

REGULAR MEETING CITY COUNCIL
August 17, 2015

The City Council of the City of Albemarle met in a regular session on Monday, August 17, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall. Mayor Ronnie Michael presided, and the following Councilmembers were present, to-wit: Mayor Pro Tem Troy E. Alexander, Bill Aldridge, Benton H. Dry, II, Martha Sue Hall, Martha E. Hughes, Dexter Townsend, and Chris Whitley. Absent, none.

Mayor Michael called the meeting to order.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Alexander, seconded by Councilmember Hall, and unanimously carried, the City Council approved the August 3 regular session minutes as submitted.

Mr. Jim Bright, Recruiter, Tarheel Challenge Academy came before Council to inform them of the opening of an academy in New London at 215 North Main Street (old New London School) on October 11, 2015. This presentation by Mr. Bright is for information purposes only; no action was required by Council. This program is 22 weeks long for kids 16, 17, and 18 years old and is state funded with state personnel.

Mr. Bright also stated that this program is sponsored by the National Guard and is a military oriented resident program. This includes 5 months in house, 24/7 training followed by an intensive 12 month placement and mentoring phase to aid them in adjustment to career paths and goals. They will be able to complete their GED, CPR training, service to community projects, life skills, field trips, computer skills, etc. The residents will receive a \$30 stipend every two weeks for personal items. The program is state funded so no cost to individuals attending or their families.

Also, to be eligible, a candidate must be 16-18 years old, a US citizen, legal resident of NC, drug free, unemployed or underemployed, no sentence pending or on parole, physically and mentally capable, and to complete an interview process. Mr. Bright said that they have a 90% success rate with this program.

Mr. Bright answered any questions that Council had.

Mayor and Council thanked Mr. Bright for coming to share information about this program.

Ms. Burnetta Maske, Stanly County NAACP Vice-President, came before Council to discuss the Stanly County School Board's Plan A&B and their impact on the City. She stated that she is here representing their local chapter and their President, Chuck Horne. Councilmember Townsend received a request that a representative of the Stanly County NAACP speak before Council.

Ms. Maske stated she is here to ask each Councilmember what their stand is on either Plan A or Plan B as presented by the Stanly County School Board in February.

Mayor Michael stated that City Council met with the school board on February 9 and at that time each Councilmember voiced their opinions to the school board. We as a Council support the school board doing something to enhance our school academics but he does not feel we should tell that board how and what they need to do.

Councilmember Hall reiterated comments that the Mayor made and that she does not like Plan A or B but there may be another plan out there to consider. She said that we do need to look at redistricting.

Councilmember Whitley stated that he is not sure if either Plan A or Plan B would work as presented. A lot of things could be changed about Plan A and B. He stated that he does like Plan A's suggestion of a magnet school.

Councilmember Dry stated that he is glad that Ms. Maske and her organization are here tonight because change is needed. The school board has had discussions with other boards, parents, teachers, and the community which is causing them to go back to the drawing board. We need to wait and see how all of this input will be processed by the board of education.

Councilmember Alexander stated that he agrees with Councilmember Dry and he has confidence in the school board to do their best to improve academics for our schools.

Councilmember Townsend stated that his position agrees with the Mayor and it is not our position to tell the school board what to do. He also agrees with Councilmember Hall and Whitley in that there has not been a perfect plan presented so far. He stated he personally does not believe we have done our duty as a Council to protect our City residents. The City of Albemarle may have the most to lose.

Councilmember Hughes thanked Ms. Maske for being here this evening. She stated that she agrees with Councilmember Townsend and each of us has come away with our own opinions but that we do need to improve our schools. The school board has heard all concerns and they are back reconsidering a revised plan to present.

Councilmember Aldridge thanked Ms. Maske for being here this evening. He stated that tough decisions have to be made and he applauds everyone for their opinions and for the school board backing off to reconsider their stand. We do need to consider redistricting. He stated that he is not comfortable with Plan A or B but hopeful that the leaders and board will come together.

Ms. Maske stated that the Stanly County Chapter of the NAACP has written to the NAACP State office stating that they have taken a negative stand on the school boards recommendations and are waiting for a response from them.

