

City of High Point

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



Minutes

Monday, February 3, 2020

4:00 PM

3rd Floor Lobby Conference Room, #302

Special Called Meeting of City Council

Jay Wagner, Mayor

Christopher Williams, Mayor Pro Tem

Michael Holmes

Wesley Hudson

Cyril Jefferson

Tyrone Johnson

Victor Jones

Britt Moore

Monica Peters

CALL TO ORDER

**Special Meeting
of the
High Point City Council
February 3, 2020 - 4:00 p.m.
3rd Floor Lobby Conference Room**

Minutes

Present (9):

Mayor Jay Wagner, Mayor Pro Tem Christopher Williams (Ward 2); Council Member Britt W. Moore (At Large); Council Member Tyrone E. Johnson (At Large); Council Member Cyril A. Jefferson (Ward 1); Council Member Monica L. Peters (Ward 3); Council Member S. Wesley Hudson (Ward 4); Council Member Victor A. Jones (Ward 5); and Council Member Michael A. Holmes (Ward 6)

Staff Present:

Greg Demko, City Manager; Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager; Greg Ferguson, Assistant City Manager; Eric Olmedo, Assistant City Manager; JoAnne Carlyle, City Attorney; Meghan Maguire, Assistant City Attorney; Jeron Hollis, Director of Communications and Public Engagement; Laura Altizer, Senior Budget Analyst; Angela Kirkwood, Director of Human Resources; Loren Hill, President- High Point Economic Development Corporation; Sandy Dunbeck, Executive Vice President, High Point Economic Development Corporation; Mary S. Brooks, Deputy City Clerk, and Lisa Vierling, City Clerk

Others Present:

Ray Gibbs, Executive Director, Forward High Point
Felicia Jones, resident

News Media Present:

Pat Kimbrough, High Point Enterprise

Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 3:07 p.m.

Present 9 - Britt Moore, Christopher Williams, Cyril Jefferson, Jay Wagner, Michael Holmes, Monica Peters, Tyrone Johnson, Victor Jones, and Wesley Hudson

PRESENTATION OF ITEMS

[2020-46](#)

Presentation-Forward High Point

Staff is requested to give a presentation for Forward High Point

Attachments: [Who is Forward High Point - City Council Presentation - Feb 2020.pptx](#)

City Manager Greg Demko introduced Ray Gibbs, Executive Director, Forward High Point (FHP) and advised that FHP is the agency that was created to help focus, live, and breathe downtown development. He explained that the city has been funding FHP for the first three years and it is fully expected that there will be a continuing relationship in the coming years as well.

Mr. Gibbs provided a brief history on FHP and reviewed some of the projects that FHP has been working on. He advised that FHP was formed in 2016 through the efforts of the city to look at revitalization downtown outside of the Furniture market/business. Initially, they looked at the goals that City Council set which was to focus on a catalyst project by utilizing the strategies that have been shown to work around the country for about 30 years through the National Main Street Program and the International Downtown Association. Forward High Point is one of about 97 other communities in North Carolina that have full downtown development programs with a full-time project manager. He pointed out that he became a full-time downtown manager in 1985 in Smithfield, NC and started work in downtown Greensboro in 1999 having served eight years there. He stated he is also a professional landscape architect, an urban planner, and has had experience in private practice in private real estate development, as well as city development, and has also worked as a planner.

He proceeded to share the mission statement for FHP which is "to transform downtown High Point into an ordinary, vibrant place to live, work, study, and play." He advised that FHP was incorporated in July of 2016 and he was hired as Executive Director in September 2016 and has been doing downtown development work for about 40 years.

He then reviewed the initial goals of FHP that were set by the City Council during a Retreat in 2016:

1. 500 private sector jobs;
2. 15-20 new restaurants/shops;
3. 250 additional residential units; and
4. A centralized gathering place.

He further explained that Forward High Point is actually several organizations with Forward High Point being a 501(c)6, which is a membership organization and their operating organization. Forward High Point Foundation is a 501(c)3, which

is a charitable non-profit and has a couple of LLCs under it which allows them to buy and sell some property. He spoke to how FHP has been very project-driven looking at business growth, jobs, and tax base growth. They are funded primarily by the City of High Point, but started making efforts to get some additional donations this year and raised \$60,000 in private donations and corporate sponsorships through their members. Mr. Gibbs reported that he will soon be submitting a funding request to Guilford County for funding in the next cycle.

He went on to say that FHP is made up of a 25-member Board of Directors and noted that because of their structure and partnership with the City of High Point, there is a strong city presence on their Board of Directors (about one-third of the members).

Mr. Gibbs spoke to how their area of focus does not include furniture showrooms and they are probably looking at a general area that goes from Commerce across to Lexington, but explained that their boundaries are fluid so they would consider going further down all the way down Main Street and generally over to the Lindsay/Wrenn/Hamilton area. He further elaborated on how they use the four-point approach of organization, economic development, promotion, marketing/design and they are all about focusing on the public-private partnership because the city cannot do revitalization on its own.

