

ADJOURNED MEETING CITY COUNCIL

September 11, 2017

The City Council of the City of Albemarle met in an adjourned session on Monday, September 11, 2017, at 6:00 p.m. in the Ray Allen Community Room located in City Hall at 144 Second Street, Albemarle, NC. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the City's Economic Development Strategic Plan and the Wiscasset Mills Ballpark Fundraising Feasibility Analysis. Mayor Michael presided and the following Councilmembers were present, to wit: Bill Aldridge, Chris Bramlett, Benton Dry, Martha Sue Hall, Martha E. Hughes, Dexter Townsend and Chris Whitley. Absent: None.

Mayor Michael called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1) Wiscasset Mills Fundraising Feasibility Analysis

Rick Kiernan and Anissa Starnes, Convergent Nonprofit Solutions representatives, collectively gave an overview of their feasibility analysis for the proposed Wiscasset Mills Ballpark. Materials included in the initial phase which began in May 2017 included the prospectus, interview request letter, and compilation of the interviewee list; interviews were subsequently conducted in June and July where 36 people were interviewed in person.

The process of mailings and interviews were discussed at length.

Methodology of the interviews was discussed.

Classification and details of interviewees were discussed in detail.

Respondents' rankings of the project as a civic priority were discussed.

Mr. Kiernan stated that only 11% of respondents thought that \$9M was a realistic fundraising total for the project whereas 54% stated this amount was an unrealistic goal. He also discussed the lack of finding a campaign committee or chair for the project to help encourage and push the fundraising efforts along. Analysis in the interview processed revealed a very strong sense of receptiveness amongst respondents to the current City Council and Parks and Recreation administration staff to continue to carry out the project.

Mr. Kiernan gave a list of recommendations to consider which included: consider scaling down the version of the plan (or a phased approach); recruitment of six to eight (6-8) stakeholders to develop a business plan for the projects financial feasibility; continue the project with accelerated public relations and educational efforts throughout the community; and focus on the message to potential investors with a future capital campaign in mind.

Upon no further discussion, Mayor Michael thanked Mr. Kiernan and Ms. Starnes for their presentation and introduced the next presenter.

2) Economic Development Strategic Plan

Crystal Morphis, Creative Economic Development Consulting, LLC representative, discussed economic and demographic profiles in detail which consisted of the following trends: a relatively flat population growth; low younger aged workforce (aged 25 – 54); median age increase from 39.6 to 41.2 from 2010 to 2015 (above regional and state averages); racial and ethnic diversity mirrors the region and state (with the exception of fewer Hispanics); population in Albemarle has a higher educational attainment than Stanly County; cost of living index in Albemarle is 85, compared to 95 in North Carolina, and a national average of 100; labor force growth in Stanly County is flat; and the unemployment rate in Stanly County is declining.

There was discussion of retail sales and collections of sales and use tax increasing which is indicative that Albemarle remains a retail hub. There was also discussion of the retail leakage report that displays a significant leakage in building materials, garden equipment and supplies, grocery stores, health and personal care, and restaurants and other eating places.

Ms. Morphis also discussed a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) that was conducted with 226 surveys which include the following:

Strengths

- Water and sewer availability
- Location and transportation network
- Stanly Community College and training programs
- Quality of Life: health care, recreation, small town feel, cost of living
- Stanly County Airport
- Willingness to grow and accept change
- Local Businesses
- Badin Lake, Lake Tillery, Morrow Mountain State Park, Uwharrie mountains
- Partnership with Pfeiffer University
- Available buildings for retail
- Climate
- Educational Institutions
- Rural Atmosphere
- Workforce potential
- Economic Development staff
- Commercial corridor
- Community banks
- Status as the County seat
- Low taxes
- Younger generation working to promote synchrony and growth
- Business-friendly leadership investing in development
- Downtown development
- Reliable electric utility service

