



Prosperity & Livability Committee
Members: Ewing, Hill, Wagner and Williams
Chaired by Council Member Ewing
3rd Floor Lobby Conference Room
July 12, 2016 – 11:00 A.M.

MEETING MINUTES

Present:

Committee Chair Jason Ewing, and Committee Members Alyce Hill, Jay Wagner and Chris Williams

Also Present:

Council Members Cynthia Davis and Latimer Alexander

Staff Present:

Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager; Randy Hemann, Assistant City Manager; Jeron Hollis, Communications & Public Engagement Mike McNair, Director of Community Development; Michelle McNair, Community Resource Manager; Mark McDonald, Transportation Director; JoAnne Carlyle, City Attorney; Maria Smith, Deputy City Clerk and Lisa Vierling, City Clerk

Others Present:

Judy Stalder, TREBIC; Barry Kitley, HPU; Meredith Mitchell, Leadership: High Point

News Media:

Pat Kimbrough, High Point Enterprise

Handouts:

- *Policy for Traffic Calming Devices in Residential Areas*
- *City of Raleigh Neighborhood Traffic Management Program*

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

Chairman Ewing called the meeting to order at 11:08 a.m.

1) **Discussion regarding advertising on publically owned properties**

Chairman Ewing noted although the topic on the agenda says “advertising on publically-owned properties” it is actually “community messages on publically-owned properties”. He asked City Attorney JoAnne Carlyle to provide some background on this matter. Ms. Carlyle advised in the past there have been discussions about whether or not the city could put signage or an emblem/symbol on the city’s water towers. She mentioned a 4th Circuit North Carolina case in the past that indicated cities are not allowed to do that. She advised there is now new case law that has remanded the 4th Circuit case and they determined that governments could allow this as long as the government chooses the message, the government must maintain control over the selection of the message. She pointed out the water tower located on 311 has clearly been the city’s message/emblem for several years now and she noted the Gaffney, South Carolina “peach” was certainly governmental speech.

Council Member Alexander provided an example—the Ed Price Field, which is named in honor of an individual. Ms. Carlyle suggested this would have to do more with an actual form where the entities are allowed to offer an act of speech and more of sending a message than honoring an individual or an event. She also had heard that this would give our neighborhoods and our communities a sense of identity while using it for that purpose. She mentioned that the forum would have to be opened up to the government and the government would have to maintain the control of what the message is. It would be up to Council to make the decision as to the appropriateness of the message.

Chairman Ewing advised this came about through a request from High Point University (HPU) to promote their logo on one of the city’s water towers at a nearby location. He noted that HPU is a major institution in the city, the largest contributor and largest utility consumer, and many cities have their largest institution identified on towers in support of that institution. He advised the next step would be for staff to assemble a policy.

Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager, stated there are three elevated water towers in the City of High Point. Chairman Ewing stressed that if this is something that Council would like to move forward with, a policy would be needed to govern the message. He felt any costs involved should be the responsibility of the person/entity who is making the request to place a message on the tower (including on-going maintenance costs until they decide to terminate the message and/or agreement) and that the City Council should be the deciding factor as to what the contents of the message will be.

Council Member C. Davis asked who would be responsible for re-painting the tower once they no longer want it displayed. Chairman Ewing suggested putting this in the policy. Council Member Alexander also suggested that should the City want to remove the tower, that they would have the immediate rights to do so. Chairman Ewing stated that the City still owns the tower, the rights of the tower and would only be granting them the opportunity to put a community message on the water tower. Ms. Carlyle reiterated that the city would own the message. Council Member Wagner pointed out, in fact, it is the city’s message.

Council Member C. Davis asked how this would affect the request from the Southwest Renewal Foundation's desire to paint an "acorn" on a water tower and asked if the city was going to do something because it is a non-profit. Chairman Ewing felt it would be a straight-lined policy where the city has three elevated water towers—one, with great visibility on I-74 and this is one the city has maintained to support the message as folks are driving through to let them know that they are driving through High Point, North Carolina. He felt this water tower should continue to convey that message, which would allow the other two towers to be utilized for the purposes of the policy. He noted there have been two requests: one from HPU and the other from Southside Renewal Foundation. He suggested looking into an application and/or petition process to be put in place to allow consideration with Council having the final decision as to what will actually go on the water tower. He reiterated that the cost for painting or whatever needs to be done to put the logo up would be borne by whoever brings the request to Council for consideration.