Regarding the promotion/marketing aspect, Mr. Gibbs reported that they now have a new webpage coming out that will do some business mapping as far as location of the businesses, what businesses are around it, parking locations, menus, etc..... He stressed the importance of design as well and being able to offer a sense of design not only from streetscapes to individual buildings, but offering assistance on what buildings should look like and how they should feel. He pointed out downtown should have a human scale to it and for it to function in a pedestrian way, there are a lot of actual social rules it needs to follow as far as design.

Mr. Gibbs then reported on the following projects they have been charged with working on:

1. Multi-purpose Stadium (which was completed and the first game was played on May 2, 2019). He spoke to FHP's extensive role in the project, starting out with the initial feasibility study by CS&L, site analysis, site selection, assemblage of property, land negotiations, etc... All of this was carried out using a Master Developer system and they chose Elliott Sidewalk Development. Mr. Gibbs spoke to how the focus was to ensure that the adjacent parcels were set up right to have new construction as far as property to fit a hotel, office building, apartments, etc..... and the facilitation as development moves forward to make sure all the little things happen going through the permitting process.

He then shared a short video of th proposed Outfields development.

2. Food Hall (274 N. Elm Street) that would be a food hall on the first floor with offices above. This building will actually overlook center field. He reported that there would be ten restaurant spaces in the Food Hall and they have actually had 24 applications for those ten spaces. Construction has finally started on the building and he spoke to a lot of different brownfields issues and some other things they are working through including the wet weather that has brought challenges. It is anticipated that completion of this building will be sometime in the Fall of 2020. Cana Development, which is the largest developer of food halls in the country, has agreed to operate the first floor and they have leased the entire floor for that operation.

3. Minor League Professional Soccer. Mr. Gibbs reported that negotiations are underway with USL One, a Minor League Professional Soccer League, that is interested in leasing the Stadium. FHP is working with an investment group that is putting an application together that will be submitted for consideration. He advised that if everything is done on time and the application is approved, then it could be up and running for March 2021. He advised that the Soccer League ha said that they want everything in place at least one year ahead of their first game. This would be a Triad soccer league and it would entail a franchise for a 60-mile radius around High Point, so there would not be a team in Winston-Salem or in Greensboro and High Point would be the soccer franchise for this area. The soccer season runs from March to October or beyond, which presents challenges trying to negotiate with the baseball team on the transition of the stadium for one or the other.

4. ShowPlace West. Mr. Gibbs reported that this building has been vacant for many years and advised that IMC donated the building to FHP last year with the understanding that they would try to find somebody to renovate the building. As a result, they conducted an analyses on the building and did a national search for development groups, sending out RFPs. Five development groups have expressed an interest and have actually toured the building, and FHP wound up with two very good applications. They have chosen which one they would like to see and will actually start negotiations tomorrow. Over the next 30 days, they hope to negotiate a development agreement and if they are not successful, they will then pursue the second interested party. Mr. Gibbs advised that he would be meeting with the second interested party to show them a couple of other locations downtown where they can possibly do their development. He further advised that this would be a major renovation of the ShowPlace West building estimated at \$24-\$25 million to renovate the entire building because it needs a new roof, new elevators, new electric, new plumbing, new heating, new a/c, all new exterior glass, etc... He pointed out the proposed uses of the building would be 52 weeks a year as this was one of their requirements.

5. Library Plaza. Mr. Gibbs advised that he has been working on designs for the Library Plaza, which is one-third concrete. He plans on planting trees in planters, which will have 6 x 6 tiles and they will have different groups/children actually paint ceramic tiles that will be fired in a kiln and installed around the planters. He advised that eventually, they would like to install a fountain and they are hopeful that they will find a private donor for it. The area would have some sculptures, a shade structure, and seating.

6. Sensory Garden at the Library. The Sensory Garden is proposed for the area at the Library at Sunset and Main Street and will connect the clock tower to the children's area. Mr. Gibbs advised that the Rotary Club adopted this as their project and they have committed \$100,000 for the project. Plans are underway to launch a fundraiser in the Spring of 2020 with hopes that another \$200,000 will be raised for the project. The Sensory Garden is a project geared towards children with autism and adults with Alzheimers and will be used as a form of treatment for them.

7. Main Street Station. Mr. Gibbs reported that this is a project that they started working on early to bring residential back to downtown. He advised that they started assembling property on Main Street for what would be another catalyist project. The project would house 150-200 residential units and about 15,000-20,000 sq. ft. of commercial space. Mr. Gibbs mentioned that to a viable downtown would require people living there, shopping there, eating at restaurants, etc..... He spoke to the challenges of timing and that it would take about three years to assemble the site. The plan is to have everything ready and basically put together for a developer to walk in and immediately start construction. They plan on having four to five stories.

