



City of Greensboro

Melvin Municipal Building
300 W. Washington Street
Greensboro, NC 27401

Meeting Minutes - Draft City Council Work Session

Thursday, May 14, 2015

12:00 PM

Plaza Level Conference Room

1. Call To Order

This City Council work session of the City of Greensboro was called to order at 12:00 p.m. on the above date in the Plaza Level Conference Room of the Melvin Municipal Office Building with the following members present: Mayor Nancy Vaughan, Mayor Pro-Tem Yvonne J. Johnson, Councilmembers Marikay Abuzuaiter, Mike Barber, Jamal Fox, Sharon Hightower, Nancy Hoffmann and Tony Wilkins. Absent: Councilmember Zack Matheny.

Also present were Assistant City Manager Mary Vigue, City Attorney Tom Carruthers and City Clerk Elizabeth H. Richardson.

2. Presentations

1. [ID 15-0420](#) Council Discussion on Fiscal Year 2015-16 Budget

Assistant City Manager Vigue stated that she had the presentation made by City Manager Westmoreland at the May 5th meeting of Council; reviewed parking operations; outside agency funding; outlined agencies that were requesting additional funding; stated that the City allocated what the agencies had previously received; and added that the City did not allocate funding for Triad Stage this year due to the original commitment being for short term funding.

Discussion took place regarding review of the item; funding for East Market Street Development; clarity on the role of and what Economic Development Support Services consisted of; and the original request of East Market Street Development.

Councilmember Hightower requested that staff bring back a proposal to fund East Market Street Development in the amount of \$50,000.

Councilmember Wilkins verified that today was for discussion only; referenced issues with Downtown Greensboro, Inc. (DGI); asked if staff had researched bringing some of their work in house; and spoke to the discussion of the formation of a commission to handle funding.

Mayor Vaughan verified that there had not been discussions regarding a commission on the Council level; stated the role of a Community Advisory Board would be for small business grant requests; and verified Council would make the final decision on grants.

Discussion continued regarding the lack of a leader at DGI; lack of representation at this meeting from DGI; possibly earmarking funds but not releasing them for DGI in the recommended budget; updated DGI budget documentation that was emailed this morning; smaller requests from entities that were represented today; and allocation of the difference should the funding come back to the City.

Mayor Vaughan asked about remaining funding in the Economic Development Fund; inquired about the City's obligation to the Folk Festival; and requested Assistant City Manager Vigue bring back the City costs to make Downtown inviting for the Festival and to confirm whether said costs had been included in the \$75,000 allocated for the Festival.

Assistant City Manager Vigue responded that the funding remaining in the Economic Development Fund was for existing projects; and referenced the in-kind services and financial contribution of the City for the Folk Festival.

Assistant City Manager David Parrish interjected that \$75,000 would go to Arts Greensboro for the Festival; and spoke to work that would be done prior to mid-September in the Downtown area.

Discussion ensued regarding the funding request by North Carolina A&T State University for track meets; conversations with Guilford County regarding work that would need to be done in the plaza prior to the Festival to allow for performances; safety issues of the plaza; amount of funding allocated for the Greensboro Children's Museum; and additional funding needs.

Mayor Vaughan requested staff identify possible funding in the amount of \$100,000 for the Accelerator Program.

Additional discussion ensued regarding how the decision was made to fund some entities but not others; funding not being decreased from what was allocated in the 2014-15 fiscal year; improvements to the Depot entrance; the need to implement the East Greensboro Study Committee items; and the need to improve infrastructure and get people interested in commercial development in East Greensboro.

Councilmember Hightower referenced the name change and mission for East Market Street Development; stated they were looking at ways to brand it out; and informed Council that there would be a board meeting next week.

Councilmember Wilkins requested staff advise Council of the revenue received from the Blandwood Mansion rehab work.

Additional discussion took place regarding funding DGI; incorrect figures provided previously; and a request for a representative from DGI to be present at the May 26th work session.

Councilmember Hightower stated she was not comfortable adopting the 2015-16 Fiscal Year Budget at the first meeting in June; and spoke to the dates of the community district budget meetings.

Assistant City Manager Vigue was requested to place the adoption of the Fiscal Year 2015-16 Budget on the June 16th meeting of Council.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson commended staff for not making any cuts from the Parks and Recreation Department.

