

# City of High Point

*Municipal Office Building  
211 S. Hamilton Street  
High Point, NC 27260*



## Minutes

**Monday, August 19, 2019**

**4:00 PM**

**3rd Floor Lobby Conference Room, #302**

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

*Jay W. Wagner, Mayor  
Jason P. Ewing, Mayor Pro Tem  
Jeffrey J. Golden, S. Wesley Hudson,  
Victor A. Jones, Britt W. Moore,  
Monica L. Peters, Donald A. Scarborough, Christopher Williams*

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. The following Council Members were present (8):

Mayor Jay W. Wagner; Mayor Pro Tem Jason P. Ewing (Ward 6) [arrived at 4:35 p.m.]; Council Member Donald A. Scarborough (At Large); Council Member Jeffrey J. Golden (Ward 1); Council Member Christopher Williams (Ward 2); Council Member Monica L. Peters (Ward 3); Council Member S. Wesley Hudson (Ward 4); and Council Member Victor A. Jones (Ward 5) [arrived at 4:03 p.m.]

### **Staff Present:**

Greg Demko, City Manager; Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager; Randy Hemann, Assistant City Manager; Meghan Maguire, Assistant City Attorney; Angela Kirkwood, Human Resources Director; Eric Olmedo, Managing Director; Laura Altizer, Budget & Performance Manager; Jeron Hollis, Director of Communications & Public Engagement; Loren Hill, President- High Point Economic Development Corporation; Mary Brooks, Deputy City Clerk; and Lisa Vierling, City Clerk

### **Also Present:**

Melody Burnett, Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Mark Browder, Mark III  
Blake Spell, Mark III  
Louis Thibodeaux, Resident

### **News Media Present:**

Pat Kimbrough, *High Point Enterprise*

**Present** 8 - Mayor Jay Wagner, Council Member Christopher Williams, Council Member Donald Scarborough, Mayor Pro Tem Jason Ewing, Council Member Jeffrey Golden, Council Member Monica Peters, Council Member Victor Jones, and Council Member Wesley Hudson

**Absent** 1 - Council Member Britt Moore

## **PRESENTATION OF ITEMS**

Note: the Power Point Presentation entitled "High Point Destination Strategic Plan" is hereby attached in Legistar as a permanent part of these proceedings.

### **2019-381**

#### **Update on the Convention & Visitors Bureau Activities**

A representative from the Convention & Visitors Bureau will be present to update Council on CVB activities.

**Attachments:** [High Point Destination Strategic Plan](#)

Melody Burnette with the High Point Convention & Visitors Bureau provided an

update on their activities. She mentioned they have been in the planning process over the last year with their partners from JLL who is assisting with a 10-year master plan for tourism. Over 200 surveys and 150 interviews were conducted so they could capture the essence of High Point and the direction that the city is moving in as far as tourism.

Who is visiting High Point? Ms. Burnette advised first and foremost it is the home furnishings, retail, and design visitors who are coming to High Point to shop in the 50+ retail stores and to shop in the design showroom assets in the 40+ showrooms. Additionally, High Point University is bringing in 100,000 visitors year round to High Point. Ms. Burnette noted that High Point is embarking on some sports tourism, festivals, events such as the John Coltrane Jazz Festival, small conferences/meetings of 500 or less people, friends, family, and transient business.

In terms of benchmarking with similar cities in scope and size in North Carolina, comparisons were made with Wilmington, Asheville, Concord, Greenville, Cary, etc.... and it was determined that after looking deeper into High Point's assets that High Point does not mirror a traditional destination product. One example provided was that High Point is not very competitive in the sports fields, is lacking some higher quality lodging, does not have large conference space available, nor does High Point have the traditional attractions that bring in visitors.

Ms. Burnette reported that the big thing that draws thousands of visitors to High Point twice a year is the Home Furnishings industry; however, High Point has a lot of good year-round assets that they can capitalize on that give a nod to our branding of home furnishings and design.

