



City of Greensboro

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

Meeting Minutes - Final City Council Work Session

Wednesday, May 31, 2017

3:30 PM

Plaza Level Conference Room

I. Call To Order

This Work Session of the City of Greensboro City Council was called to order at 3:30 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, Councilmembers Marikay Abuzuaite, Mike Barber, Jamal Fox, Sharon Hightower, Nancy Hoffmann, Yvonne J. Johnson, Justin Outling and Tony Wilkins.

Also present were City Manager Jim Westmoreland, City Attorney Tom Carruthers and City Clerk, Elizabeth H. Richardson.

City Manager Jim Westmoreland welcomed a group of student scholars from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill who would be here for approximately eight weeks; spoke to the mission and focus of the group; asked members to introduce themselves; explained the research they were doing; and added that he would facilitate individual meetings between Council and members of the group.

City Manager Westmoreland announced that Parks and Recreation Director Wade Walcutt would be leaving to take a position in Cincinnati, Ohio as of June 30th; voiced appreciation for the work, strengths, and contributions of Mr. Walcutt while with the organization; and stated he would be missed.

II. Presentations

1. [ID 17-0372](#)

Fiscal Year 2017-18 Budget Discussion

City Manager Westmoreland stated he would follow up with discussions from the May 23rd Work Session regarding outside agency funding and water rates; and made a PowerPoint Presentation (PPP). City Manager Westmoreland provided an overview of Options 1 and 2 for the water/sewer rate; spoke to the percentage of increase and difference in rates for inside and outside users; to the ability to operate facilities; and to the monetary impact of an increase to monthly water bills.

Mayor Vaughan inquired which option City Manager Westmoreland recommended, to which he replied that Option 2 was in response to what Council had requested; provided the organization with the resources to operate facilities; and requested feedback.

Discussion took place regarding if the option reflected a decrease to inside residents; what the total equated to; and profit made by the Water Resources Department.

Water Resources Director Steve Drew provided an overview of the outside user rate; stated the fund balance was approximately \$4 million; stated that the funds went towards the cost of Capital Improvement Projects (CIP); regulatory obligations; and spoke to the debt service.

Assistant City Manager David Parrish confirmed the allocation of funds.

City Manager Westmoreland verified it was the will of Council to move forward with Option 2.

Councilmember Barber asked if the City had a user fee policy to address a greater financial burden on those outside the City limits that utilized City services, facilities, and programs.

Discussion took place regarding possible implementation of user fees; reduced parking and/or ticket prices at the Coliseum for City residents; history of partnerships with Guilford County (County) for libraries and other programs; parking passes included in residents' water bills; concerns with residents not receiving passes as a result of having a monthly draft; the need to incentivize the County to participate in programs; leveraging for the County; County tax rate; funding for libraries by the County; and the County having a neutral revenue tax rate.

Council requested City Manager Westmoreland to research implementation of a user fee type program for County residents utilizing City programs and services.

City Manager Westmoreland was requested to research the implementation of parking rate discounts at the Greensboro Coliseum for City residents.

Councilmember Wilkins spoke to the neutral revenue tax rate; moved that the City implement a .61.14 property tax rate with no changes in the public safety improvements; to implement a revenue neutral tax rate which would be the only thing the City could do to avoid a tax increase; and asked City Manager Westmoreland what direction he would take should that be the direction of Council.

City Manager Westmoreland spoke to the previous direction given by Council regarding a tax increase.

Councilmember Outling voiced appreciation for the motion; spoke to the motion he had made previously; emphasized the motivation for the need to find a shared vision of Council; the need to see the bond projects executed as soon as possible; and stated he wanted to support the motion but could not based on his concerns.

Discussion took place regarding reduction of the property tax rate by the County; Council's previous direction to City Manager Westmoreland; Councilmember Wilkin's timing for making the request; responsibilities of the County with regard to funding programs; cuts of several programs by the County; and taking money from the elderly.