8. Rucker's Street Party. Plans are underway for every Saturday home game that a concert will be held from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. that will be free. There will also be some children's games and activities. The goal is to make it a full day celebration for those attending the game and those who do not.

9. Other Programs. FHP puts out a weekly e-newsletter of activities that are happening downtown. Their new webpage is about to launch with interactive mapping. A new conceptual design for property owners and potential developers interested in sites and what they can fit on the sites will be featured, as well as information about available properties for development.

Mr. Gibbs advised that they provide consulting services on real estate issues, market data, helping people with business start-up, helping write business plans, etc..... He informed Council that he is currently a one-person office, but does have a part-time assistant who is out on medical leave. He stated he is hopeful to receive funding from Guilford County that would help to fund another professional position in the next year to help with all these ongoing projects.

Mr. Gibbs entertained questions following the conclusion of his presentation and reminded Council that a contract between FHP and the city of High Point is pending. He further explained that although funding was approved early on for FHP, a formal contract was never in place until their accountant recommended that a contract was needed.

Council Member Jefferson posed the following questions.

1. Where is the annual audit for FHP located? He noted that he could not locate it in OneDrive and asked if this is information that is available.

City Attorney JoAnne Carlyle advised that the audit requirement applies to all non-profits that the city funds.

2. How are the public meetings going?

Mr. Gibbs replied that they are looking at having a large public meeting to announce projects and will probably do an annual meeting in Spring of 2020. He advised that he personally has spoken to about 50 groups, but FHP has not had large public meetings.

3. What about the recruitment process for the FHP Board of Directors? What about the very low minority representation on the FHP Board of Directors? Is there going to be a focus on diversity on the FHP Board of Directors?

Mr. Gibbs explained that the FHP Board was initially set up with one-year, two-year and three-year terms with a series of classifications, so there are people representing certain groups which includes some at-large members (5 at-large) and city representation. He noted that groups such as the Furniture Market Authority, Business High Point-Chamber of Commerce, Southwest Renewal Foundation, Convention & Visitors Bureau, etc.... that have a representative on the Board. City Attorney JoAnne Carlyle advised that the composition of the FHP Board is outlined in their By-Laws.

Regarding the question about focusing on diversity, Mr. Gibbs explained they do focus on diversity as much as they can and have made efforts to focus on diversity. Council Member Jefferson pointed out out of a 25-member board, approximately 16 of the members are Caucasian males which is about 2/3 of the entire board. While he felt FHP was doing a great job, Council Member Jefferson stressed that it is almost inevitable that their focus on building the downtown is limited in its capacity to be embracing of all people if the people that are making the decisions about the work is literally lopsided.

Regarding the recruitment process, Mr. Gibbs replied that he has been trying to

get more women and young people involved. He explained there are some qualifications and looking at the structure of the FHP Board some have to be people who have businesses downtown. He asked that the recommendations would be people with an interest in what FHP is doing and not just a representative attending a meeting. He offered to work with Council on prospects/recommendations for future appointments and pointed out there would be three positions on the FHP Board that would probably come up in July.

4. What can we do to assure the public that the process that FHP uses for bids/transactions, etc..... is fair?

Council Member Jefferson acknowledged that the work that FHP is doing is not just economic development for the city, it is also economic development for property and business owners who are submitting the Requests for Qualifications and the Requests for Proposals. He mentioned concerns that have been expressed by the public that the process has been unfair and specifically mentioned the recent bids for ShowPlace West. He explained that because the city funds FHP operations, the City Council needs to be able to quell any concerns that the process has been unfair and let the public know that the City Council trusts that FHP conducted a fair process.

Council Member Holmes asked about the possibility of amending the FHP By-Laws and Mr. Gibbs explained the By-Laws would have to be amended by the FHP Board. He recommended that the membership on the FHP Board should not be increased; 25 members are actually more than he prefers.

Mayor Pro Tem William noted that he has served as a member on the FHP Board until recently, and felt FHP has done a good job with the access to information piece. He applauded the points made by Council Members Jefferson and Holmes and understood the need to help the community understand the process.

For Information Only

[2020-47](#)

Closed Session-Attorney-Client Privilege

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

Mayor Wagner announced the need to enter Closed Sessions for economic development and to preserve attorney-client privilege.

At 4:52 p.m., motion was made by Council Member Moore, seconded by Mayor

Pro Tem Williams to enter Closed Session pursuant to N.C. General Statute 143-318.11(a)(4) for economic development and N.C. General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3) to preserve the attorney-client privilege. The motion carried by a 9-0 unanimous vote.

Upon reconvening into Open Session at 5:26 p.m., Mayor Wagner announced there would be no action taken as a result of the Closed Sessions.

For Information Only

[2020-48](#)

Closed Session-Economic Development

Council is requested to go into Closed Session pursuant to N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(4) for Economic Development.

For Information Only

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:26 p.m. upon motion duly made and seconded.

Respectfully submitted,

Jay W. Wagner, Mayor

Attest:

Lisa B. Vierling, MMC
City Clerk