- Progressive City Council

Weaknesses

- Lack of quality public school system and Board of Education
- High percentage of residents on government assistance
- Perceived anti-business/anti-growth attitude
- Lack of cooperation from Stanly County
- Lack of progressive community leaders
- Dilapidated buildings, underutilized and in disrepair, rehab code
- Unwillingness of downtown building owners to invest
- Local stores and restaurants hours of operation
- Having a main industry to attract workers
- Not near an interstate or major highways
- Lack of well-paying jobs
- Infrastructure improvements
- Analysis paralysis
- Parking and transportation access
- Local regulatory process, permitting, and code enforcement
- State leadership
- Work ethic
- Complacency of leaders and older generations
- Poor business climate
- Affordable restaurants and shops in the downtown area to draw middle income families
- Population's income is limited, growing poverty level
- Drug problem
- Education and training of skilled qualified workforce
- Lack of facilities and infrastructure to support new business
- Inability to draw big businesses
- Flat population
- Lack of outside capital investment

Opportunities

- Redevelopment of empty buildings with incentive programs
- Increase the diversity of industry
- Downtown revitalization
- Retail growth
- Recruit people with higher incomes
- Tourism development attract people from Charlotte area for day trips
- Expanding local existing businesses
- Pfeiffer University satellite campus for physician assistant and occupational therapy
- Capitalize on proximity to lakes, mountains, beautiful countryside, agriculture, and vineyards
- Four lanes on Hwy 24/27 from Charlotte to Troy

- Shipping /distribution for online retailers
- Craft beer industry
- Improve public school system through consolidation, teacher retention/recruitment
- Parks and recreation investments
- Better restaurant, shopping, and fun attraction additions
- Affordable land for industry
- Partnerships between higher education institutions and industry workforce needs
- Incentives for downtown development without historical requirements
- Agri-business development
- Stanly Community College and Advanced Manufacturing and Industrial Technology Center
- Creative entrepreneurs
- New Albemarle Corporate Center
- Proximity to 485
- Retain youth
- Housing and business incentives
- Development of facilities on the lake to attract businesses
- Wiscassett Project
- Promote Albemarle
- Enforce appearance standards
- Arts and entertainment developments

Threats

- High percentage of government housing
- Public school system, lack of a long-term plan
- Loosing young college graduates to bigger cities
- Perceptions of local drugs and crime
- State delegation, leadership
- Big box and chain stores compete with local businesses
- People leaving for better opportunities
- High paying job availability
- Stagnant downtown
- Lack of cohesive vision
- City zoning and restrictions
- Becoming a bedroom community
- Can easily drive to Charlotte for everything that Albemarle lacks: jobs, shopping, restaurants, entertainment, etc.
- Population growth flat
- Poor business climate
- Vacant storefronts
- Not thinking outside the box

- Aging workforce
- Lack of good jobs beyond retail and food industry
- Aging housing stock
- Lack of strategic marketing
- Lack of investment
- Lack of transportation/distribution facilities for larger companies

Ms. Morphis discussed the proposed economic development strategic plan goals as follows:

- Recruit businesses that will diversify the economy
- Create an inventory of industrial, commercial, and retail space
- Leverage Pfeiffer university development in downtown
- Market Albemarle
- Small business expansions and increase in start-ups
- Retain and grow existing businesses
- Improve Stanly County Schools
- Develop Collaborative Leadership

There was discussion of strategic action steps to help achieve goals.

3) Other Discussion

There was discussion of the Landfill Leachate Line on Stony Gap Road and the need to relocate their original proposed location due to an NCDOT bridge replacement project. The City Manager noted that having our current project contractor install the lines where they will not conflict with the NCDOT project will save the City money on future relocation costs, with the only cost at this time being 25% of design services.

Councilmember Hall made a motion to authorize payment of \$3,739.71 for the design to locate sewer lines within the new right-of-way where installation will comply with requirements of the project; the motion was seconded by Councilmember Dry which carried by unanimous consent.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Dry, seconded by Councilmember Hughes, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned until Monday, September 18, 2017, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall for a regular session meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Alphin, Assistant City Manager/Deputy City Clerk