

# City of High Point

*Municipal Office Building  
211 South Hamilton Street  
High Point, NC 27261*



## Minutes

**Thursday, February 18, 2016**

**3:00 PM**

**Council Chambers**

## **Special Called Meeting of City Council**

*William S. Bencini, Jr., Mayor  
James C. Davis, Mayor Pro Tem  
Latimer B. Alexander, IV, Cynthia Y. Davis,  
Jason P. Ewing, Jeffrey J. Golden,  
Alyce E. Hill, Christopher Williams,  
Jay W. Wagner*

[160097](#)

Pre Budget Work Session #4 - topics: Fleet Department, Electric Department, Communications & Public Engagement

**Presentation by Jeron Hollis - Communications & Public Engagement Department**

Jeron Hollis, Director of the Communications & Public Engagement Department, began the presentation by providing an overview of the department which includes Marketing/Communications and Human Relations. This is a new department that was formed in July of 2015 and combined the Public Information Office and the Human Relations Office. The main goal of the newly formed department is to provide consistent, professional communications for the City and to bring all media/public communications under one umbrella. He introduced the staff - Ryan Ferguson, Marketing Manager; Worley Smith, Communications Specialist; and Nina McNeilly, Webmaster. There are two employees assigned to the Human Relations Division - a Human Relations Division Manager (vacant position at this time) and a Human Relations Program Coordinator. Mr. Hollis stated he is currently interviewing for the Human Relations Division Manager's position and expects to have the position filled in March. The Human Relations Program Coordinator is currently on FMLA leave. Even though there have been staffing issues in the Human Relations Department, with the help of other staff and the Community Development Department, the department has functioned successfully.

With the development of this new department, the City now has capabilities to do things we haven't been able to in the past. All communication that goes out to the public is reviewed by Mr. Hollis' s staff to make sure it is appropriate and doesn't lead to negative publicity for the city. Staff has developed a work order system for all departments to use in order to keep check on efficiency.

The City is now able to provide high level graphic designs for all marketing and branding in house. One example is the logo for the new buses. Examples of other graphic designs the department has provided were displayed for everyone to view and included the project board design for the Library Plaza Project; outreach materials for the new Development Ordinance and items for the retirement celebration for Police Chief Marty Sumner.

The City is broadening communications to our residents through the use of social media. Text messages are sent to employees advising of weather related closures and other events; emergency communications are used to reach the public via Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Videos and photos are also posted to attract more followers.

The communications portion of the department publishes Newsletters each month to let people know that things are happening at city hall. Inserts are placed in utility statements each month to keep the public aware of events, etc. When the City Council adopted the Tethering Ordinance, this was relayed to the public through a bill insert. All of these communications are produced in house and we no longer need the services of a vendor.

How do our citizens receive this information? Multiple platforms called "Shotgun Messaging" which includes: signage, bill inserts, website, advertising, newspaper, social media, TV interviews, video, and media release, which are all consistent and of a high,

professional quality.

Mr. Hollis gave a brief report on the Human Relations Department. The goal of this department is to provide equity among all citizens; promote goodwill, understanding and respect; dispute resolution, better trained and qualified youth, handle incoming concerns and provide outreach programs for our citizens. It is an extension of customer service. In the past nine months, the department has had 63 walk-ins and calls. Twenty of these were housing issues; thirteen were landlord/tenant issues; and twenty five miscellaneous calls. All of these required only minimal outreach.

Last fall the City Council adopted a revised Human Relations Ordinance. Since that date the Commission has reorganized and all members are newly appointed. The new ordinance provides that a work plan be submitted to City Council twice a year. On Saturday, February 20th, the newly organized Human Relations Commission will hold a retreat and the work plan will be forwarded to City Council for approval after this retreat. Council will approve the activities the City will be involved in and how much staff time, energy, and funds the city will provide.

Mr. Hollis stated that there are several challenges facing the city in the area of communications. This includes outdated equipment and outage concerns for the website. We have 20th century technology trying to work in the 21st century. We need to do a better job of telling our story and to bring all community outreach/communication under one umbrella and have the same consistent message. We need to work on the perception of our Human Relations work and have a department that works for the entire community.

The audio in the City Council Chambers needs replacing. It is obsolete and the audio needs to be intelligible for recording purposes. The hearing impaired equipment is from the 70's and is obsolete. The equipment used for our Cable Channel is of old picture tube technology.

Challenges within the Human Relations Department includes the need to reestablish connections with community partners/internal partners and to better our image with our community stakeholders. There has been no outreach efforts for several months.

