



**MANAGER'S BRIEFING SESSION
HIGH POINT MUNICIPAL BUILDING
February 6, 2017 – 4:00 P.M.
3RD FLOOR LOBBY CONFERENCE ROOM**

Present:

Mayor William S. Bencini, Jr.; Mayor Pro Tem Golden (Ward 1); and Council Members Latimer Alexander (At-Large); Cynthia Davis (At-Large); Chris Williams (Ward 2), Alyce Hill (Ward 3), Council Members Jay Wagner (Ward 4), Jim Davis (Ward 5), and Jason Ewing (Ward 6)

Staff Present:

Greg Demko, City Manager; Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager; Randy Hemann, Assistant City Manager; Jeron Hollis, Director of Communications & Public Engagement; JoAnne Carlyle, City Attorney; Loren Hill, President- High Point Economic Development Corporation; Eric Olmedo, Budget & Administrative Director; Terry Houk, Director of Public Services; Derrick Boone, Assistant Director of Public Services; Rebecca Coplin, Environmental Programs Coordinator; Chip Vanderzee, Environmental Services Superintendent; Robby Stone, Assistant Director- Public Services; Jeff Moore, Director of Financial Services Maria Smith, Deputy City Clerk; and Lisa Vierling, City Clerk

Others Present:

Judy Stalder, TREBIC; Jennifer Imo, The Ferguson Group

News Media:

Pat Kimbrough, *High Point Enterprise*

Handouts: *City of High Point, North Carolina- Draft 2017 Federal Agenda*

Note: *This handout will be attached as a permanent part of these proceedings.*

Presentation- Ferguson Group- 2017 Federal Legislative Agenda

City Manager Greg Demko introduced Jennifer Imo, who is the city's federal lobbyist and is with The Ferguson Group. Ms. Imo reported they have been very busy in Washington and commented these are very interesting times. She advised the new theme in the 115th Congress is "Expect the Unexpected." She shared they are trying to be very vigilant ensuring that the areas and programs that benefits communities like High Point are preserved and the areas/regulations/programs are not taken away. She advised it is an interesting, balancing act in Washington. She mentioned that Congressman Budd is a new member in Congress. She stated the goal for today was to discuss the draft Federal Agenda. She noted this is essentially a road map for Council as they move forward. Ms. Imo reported this is a result of meetings/discussions held with management and staff to identify some of the priorities and projects that they are working on and to see how they can support these at the Federal level.

She highlighted that in the past year in working on grants, they have been very successful, especially with the Police Department. They were awarded more than \$1.4 million for two separate grants. She also mentioned a technical grant that was received last year, "Local Food, Local Places" grant and shared that she has been amazed by the final work product and plan that the program provided. As a result, it involved a larger Farmer's Market at the Library. They are currently working with the Library staff and others to develop a grant application under USDA's Farmer's Market Program.

Ms. Imo pointed out the proposed legislative draft was a fluid document and items could be added as needs arise. She pointed out this is only a guide and welcomed any suggestions/questions. She elaborated that they know there would be some sort of repeal or replacement of the Affordable Care Act, as well as Tax Reform regarding Tax Exempt Municipal Bonds.

She advised there is a real threat on Tax Exempt Municipal Bonds due to the amount of infrastructure and the Tax Reform bill that has to be paid for. She is currently working on a draft letter for Council's review and that the National League of Cities would be providing this letter regarding Tax Exempt Municipal Bonds to our members of Congress along with a document that shows how High Point has utilized Tax Exempt Municipal Bonds in the past 10 years and the coming 10 years so they truly understand that the financing mechanism is removed and as a result it will stop critical infrastructure, or they will move forward and all this cost will be pushed down to the residents/constituents.

She also advised that they have not seen a proposed budget from the Trump Administration for FY 2018, but have heard there would be drastic cuts in certain programs, even elimination in some programs and agencies like the Economic Development Administration. Ms. Imo reported that she is working with the city's staff to identify the programs that really are important (i.e. CDBG, etc). She reiterated that we do have to be vigilant and can't assume anything and can't assume funding is going to be safe because it always has been before.

Mayor Bencini advised this is the first he has heard about the possibility of Tax Exempt Municipal Bonds going away and asked if this is just speculative. Ms. Imo stated it is not speculative and advised that they hired Kevin Brady, Chair of the House Ways & Means Committee that has jurisdiction over tax, and they have been told it is 100% on the chopping block.

Council Member Alexander asked about the "Market Place Fairness" and noted across the nation, they are seeing a loss of brick and mortar sales due to it all going on-line. He advised this is translating into lower sales tax receipts, which is direct dollars to the city. He suggested that the playing field needs to be leveled on this.