Councilmember Fox spoke to the repairs needed at the Chavis Library and Windsor Recreation Center; and requested that staff look at combining those facilities at the Windsor location during the next budget cycle which would save the City money as well as allow the Chavis Library property to come back into the tax rolls.

Assistant City Manager Chris Wilson stated staff was currently looking at combining recreation centers and libraries.

Councilmember Hightower inquired about fire station construction for Station 57 and the Franklin Boulevard Station; and requested an update on the land availability for the location of the Franklin/McConnell fire station be provided to Council.

Councilmember Fox requested an update on the District 2 Summit Avenue Street streetscape project.

Mayor Vaughan referenced some points that were brought up by Councilmember Matheny in an email to Council; and spoke to a 1% across the board decrease.

Brief discussion took place regarding the 1% across the board decrease proposal; excepting public safety from the proposal; verification that a reduction in departmental targets had been done in the proposed budget; and impact to smaller departments of the proposed cut.

Mayor Vaughan requested a spread sheet outlining the departmental 1% cut targets and the achievement of said targets.

Councilmember Hightower voiced concern with skimping on City services; and asked what would be cut.

Councilmember Wilkins referenced his similar request for a one cent tax decrease which would neutralize the proposed water rate increase; and requested that public safety not be decreased.

Discussion took place regarding finding efficiencies in public safety similar to other departments; response times in District 5; if the request was just a philosophical exercise; researching the transition of trash pickup into an enterprise system; difference in the amount of property tax for people owning houses valued over \$300,000; measuring Greensboro against comparable cities; looking at fees; and the difference between fees in Raleigh and Charlotte.

Councilmember Fox inquired about the Additional Capital/Maintenance Enhancements.

Assistant City Manager Vigue explained the projects that were needed in the community; spoke to the funding needed to complete the projects; referenced the goal was to keep funding available to allow for other improvements that needed to be done to City facilities; and highlighted what projects had been achieved.

Councilmember Barber requested the document outlining solid waste services that could be turned into enterprise systems be republished.

Councilmember Fox inquired about the employee bonus program; and about the possible cost savings as a result of combining the City and Guilford County Planning and Engineering and Inspection Departments.

Assistant City Manager Vigue responded by providing an overview of development of an employee incentive program; and added that maintenance and operations would be the cost savings of combined City/County Departments.

Discussion took place regarding having another discussion with Guilford County around combining departments; and the lack of activity in the County Planning Department at this time.

Councilmember Wilkins left the meeting at 1:07 p.m. and returned at 1:11 p.m.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson left the meeting at 1:10 p.m. and returned at 1:13 p.m.

Councilmember Abuzuaiter inquired about water rates; spoke to a recent water rate increase; asked about the process for rehabbing infrastructure; and the fund balance in the reserve account.

Assistant City Manager Parrish outlined the process for rehabbing infrastructure lines; stated the City was becoming more aggressive with the replacement of lines to avoid sewer line breaks and overflows; and added that the decrease in overflows was due to the replacement of infrastructure.

Finance Director Rick Lusk stated there was approximately \$13 million remaining in the fund balance.

Discussion took place regarding funding for infrastructure to Randolph County; funding for the North Buffalo Treatment Plant; the City not having an overinflated fund balance; cost of the Jordan Lake Rules implementation; and contribution by the Golden Leaf Foundation for the mega-site project.

Councilmember Fox emphasized the need to maintain the proposed 2.5% merit increase; and spoke to the need to retain employees and boost morale.

Councilmember Hightower left the meeting at 1:18 p.m. and returned at 1:25 p.m.

Discussion took place regarding Council member's raises being 50% of what employee merits were; and the timeframe for Council raises.

Councilmember Wilkins inquired about the City's annual profit for water.

Mr. Lusk responded that profit varied from year to year depending on weather and what was spent on maintenance.

Councilmember Barber asked if there was a percentage set aside for maintenance; referenced the cutback in funding for Amtrak; and spoke to issues with deferred maintenance of facilities and infrastructure.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson complimented staff for the work done on the proposed budget.

Assistant City Manager Vigue reviewed the next steps for the process; spoke to cost reductions; positions that had been added; and clarified directives provided by Council.

Discussion took place regarding the impact of sales tax; reduction of the tax rate by one cent; difference between a tax reduction and an across the board 1% cut; appearance that Council devalued employees with the exception of public safety; need for increased investment in economic development; the need to trim the fat out of the budget; and an update from CDFI on the loan status.