To help meet these challenges, the Communications and Public Engagement Department has identified the following solutions. The use of video to create and develop departmental videos, such as Police and Fire recruitment videos and to run content on social media, web and TV platforms. Video/photo production will be done on site. We will soon be introducing a new website which will be more user friendly and reliable and in addition, the new website will have extranet which allows for ease of internal communications from any internet connections. Customers will experience fewer problems with paying utility bills on line.

Mr. Hollis indicated that he will be applying for Public Educational Government Funding (PEG Funding) which assists Cities and County's with money to purchase equipment that supports television programming. We will need to change some our current channel content to meet minimum qualifications by March to qualify for this funding.

Currently the City only uses Time Warner Cable for cable access. Mr. Hollis is working with North State Communications for a High Point channel (North State currently runs Greensboro programming for High Point residents) and AT&T U-verse to expand to other platforms.

Moving Forward the Department will:

- Continue to enhance our image and branding
- Marketing, graphic design, video projects
- Pursue state grant funding for television upgrades
- Launch new website
- Complete staffing process for Human Relations division
- Train HR Commission and produce work plan

Council Member Alexander asked a question regarding laws when someone makes a public record request for access to citizens email addresses when they subscribe for notification of events, notices, etc.

Deputy City Manager McCaslin replied that we have never received a request of this type however; we will get an answer from our Legal Department.

### **Presentation by Gary Smith - Fleet Services Department**

Gary Smith, Director of the Fleet Services, gave a brief overview of the Fleet Services Department which provides equipment acquisition, maintenance, fuel and equipment disposal to all city departments except the Fire Department. They also manage the equipment operations and equipment replacement funds, coordinate fleet acquisition, repairs to equipment, coordinate outside vendor services and disposal of equipment.

The Mission Statement for the Fleet Services Department is to provide the highest quality fleet management services at the lowest possible cost. They strive to service the equipment in the most cost-effective manner possible through high productivity of personnel and sound professional decisions in the management of the city's fleet. They are proud of the city organization and the services that they provide through hard work, professionalism and the positive image they present.

The Fleet Services Department operates from 7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. five days a week and has 24/7 service for emergencies, inclement weather and natural disasters. They also provide mobile emergency service for fuel and tire repairs.

Mr. Smith stated that he is always in direct communication with all city departments and helps with the planning of their budgets in insure they have all the information needed to plan for the maintenance and delivery for their equipment. The department functions much like AAA and can service vehicles from cars to large garbage trucks throughout the city at all times. They do full police vehicle installation. They have a complete tire inventory for all of the city's vehicles, and a couple of years ago purchased a nitrogen machine which extends the life of tires because it allows for consistent tire pressure. This has allowed for

cost savings within the department.

Mr. Smith indicated that prior to his joining the City of High Point in 2008 there was no preventive maintenance program in place for our fleet. He developed a procedure and equipment is now monitored and because of this we have more reliable and maintained equipment. Employees fill our service envelopes when vehicles are brought in for service and text messages are sent to notify them when the vehicle is being serviced and when it is ready for pickup. There is also an "on call" box at the Fleet Facility on Triangle Lake Road for 24/7 service after hours.

Services that are outsourced are paint and body work, towing, glass replacement and upholstery work. Limited outsourcing services include tire service (when tire technician is absent from work), mufflers and exhaust work, welding and during peak workloads.

Fleet Services maintains their own fuel system. The city's fleet uses about 900,000 gallons of fuel per year. There are two fueling locations - one at the Fleet Facility on Triangle Lake Road and the other at the Municipal Operations Center (MOC) on W. Green Drive. Our police officers who work the North side of High Point use WEX cards for convenience. The information from the use of these cards is sent weekly to our Fleet division and this allows the department to monitor the use of the cards and to track fuel usage.

Mr. Smith reviewed for City Council the yearly process he follows for the fleet management program. This begins in the month of July when he begins placing orders and bringing items to City Council for approval of purchase. This allows for lead time and also end of the year model discounts. During the Fall and Winter months, the fleet program is analyzed and maintenance history is reviewed. Replacement factors taken into consideration are: age, mileage, maintenance cost and useful life. He looks at the annual usage, whether or not to purchase new or used equipment, reassignments of equipment and rental opportunities. During the Spring he begins preparing vehicle and equipment specifications, contacts potential vendors and suppliers, schedules equipment demonstrations, contact manufactures for end of year programs and looks for state and national contract opportunities.

Mr. Smith stated that we strive to maintain a standardized fleet to make the fleet more efficient. They can move equipment from department to department, depending on the need, and thus eliminating the need for training and the technicians are familiar with the equipment.

The City of High Point uses the same garbage trucks as the City Greensboro and City of Winston Salem. This allows us to borrow from each other's inventory to keep everything running in the event parts are not readily available.