Committee Member Williams asked if the city would consider limiting an agency to one tower only and Mr. McCaslin agreed that it would be entirely up to Council on a case-by-case basis. Council Member Alexander suggested and Council agreed that the towers should be a muted color, white or beige with a color logo. Mr. McCaslin pointed out there would be substantial costs involved in painting the whole tower (around \$60,000), and he did not see the city getting into repainting towers. Assistant City Manager Randy Hemann advised a darker color tower could cause problems with heat and would fade more quickly.

Chairman Ewing suggested with the Committee's consent he would like to give staff direction to pull together a policy for consideration at the August 1st Council meeting, if possible. Mr. McCaslin asked if it is the Committee's desire to have staff do this and bring it back to the Committee, or have it ready for Council's review at the August 1st City Council Meeting. Chairman Ewing suggested to have it ready for the August 1st Council meeting. Mr. McCaslin advised staff would draft it and get it out to the entire Council for review, then it could be placed on the August 1st City Council agenda.

Council Member C. Davis piggybacked on one of Council Member Alexander's comments made in a previous meeting and asked about fees that could be charged for making revenue off the advertising and if this was something that should still be considered. Committee Member Wagner conveyed that he did not believe this was a possibility since it would be the city's message. Ms. Carlyle agreed. Chairman Ewing suggested to move forward with staff drafting a policy for adoption by the City Council for consideration at the August 1st City Council meeting.

Chairman Ewing made a motion to move the High Point University request forward to Council with a favorable recommendation pending approval of the Policy by Council in August. Committee Member Williams seconded. The motion carried by a 4-0 unanimous vote.

2) **Discussion on the City of Raleigh's Traffic Calming Policy and possible amendments to High Point's Policy**

Mark McDonald, Director of Transportation, was present to answer any questions regarding the Raleigh Traffic Calming Management Policy handout. Mr. McCaslin advised that Council could modify Raleigh's policy to come up with a City of High Point policy.

Council Member Alexander asked about the history on the most recent traffic calming. He was curious if there was any observational data as to compliance or speed through the area and noted he frequently travels through Rotary and Johnson. Mr. McDonald replied not as of yet and explained most of the multi-way STOP conditions were implemented outside of the policy at Council's direction. He advised there was nothing on the table currently aside from some pavement marking changes on James Road that would be reviewed once school starts back as to volumes, speed changes as a result of these pavement markings. He noted his department also received a request from Mike McNair for some type of traffic calming on Hoskins/Davis/Edmonds/Graves area. Staff is currently working on this. Mr. McCaslin pointed out that the Washington Street Business Association has also requested staff to look at some type of traffic calming on Washington Street, although they have not yet submitted a petition.

Mr. McDonald mentioned how the Raleigh policy was reviewed several meetings ago and the different criteria that Raleigh looked at. Raleigh's 12-page policy not only includes traffic calming, but also includes neighborhood streetscaping. He stated staff would like to get some direction from Council and asked if there is a desire to use Raleigh's policy as a template for the City of High Point's policy.

Mr. McDonald also pointed out that Council included \$100,000 in the budget for traffic calming and staff needs some direction as to how to distribute this money, whether it be a 50/50 cost share with the neighborhood; or if the city is going to pick up the tab entirely, etc..... He stressed these questions have not been addressed at this point, but need to be addressed before the policy can be implemented. Mr. McCaslin explained the city's current policy requires the homeowner's association or neighborhood to submit a petition with signatures of 75% of the property owners in the affected area and then it has to be reviewed by the Transportation Department. He noted unless there is an engineering reason not to do it, staff would move forward and do a design and come up with a cost estimate and then would go back to the property owners and they would be responsible for 100% of the cost. Mr. McDonald reported after receiving the petition, staff would proceed with an evaluation that would include taking traffic counts, speed data, assessing the situation that generated the petition. Staff would then review this information with the neighborhood in an effort to determine what the most suitable treatment might be, then apply that treatment at the petitioners cost.