Mayor Vaughan requested CDFI provide an update at a future work session.

Assistant City Manager Vigue was requested to provide a budget scenario decreasing the tax rate by 1 cent and having an across the board 1% cut to departments both including, and with the exception of, public safety departments.

Mack Simms with East Market Street Development Company spoke to changes in the corporation.

(A copy of the PowerPoint Presentation is filed in Exhibit Drawer X, Exhibit No. 12 which is hereby referred to and made a part of these minutes)

Mayor Vaughan declared a recess at 1:35 p.m. Council reconvened at 1:45 with all members in attendance except Councilmember Barber who left the meeting at 1:35 p.m.

2. [ID 15-0421](#) Update on Boards and Commissions Structure

Assistant City Manager Vigue stated that she would bring this back to Council as several Councilmembers were not in attendance; addressed changes made to the roster that had been provided in the packet; and spoke to what would change with regard to at-large appointments.

Brief discussion took place regarding when an at-large representative made an appointment for a district slot; and the hope that certain districts did not get slighted going forward.

3. [ID 15-0423](#) Update on Council Committees

Assistant City Manager Vigue made a PowerPoint presentation; provided an update on the Council Committee structure; spoke to changes that had been made since the last presentation; stated a copy of Winston-Salem's agenda had been provided in the packet; provided the background of the committee structure; stated that the first Council meeting would be the consent and business items; the second Monday and Tuesday would be reserved for two committee meetings each; the third meeting would consist of public hearing items; and added that this process would eliminate work sessions.

Discussion took place around consideration for holding one longer work session a month which would free up one week a month; and how Council had tried that but gone back to two work sessions monthly.

Councilmember Hightower voiced that she was not sold on this model; stated she liked having work sessions; that she would want to attend all the committee meetings as she would have questions; that she did not have a problem with the current schedule; emphasized that Council was voted to represent constituents; added that one dynamic did not necessarily work for all; and referenced the number of events councilmembers attended.

Councilmember Fox voiced that he would like Council support for this to move forward; stated he felt it would help Council be more efficient; would align with the City's MAP result areas; would align departments; improve communication to Council of what was happening internally; and would be more effective across the board.

Councilmember Hightower stated she could not support the process; requested additional discussion take place; and inquired if this would eliminate boards.

Assistant City Manager Vigue confirmed it would not eliminate boards; would create synergy; verified there would be four standing Council committees; would allow for deeper discussion for result area items; and provide connectivity to departments.

Councilmember Abuzuaiter concurred with Councilmember Hightower; stated she was not sold on the process; asked for further discussion of the issue; voiced concern with the amount of correspondence that would need to be sent to Councilmembers; and stated that some members would want to be on all of the committees.

Assistant City Manager Vigue explained the process that would be used for the committee meetings; interaction with the public for the meetings; agenda process for the meetings; referenced the recent movement of Community Relations to the Legislative Department; and added that the meetings would be televised.

Councilmember Fox added that the Mayor would be the ex-officio and appoint the three Councilmembers to the committees; stated this would allow for interaction of the community and departments with Council; emphasized the process made sense and would be more efficient; reiterated his hope that Council would support the item; and asked that it be brought to Council at the next meeting.

Discussion took place regarding reversing the process should Council choose to do so; the need for a detailed discussion to get a better understanding of the process; concerns with asking constituents to attend additional meetings; the item being placed on the June 2nd meeting agenda; having discussions with Winston-Salem regarding the process; whether the process was more efficient and improved citizen participation; whether Mayor Joines had a vote on Council; and confirmation that Mayor Vaughan had run the meetings efficiently.

Assistant City Manager Vigue referenced other models staff had looked at; asked if there were questions of Council regarding the process; and stated Council could customize its model.

It was the consensus of Council that Mayor Vaughan would invite Winston-Salem Mayor Joines and a councilmember to attend the May 26th work session for discussion.

(A copy of the PowerPoint Presentation is filed in Exhibit Drawer X, Exhibit No. 12 which is hereby referred to and made a part of these minutes)

3. Adjournment

Moved by Councilmember Fox, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried by voice vote.

THE CITY COUNCIL ADJOURNED AT 2:14 P.M.

ELIZABETH H. RICHARDSON
CITY CLERK

NANCY VAUGHAN
MAYOR