Ms. Imo explained we now have a Republican House/Senate President and while this is not a tax increase, it is difficult to explain the concept that this just gives state and local government the ability to capture the sales tax as they already have the authority to capture but can't do it. Conservatives are staying far away from this because of concerns that it will look like a new tax increase and this is an education/marketing issue.

Ms. Imo felt the best way to pass this on-line sales tax legislation would be through the Congress's Tax Reform, which would happen within the next two years.

Council Member Alexander mentioned earmarks and Ms. Imo explained that the Republican caucus actually eliminated the ban on earmarks in January. She shared that Paul Ryan agreed that by April, they would allow a vote on whether or not they could bring earmarks back, so this is actually being discussed.

Regarding the taxable bonds, Council Member C. Davis asked if the ones that have already been issued would be grandfathered in. Ms. Imo stated she would like to get information from city staff for a list of projects that have used bonds in the past five years. She stressed that they need to be vigilant and get as much information out front as possible. She reiterated this is a really hot issue and felt it was important to identify the programs that the city benefits the most from and explaining to the delegation why these programs are important.

Mayor Bencini asked about the contemplation regarding the impact of changes to the Trade Policy as it relates to employment at the local level—a real need for manufacturing jobs. Ms. Imo noted this could certainly be added, but she would need guidance from the city as to the desired message to be communicated.

Council Member J. Davis mentioned the redistricting and asked Ms. Imo if they were still maintaining a relationship with Congressman Alma Adams and she replied they were. He also asked what she thought about Congressman Budd's staff being so young in age. Ms. Imo responded by saying this is very common and shared that she has a nice rapport with Congressman Budd and is very excited about his work in Washington.

Mayor Bencini stated a big strategic objective in High Point is to overcome blight in the Core City and the lack of employment opportunities for those who live in this part of the city. He reported that he would like to focus on the whole concept of how trade policies can impact employment. Council Member Alexander added that they also need to make sure we have people ready to take the jobs and we need to find ways to encourage this. Ms. Imo advised that she has talked to management about engaging with house members and setting up roundtable discussions on best practices relative to workforce development and discuss the possibility of long-term projects that would benefit districts. She felt this might possibly address the issue that High point has now with workers and employment opportunities.

Mr. Demko agreed to add this to the list.

Mayor Pro Tem Wagner mentioned that he recently attended a conference and learned that they were able to use some EPA dollars to incorporate bio retention facilities into traffic calming. He also reported on another session he attended regarding food innovation clusters (Food Hubs) and advised there is apparently money that can be used to create these. Mr. Hemann advised that staff has met with groups in the community and have discussed this, but not in great detail.

Council Member Williams also mentioned a grant that would allow local stores to receive SNAP benefits and he would like to investigate it further. He advised this would definitely help local residents that cannot travel.

Ms. Imo asked about confirmation regarding Council's schedule while visiting Washington at the NLC Conference and when they would want to meet with her. Consensus was to meet with her on Monday morning at her office, have breakfast, then prepare for the day's activities.

Presentation- High Point's Beautification Program

Mr. Demko mentioned a major landscaping project on Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. to beautify and enhance the gateway. Rebecca Coplin, Environmental Programs Coordinator, excitedly reported as a result of the enhancements, there are now 100 new trees that have been planted at the I-85/MLK Cloverleaf. NCDOT made these improvements at a cost of about \$74,000. Council Member Alexander asked about the watering and maintenance. The City of High Point Parks & Recreation Department will be watering and maintaining the plantings on all four sides.

Ms. Coplin also mentioned the NCDOT contract that for collected litter on highways and on-off ramps. She explained there is a 6-week rotation and hopefully everyone has noticed a great improvement.

Winter Wipeout Campaign

Ms. Coplin explained that in the winter time, the vegetation dies out and reveals more trash. This program lasts for three weeks and allows folks to go out and clean up areas at their convenience. The city provides the supplies. The campaign starts February 13th and ends on Sunday, March 5th.

Council Member Williams asked if staff could please supply larger vests for future events.

Great American Clean-Up

Ms. Coplin reported that the Great American Clean-Up event would be held on April 29th. Staff is in the process of talking to schools, churches and individuals about the vent and anticipate that the event will be bigger this year.

Keep High Point Beautiful

Ms. Coplin asked for everyone to pay attention and be on the look-out for little projects popping up. She reported that 1,000 tulip bulbs were planted at the Museum.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m. upon motion duly made and seconded.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa B. Vierling, MMC
City Clerk