Councilmember Hightower voiced disagreement with the motion; spoke to the County's burdens for programs falling upon the City; voiced the need to step up for City residents; emphasized the need to improve housing; and asked what the burden to the City would be.

Finance Director Rick Lusk outlined the impact of reducing the property tax rate; and spoke to the receipt of sales tax revenue.

Councilmember Barber referenced an article regarding the reduction in retail sales which generated sales tax revenue; referenced diminishing sales tax revenues; pointed out the governing differences between Council and the Guilford County Commissioners; spoke to the incorporated townships in the County; stated he would second the motion made by Councilmember Wilkins; voiced the need to move forward in the FY 17-18 budget for public safety personnel; spoke to getting the Housing Hub off the ground now; and to the upcoming budget.

Discussion ensued regarding Council's direction to City Manager Westmoreland three weeks ago; staff needing clarity on the prioritization of Council; Council's direction regarding where the funding should come from; and the timing of the motion.

Councilmember Abuzuaiter called the question.

The motion FAILED by a 2-6 voice vote with Councilmembers Barber and Wilkins voting in the affirmative.

Councilmember Outling explained why he voted in opposition.

Additional discussion took place regarding community budget meetings; data on the City's retention rate for all departments; Council wanting better than mediocre employees; the need for ongoing momentum for all employees; staff bringing back some changes to pay structure adjustments; and the proposed increase for public safety personnel.

City Manager Westmoreland spoke to the work staff had performed over the past week with regard to compensation; emphasized the need for staff to research and assess the information and data for positions in all departments; spoke to reviewing the policy and philosophy; allowing staff to review the total compensation policy; spoke to labor dynamics for benchmarking positions; timeframe for the work to be done; and to the information staff would bring back to Council relative to options that were available.

Human Resources Director Connie Hammond spoke to studies done in house by the City; and to the process for performing studies.

Councilmember Hightower voiced concern with keeping public safety at a different status than other departments; morale of departments; the need for the City to be responsible on how it reviewed retention and salaries for the organization; referenced the Housing Hub; not discounting anyone; and requested information regarding the rationale and reasoning behind employees leaving the organization for other municipalities.

Councilmember Barber stated the City was in a dogmatic state; spoke to the critical nature of police and fire; competition of public safety personnel; to addressing a critical marketplace issue; the need to pay public safety personnel more; the importance of acting now rather than waiting for a study to be completed in six months; the need to get the salary grid correct; referenced a New York Times article; and emphasized the need for Council to be clear in what it will do and when it will be done.

Mayor Vaughan spoke to the need for the process to continue through future budgets.

Councilmember Fox entered the meeting at 4:19 p.m.

Councilmember Abuzuaiter voiced agreement with Councilmember Barber; spoke to the time and funds to train public safety personnel; and confirmed that the City had made an large investment in said personnel.

Councilmember Outling verified that a majority of Council agreed that public safety should earn more, but that not all agreed on the 7.5 percent; spoke to the development of a pay philosophy; the need for a plan; referenced the salaries of senior employees at the law firm; and voiced the importance for Council to figure out what the philosophy was.

Mayor Vaughan voiced the need for a long term philosophy implementation; referenced a reduction in employment applications in the public safety departments; stated the City was losing employees to other cities; asked if contracts could be utilized; and voiced the need to make it attractive for employees to remain with the organization.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson voiced concern with not paying salaries in accordance with being the third largest city in the state; and referenced the difference in firefighter's retirement between municipalities.

Councilmember Hoffmann suggested it would be helpful for Council to have data regarding retention information.

City Manager Westmoreland reviewed the discussion on May 23; acknowledged the need for a pay adjustment for sworn personnel; provided an explanation for the competitive employee pay/benefits package; general work force adjustments; and the sworn police/fire package information.

Discussion took place regarding the raise structure for general workforce employees and public safety personnel; age of market study data; and market studies.

Ms. Hammond provided an overview of the benchmarking process for the City; the age of the market data that the City utilized; explained the control point and comp ratio strategy used by the City; and spoke to the longevity of said studies.