She explained High Point is a "partial legacy" city that hangs its hat onto the past and that sometimes it is hard for locals to digest it when they start thinking about High Point's past in manufacturing and furniture and the difficulty in transitioning from the past into the future. Ms. Burnette stated they are going to have to think about home furnishings in a brand new way possibly in design services and creative design. She noted an easy comparison would be that home furnishings is to High Point as bourbon is to Louisville and went on to say that it is all about ownership. She advised that the short term opportunity is to concentrate on the direct partnership with the Market Authority, the showrooms, the designers, hotels, and the retailers in order to capture more of the designer business.

With all this in mind, Ms. Burnette explained that the CVB is going to have to change its marketing thinking and morph more into a business of recruiting designers, students, and trade buyers. She mentioned that the CVB had a retreat with the Furniture Market Authority and the Showroom Association in March and also sent out letters to 3,000 designers in June to solicit feedback about their specific business needs so High Point can be a year-round destination for them.

They are also in the process of conducting one-on-one interviews with designers and they are working with the Furniture Market Authority and the Showroom Association to see what kind of programming they can do.

She suggested one of the long-term goals for the CVB could be to hone in on the Furniture Hall of Fame as a destination attraction and own the branding within a 50-mile radius with the idea that "your furniture store is going to be ours."

Ms. Burnette then shared some next steps in terms of targeting events and noted that the CVB wants to cultivate spectator events such as concerts, festivals, marathons, cycling events, etc... and have those types of events here in High Point. One suggestion that she shared was the possibility of bringing a Thomas Built Bus Rally to High Point and create a real cool signature event for High Point.

Ms. Burnette provided an overview of the CVB calendar and events scheduled and noted they would also like to come up with an event planner guidebook to promote the activities/events in a different way. She pointed out they needed to come up with some creative ways to leverage the 100,000+ HPU visitors coming into High Point because HPU's growth will bring additional opportunities. The consultants saw an advantage point and suggested the CVB could hone in on the HPU branding as being the premier life skills university.

In terms of linking and imaging downtown, branding and wayfinding signage could be added. In terms of servicing sports and conferences, the CVB's competitive advantage point is the services component and offering exceptional services that are not offered by other CVBs.

In terms of sports marketing and events, the CVB has expressed an interest in building a sports complex in High Point. As this can take a while, they have agreed to concentrate on focusing on niche sports events such as the rowing and regatta events, and enhancements to Oak Hollow Lake would put them in more of a competitive advantage to pull these events from a Tri-State area.

In terms of planning for the Congdon Events Center, they would like to work closely with Business High Point and their designers to cultivate that footprint and put together a focus group for a niche market that can assist them in the planning stages. They would also like to be more transparent in terms of what is being brought to the table and sharing plans with their counterparts in hopes of landing some county and regional events in High Point.

In order to complement these changes, Ms. Burnette advised that the CVB does realize it is going to have to change. This will require changes to their organizational structure, job descriptions will need to be rewritten, and the way the budget is spent is going to be different. They also plan to work hand-in-hand with the High Point CVB Foundation Board, the 501(c)3 arm of the CVB. The

consultant, JLL, will assist them in implementing a grants program with a matrix that will be used to help with weighting, prioritizing, and programming the various events. They also plan on pulling together their stakeholders to ensure they are on point with this plan in developing a Destination Development Council that could be comprised of stakeholders from the city of High Point, the CVB, Market Authority, Business High Point, etc..... Ms. Burnette explained that when making decisions, it will be necessary for them to start categorizing what is an attraction and what is an attractor.

presented before council

2019-382

**Presentation-Proposed 2020 Health Insurance Renewal**

Mark Browder with Mark III will be present to make a presentation to Council on the proposed 2020 Health Insurance Renewal for City of High Point employees.