Committee Member Wagner brought up the idea about a scoring system for prioritization of these requests. He noted the city will more than likely receive more requests than there is money to fund so an objective scoring criteria should be established. He suggested having the neighborhood pay or have a scoring system or get neighborhoods to try to raise some of their own money to contribute. Committee Member Wagner would like to go in the direction of having a scoring system such as Raleigh for an objective system. He also mentioned as

discussed in the last meeting to have the neighborhood pay or not and maybe include that as part of the scoring system. He advised he was not sure about this because it would favor the neighborhoods that have the ability to come up with the money while it may not be the most dangerous street, but noted the flip-side of this would be the city could get more done if they could raise some of their money. Mr. McDonald believed this would be a step in the right direction as opposed to just asking the neighborhood to pay for it outright. He explained by offering to cost-share in some way, based on criteria it would be leveling the playing field for everyone. Council Member Alexander mentioned the procedures used by NCDOT and oftentimes cities have to put more money into specific projects to entice them to move the project up. He suggested the possibility of factoring in the economic data in a neighborhood to factor into the scoring data.

Committee Member Williams pointed out in some of the areas where there are absentee property owners it would be difficult for them to raise money. He provided an example in the Rosetta C. Baldwin area and issues they have with speeding and noted it is almost to the point of being a public safety issue because of the proximity to the daycare. Committee Member Wagner asked if the 75% required on the petition was for residents or property owners. Committee Member Hill suggested it may be an area where it's predominantly rental properties, the threshold would be significantly lower, like 75% owner occupied. Chairman Ewing felt from this standpoint, it should be more residents than owners due to the high amount of rental properties where the absentee owners are out of state. He noted from a public safety standpoint, it is for the safety of the person actually living there.

Chairman Ewing suggested for staff to put together a rating scale with some of the criteria for Council to review taking into consideration the economy of the neighborhoods and figure out how we can help some of the neighborhoods that have a lower median income and property value versus some of the more affluent neighborhoods who would have the ability to come up with the cost.

Mr. McDonald pointed out that the city's current policy states 75% of property of residents or property owners, so it really does not distinguish one from the other. He also pointed out that vacant lots are not counted in the percentage. Chairman Ewing advised that it could be a case in a neighborhood where someone owns many rentals and pointed out while the residents living there might not have the ability to pay, the property owner may have the ability to pay. Mr. McCaslin suspects that many neighborhoods would be interested in this, but pointed out the \$100,000 would not go far and the list will continue to grow.

Council Member Alexander suggested instead of the speed humps a possibility might be to look into the 4-way stops as they are an inexpensive way of traffic calming while this type of measure might be more conducive in some, but not all the neighborhoods. Chairman Ewing noted that although 4-way STOPS are relatively inexpensive, he did not want to see them put up everywhere because they do not work in every situation. He suggested that Council would rely on staff to review and evaluate the requests with the criteria that is selected to make sure that the most logical form of traffic calming is done.

Committee Member Hill questioned while looking at economics and how much the neighborhoods could contribute, if there would be a way to provide and take into consideration the danger and risk rating and asked if there should be a mechanism where the city could go back to them with a lesser cost option in the neighborhoods that cannot necessarily pay the greater amounts. She felt this might be an option that could solve the problem and allow traffic calming in neighborhoods where it might not otherwise happen. Committee Member Wagner stated he would like for it to be a policy handled entirely by staff for prioritization where the City Council has nothing to do with it. He recommended the following aspects be included in the policy:

- Cost
- Money to be raised
- Danger level
- Types of treatment

Mr. McDonald noted the city currently has the following policies:

- Traffic calming policy
- Multi-way STOP policy
- Speed-limit reduction policy

He pointed out Raleigh's policy incorporates all of these into one single policy. Chairman Ewing recommended that all of High Point's policies also be consolidated into one single policy.

Committee Member Wagner made a motion to use the City of Raleigh's Traffic Calming Policy as a template incorporating this discussion and have staff bring back a working draft of a traffic calming policy for the Committee's August 3rd meeting. Committee Member Williams seconded.

As a matter of information, Mr. McDonald pointed out that Washington Street would not qualify for speed humps due to it not being a residential street per the city's current policy. He pointed out as part of the improvements made on Washington Street, the city provided ample on-street parking and suggested this would slow down traffic somewhat.

Enhancement of Intersections

Committee Member Wagner reported he has talked with Legal and staff about his proposal for enhancement of intersections. Committee Member Wagner stated he would be sending it out to Council for review so it can be discussed at the August 3rd Committee meeting.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m. upon motion duly made and seconded.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maria A. Smith
Deputy City Clerk

Jason P. Ewing, Chairman

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