In the past, once a year, the City would have an auctioneer come on site to auction off surplus equipment. This was only marketing to local people and would only bring in about \$150,000 annually. It would take the department two months to prepare for this auction. We now sell everything online through GovDeals at a much greater profit.

Safety is very important to the Fleet Service staff and they have a five year safety record.

Mr. Smith reported that the long range plans for his department include: adding additional work space, replacing the Triangle Lake Road fueling station and the carwash on Triangle Lake Road. The current Fleet Facility was built in 1977 and is maxed out. The fueling station has underground tanks with single walls. Monitoring wells are on site and to date we have had no problems.

Deputy City Manager McCaslin commended Mr. Smith on the work of the Fleet Services Department stating that since 2008 they have made tremendous strides by cutting the staff in half and developing the preventive maintenance program into effect. It is a whole different operation under Gary's direction.

### **Presentation by Garey Edwards - Electric Utilities Department**

Garey Edwards, Director of Electric Utilities, gave Council a short overview of the future projects his department is planning for electric service within the City of High Point.

Our current electric system includes:

406 Miles of overhead primary

344 miles of underground primary

31,914 city owned poles

66 square miles of service area

14 substations

40,387 customers (Commercial 4,647; Industrial 271; Residential 35,469)

The City of High Point is different from other cities because most of our revenue comes from commercial customers. Duke Power also provides service through the city. The Electric Fund consists of 80 % wholesale power.

Mr. Edwards briefly presented "Overhead vs. Underground." Underground distribution cable is twice the expense because of the cost of the materials and it does have to be replaced every 20 years. We are currently planning the replacement of the Main Street underground.

The city is not seeing much growth in residential development. The largest growth is in commercial and this helps us to stay competitive.

### **The current projects for the Electric Department are:**

Skeet Club Road Project - 2.5M

Filter Plant Substation Upgrade - \$1.2M

Boundary Street Substation - \$3.0M

Conversion of Linden Substation to 100 kV

### **The Future projects for the Electric Department are:**

Burton Substation 2nd Transformer Upgrade - \$1.4M

Russell to Burton Conversion \$2.0M

North Main Overhead to Underground Conversion

NCDOT Hwy 68 & I-74  
Hammer Street Substation  
Deep River to Penny Road Transmission  
Phillips Substation Expansion  
Substation Transformers  
    Jackson Lake Road T1 & T2  
    Oak Hollow T1 & T2  
    Fairfield Road T1 & T2  
    Penny Road T2  
    Eastchester Drive T1 & T2  
Medium Voltage Feeder Breaker Conversion

**On-Going Projects for the Electric Department are:**

Automated Meter Reading  
Load Management  
Area Outdoor Lighting  
Street Lighting  
Downtown Underground  
Overhead/Underground Conversions

The City gets power off the grid at four places around the City. They are: Jackson Lake Road substation; Phillips Street substation; McCaslin substation and the North substation. Penny Road is newest substation and came online last summer. This took the overload off the Eastchester substation. Penny Road to Deep River is the future development and will complete the loop around the city.

Equipment is decades old in the substations and needs to be replaced to keep up with the demand for electric service in the city and for safety. The Eastchester, Filter Plant and Burton Street substations are especially in need of replacing as this equipment is beginning to fail. Electric crews constantly check transformers for any signs of failing and immediately take them offline if there are any indications of such. The upgrades to these substations will help meet the demands as well as the planned transmission line projects on Skeet Club Road and Penny Road.

The Skeet Club Road transmission line construction project was placed on hold by the NCDOT earlier this month to allow time to explore the burying of the power lines instead of placing them overhead on 100 foot high metal poles as proposed.

The old Hammer Street substation was abandoned years ago and we are now planning to update it and bring it back online to help with overload on the Eastchester substation. This will not be a huge investment as we already own the land and the structure and it is zoned properly.

Mr. Edwards stated that he began a ten year plan for our electric system. The replacement of a substation can range from \$600,000 to \$1M each.

The City is currently replacing the old mechanical meters to the smart meters. The old

mercury style light bulb (used in street lights) is being replaced with LED light bulbs. A 15-year life LED bulb costs about \$200 which is very affordable. With the LED bulbs, the light is pointed down and you don't have the "feathering out" of light that you get with the mercury bulbs.

Council Member Alexander asked if the City still had the program where a homeowner could pay to have underground service from the street to the home. Mr. Edwards responded that the city does still offer the program and it is \$150 per residence. This is a very good program because should we experience a weather event, such as an ice storm, and a tree limb takes the line at the home down it will be last on the list for repairs or reconnect.

Deputy City Manager McCaslin stated that the City's Electric Department is a big part of the City's operation and in turn costs a lot of money to maintain; however, it serves a lot of citizens.