Mark Browder with Mark III Consultants provided information on the proposed 2020 health insurance renewal for the city of High Point employees. He advised that they looked at both self-funding and fully insured for 2020. He noted that during the last two months of 2018, claims were up substantially with a high number of cancer claims and this carried over into the next plan year. He explained under a normal renewal calculation, the fully insured renewal should be about an 18.5% increase, and on a self-funded basis, it should be at 8%. The reason that self-funded is less is that the fixed costs are less (no health insured tax, no state premium taxes, etc.....)

The renewal for 2020 came in at a 5.72% increase and Mr. Browder noted that fully insured still continues to make sense for the city. The city will once again get a bonus fund and an HSA (Health Savings Account), a high deductible consumer-driven health plan, is being recommended as a second option for employees to choose from. The renewal premiums are less with the option of a HSA. Council Member Williams asked if employees could take an HSA fund with them if they leave the city and Mr. Browder replied they could. He explained the good part of the HSA plan is that employees know they have good protection, but don't have a way to save for future healthcare costs so the HSA allows them to do just that.

In terms of wellness and health risks, staff is constantly trying to improve the health of the employee population of which there are a lot of risks in the city with weight being one. The top three health issues within the city were cited as:

1. Hypertension
2. Hyperglodemia (high cholesterol), and
3. Diabetes

Mr. Browder advised if the city could improve the health of the employee population and make progress on the weight side, it would have a positive impact on the overall plan. They are recommending inclusion of a "waist" incentive strategy. The waist incentive has been around since 2013. He shared some statistics from other jurisdictions from 2013 to 2018 with a good number of the participating jurisdictions reporting decreases and significant improvement. He stressed that the waist incentive strategy is a great benefit because it can help change an employees weight which leads to healthier employees, less claims, and better renewal rates. The baseline for the waist incentive strategy will be in the Fall of 2020 with the remeasure in 2021 with the incentive payout in January 2021. This will be an item in next year's budget and the employees can get the incentive in cash, or transfer it to their HSA account if they have one.

In closing, Mr. Browder felt this was an excellent renewal with CIGNA and falls within the budgeted amounts.

City Manager Greg Demko pointed out that the City Council has been really active on health and health awareness and the wellness programs offered, such as Weight Watchers, have been highly successful, well-received, and well-attended.

Barring no objections from Council, Deputy City Manager Randy McCaslin advised that Mr. Browder would continue working with CIGNA on the 2020 health insurance renewal and the contract would probably be on the next agenda for City Council consideration in September.

**For Information Only**

**Guilford Apprenticeship Program (GAP)**

Eric Olmedo, Managing Director, made reference to a recent article appearing in the High Point Enterprise on the Guilford Apprenticeship Program (GAP). He advised that the city is hoping to participate in the program that is being offered at GTCC to help develop curriculum and fill some positions in the Fleet Services, Public Services, IT/Cyber Security areas. He reported that High Point will actually be the first municipality or government to participate in the program.

Mayor Wagner added that GAP is a great program, not just for education but also for workforce development and allows rising seniors an opportunity to join the program while attending a half day at school and a half day apprenticing, then finishing out the program while attending GTCC and apprenticing. As students graduate from the program, they do so with an Associates degree and a job. The Mayor attended the signing event for GAP last week, which has really grown in the number of students. Some of the High Point companies participating in the program include Vann York, Culp, EAS, NorthState, etc....

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**Closed Session- Attorney-Client Privilege**

Council is requested to go into Closed Session pursuant to N.C. General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3) for Attorney-Client privilege.

At 4:45 p.m., motion was made by Council Member Williams, seconded by Council Member Jones to enter into a closed session pursuant to N.C. General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3) to preserve attorney-client privilege.

Upon reconvening into open session at 5:02 p.m., the Mayor announced there would be no action taken as a result of the closed session.

For Information Only

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m. upon motion duly made by Council Member Jones and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ewing.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Jay W. Wagner, Mayor

Attest:

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Lisa B. Vierling, MMC  
City Clerk