Councilmember Outling asked if Guilford Metro 911 employees were considered public safety personnel.

City Manager Westmoreland spoke to the 7.5% option; stated that the Guilford Metro 911 employees fell under the general workforce calculation; explained the step process plan; and proposed increases for public safety

personnel.

Guilford Metro 911 Director Melanie Neal explained the process for funding from the City and County based on the calls for service; and the calls for service contributions.

Discussion took place regarding Guilford Metro 911 employees; if a study had been done regarding why employees were leaving the organization; numbers to back up persons leaving for better money; and the lack of staff in all departments.

City Manager Westmoreland explained what the 7.5% effective increase for all sworn public safety personnel would look like as of December 1, 2017; spoke to starting salaries for sworn personnel; additional funds that would be necessary to sustain the program; budget impacts going forward; highlighted proposed two percent reductions to maintenance and operating (M&O) reductions for all departments; spoke to the impacts to debt service components; to the economic incentives budget; reduction of property tax allocation for debt service transfer; and to the development of a sustainable budget.

Councilmember Hightower stated she did not support M&O reductions; inquired about cemetery maintenance; and asked about the property tax allocations for the debt service.

City Manager Westmoreland outlined the impact to the debt service in future years; spoke to proposed bond projects and schedules presented to Council; expectation that the local economy would continue to flourish; and to an increase in tax base.

Councilmember Fox asked about Metro 911 funding; voiced concern with finding money for things; referenced his opinion of the 7.5%; asked that the minimum wage be increased to \$15.00 hourly in the FY 17-18 budget; and emphasized he would not vote until information with regard to the impact of raising the minimum wage to \$14.50 or \$15.00 an hour in this budget cycle with no cut to services had been provided.

City Manager Westmoreland spoke to the option for getting the minimum wage to \$15.00 an hour by 2020; and to the significant cost issues and accommodations associated with that increase.

Councilmember Barber stated for the record that police and fire were critical; and that he supported the phase-in plan presented.

City Manager Westmoreland stated he would like a sense of support for the 7.5% option; stated there would be a public hearing on the budget next Tuesday; and voiced the need for the public to have a current snap shot of the direction Council was headed.

Moved by Councilmember Wilkins, seconded by Councilmember Hoffmann in favor of a 7.5% increase to public safety personnel. The motion carried 7-2 with Councilmembers Fox and Hightower voting 'no'.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson voiced the need for balance in the organization.

City Manager Westmoreland expressed appreciation for staff's work on the budget.

Moved by Councilmember Outling, seconded by Councilmember Barber to direct staff to examine and present a new pay policy and philosophy.

Discussion took place around the request; the completion date for said request; clarification that the request was for pay plan philosophy options within 60 days; and recommended implementation and next steps to follow.

Councilmember Barber requested that the City market public safety as a City priority.

It was the consensus of Council for City Manager Westmoreland to examine and present Council with different options for a modified pay policy and philosophy for all City employees; an overview of the comp ratio and control point process for the City; and an overview of the benchmarking process not to exceed sixty days.

2. [ID 17-0398](#)

Greensboro Housing HUB Overview - Dr. Maria Hanlin CEO - Habitat for Humanity Greater Greensboro

City Manager Westmoreland recognized CEO of Habitat for Humanity Greater Greensboro Dr. Maria Hamlin.

Dr. Hamlin voiced appreciation for City Council's work; emphasized that the Housing Hub would create a one-stop shop for collaboration; highlighted current partnerships and non-profits involved in the collaboration; recognized those individuals that were present; spoke to ongoing conversations and meetings; and made a PowerPoint Presentation (PPP). Dr. Hamlin confirmed the project had been underway for a year to purchase the Triton Building located at 1031 Summit Avenue which was on the bus line; and outlined the estimated costs to upfit the facility.

Gene Brown with Community Housing Solutions spoke to a letter from The Community Foundation to match up to \$250,000 for the upfit costs; stated that the Foundation would work as the financial intermediary as well as be the disbursement arm for the project; and provided an overview of the renovation.

