with the exception of speeding complaints on Main Street, he has heard more complaints about speeding on the residential streets. Chairman Ewing agreed that the neighborhoods are where you hear it the most and felt traffic calming policies are more effective in neighborhoods. He suggested looking at using a combination of tools to address speeding such as:

- Traffic calming devices
- Speed limits and enforcement in certain key areas

Council Member C. Davis shared that someone mentioned the Heritage Plan for the Museum to her and she did not know there was a plan. She asked if it might be possible to review the plan to get a better idea of how the Museum campus is to develop. Mr. McCaslin acknowledged there is a Heritage Plan that has been adopted by City Council. Chairman Ewing suggested it might be beneficial to have a bus tour to the various facilities. Committee Member Wagner suggested to take ten minutes during a Briefing Session and review the Heritage Plan. Committee Member Alexander agreed that the Museum Campus would be changing and noted that at some point, Lexington Avenue would be widened. Mr. McCaslin explained that the widening would miss the Museum. Committee Member Alexander realized the widening would miss the Museum, but asked if the City was going to start acquiring property across the street as it becomes available.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m. upon motion.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maria Smith
Deputy City Clerk

Jason P. Ewing, Chairman