Dr. Hamlin stated the goal was to raise \$500,000.

Councilmember Outling inquired about the metric for success of the collaboration; and benefits to the City.

Sophia Crisp with Housing Consultants Group stated that non-profits were challenged to remain open; spoke to individuals that did not get served as a result of not knowing where to go; that by working together the non-profits would be able to remain open; and emphasized the goal of connecting people to services.

Councilmember Outling asked if the group had actual numbers.

Dr. Hamlin responded that the group had skin in the game; had invested \$12,000 into the design and plan as well as a year's worth of effort; spoke to the experience of the director of the Housing Hub; to long term community relationships; and goal of the group.

Councilmember Outling stated he was looking for additional insight as to why this would be the best way for City funds to support the project.

Councilmember Abuzuaiter voiced it would be modeled similar to the Family Justice Center; spoke to the success of the Interactive Resource Center and the Family Justice Center as well as other entities that brought people together; and voiced she felt that Guilford County should contribute.

Councilmember Hightower expressed that sometimes the benefit could not be broken down into dollars and cents; emphasized the need for the project; that peoples' lives were invaluable; stressed that the lack of housing needed to be addressed; that the costs may not be defined initially; and referenced the impact and greater benefits to area families.

Discussion took place regarding the intake process; assistance with filling out the forms; and moving people from homelessness to home ownership.

Dr. Hamlin provided an overview of the intake process; stated the facility would have a navigator similar to the Family Justice Center; and spoke to streamlining the forms process.

Mr. Brown provided information with regard to the shared warehouse space and equipment; and stated they hoped to be in the facility by early fall.

Councilmember Fox voiced appreciation for the information; asked how the \$250,000 from the City would be utilized; and where the funding would come from.

Dr. Hamlin stated the funds would be utilized for the upfit of the building.

City Manager Westmoreland recognized Assistant City Manager Barbara Harris to speak to the Community Building Development Grant (CDBG) funding options.

Assistant City Manager Harris confirmed that staff would have a recommendation once they had received notification of the Federal allocations; and spoke to reprogramming funds for the project.

Councilmember Fox confirmed this would be a one-time ask to which Dr. Hamlin responded in the affirmative.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson voiced support of the program; stated that housing was one of her passions; spoke to improving the lives of people; emphasized that everyone deserved to live in a safe community; and added that quality of life was something she had a great respect for.

Assistant City Manager Harris provided alternative funding sources pending approval of the City's receipt of Federal funds; and spoke to excess funding that could be reprogrammed from current and prior years' programs.

Moved by Councilmember Hightower, seconded by Councilmember Abuzuaiter to provide funding in the amount of up to a \$250,000 match for the development of the Housing Hub contingent upon the City's receipt of 2017-18 Federal funding.

Discussion took place regarding the contingency; CDBG project funds; loan funds; program income; if there was a prior intent for said funds; and bringing the excess funds forward to be reprogrammed.

Assistant City Manager Harris provided an overview of the contingency funds that could be reprogrammed for the project.

The motion carried 8-1 by a show of hands with Councilmember Outling voting 'no'.

Councilmember Outling requested City Manager Westmoreland provide an overview of the City process for reprogramming previous year's housing funds into alternative projects.

Councilmember Fox voiced concern with last minute requests for funding; and requested staff provide a policy reference and funding information/availability when presenting future proposals for Council's consideration.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson voiced concern with the need to weigh different projects at the time they were brought to Council.

(A copy of the PowerPoint Presentations are filed in Exhibit Drawer Z, Exhibit No. 20, which is hereby referred to and made a part of these minutes.)

III. Adjournment

Moved by Councilmember Outling, seconded by Councilmember Abuzuaiter, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried by voice vote.

THE CITY COUNCIL ADJOURNED AT 5:17 P.M.

ELIZABETH H. RICHARDSON
CITY CLERK

NANCY VAUGHAN
MAYOR