Mr. Brenda Stanback came forward as a member of the Stanly County Chapter of the NAACP to talk about demographic concerns. Also, she stated that we feel like our district is not represented and we feel like we are not being listened to and are defeated already.

Ms. Shannon Johnson, Executive Director of the ADDC came before City Council to present and review the 2014/2015 ADDC Annual Report. She stated that there were \$409,500 of public investment dollars, \$731,088.35 of private investment dollars, 22 full-time jobs created in the downtown, 16 part-time jobs created downtown, 10 facades redone with the help of the Design Grant Program, 1278 volunteer hours contributed downtown, and \$6,348.16 of grant money awarded to property/business owners for improvements this past fiscal year.

Ms. Johnson stated that Market Station is owned and operated by the ADDC with event rentals for the facility increasing by 50% for the 2014/15 fiscal year due to greater marketing activities. She also mentioned ADDC looking at 5 different cities with a commercial maintenance code to create one for the

downtown which was given to the Planning and Community Development Director Keith Wolf for review.

Ms. Johnson mentioned the four elements to creating a well-balanced program are organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring. Concerning economic restructuring, Ms. Johnson stated the downtown Holiday Pop Up contest was held and one of the winning businesses expanded and is now selling product in a downtown store. Six new businesses opened in downtown: Big Bob's Flooring, Books and Baubles, Deeter Real Estate, Four Seasons Realty, Second Street Sundries, and Triple H Consignment. Vac n Dash, an existing business, expanded. The ADDC created a database of all the properties and current use within the service district to help determine the best location for new businesses.

Ms. Johnson thanked City Council for their support of the ADDC and she answered any questions that they had.

Mayor Michael stated that this is the last Council meeting Ms. Johnson will have with us before taking a new position somewhere else. He publicly thanked her for all her hard work with the ADDC and the downtown.

The Mayor asked that Blake Martin, Chairman of the ADDC to come forward and state recommendations that the board has now moving forward. Mr. Martin stated that there will be an interim placed as Director of ADDC for a few months and then we will look at reorganization before a new director is hired. Mr. Martin stated that they will also receive guidance from the NC Main Street program on the direction they should take.

The Mayor also recognized Communications Specialist Victoria Sites with ADDC who will also be moving to a new position somewhere else.

The Mayor stated that Council had a copy of the monthly departmental reports in their agenda packets and asked if anyone had any questions.

Economic Development Director Mark Donham upon request of Councilmember Hughes gave an update on the new Industry Recognition program for the City. He reported that plans are being finalized with two industries for the first recognition event.

The Mayor and City Council considered a request to provide construction services associated with the installation of water, sewer, fire protection, and electrical building services for the new cosmetology building at Stanly Community College.

Public Utilities Director Michael Leonas noted that the total construction costs are \$140,600, of which \$10,000 of the work (Underground Feeder Relocation) has been completed. The estimated amount remaining, \$130,600 is anticipated to be absorbed into the existing budget accounts for operations within the Electric Fund and Water & Sewer Fund.

Electric Construction	\$ 32,800
Water & Sewer	\$ 107,800
TOTAL OF CONSTRUCTION WORK REQUESTED	\$ 140,600

He also noted that SCC has stated they may be able to supply the material for the water and sewer scope. The list of material to be supplied by SCC to support the construction has not been finalized. Therefore the extent of the reduction in the estimated material costs (\$25,000) cannot be determined at this time.

Upon questioning, Mr. Leonas stated that the redirection of budgeted labor and equipment from the Department's OMRC operations to a construction project of this extent and duration will impact the Department's ability to complete certain infrastructure replacement and improvement programs that were included in the current budget without subcontracting the work at additional expense.

Public Utilities Director Michael Leonas estimated the remaining electric project will take approximately one (1) week and will require the commitment of the Electric Division's Underground crew and their equipment. The extent and scope of the Water and Sewer construction work above is estimated to take approximately a minimum of three (3) weeks and will require the commitment of the two (2) to three (3) crews and their equipment of the W&S Systems Division. Mr. Leonas stated that first of our concerns is that the operations of both the Electric Division and the Water & Sewer Systems Division are geared towards an Operation, Maintenance, Response, and Compliance (OMRC) mission.

Public Utilities Director Michael Leonas answered any questions that

Council had.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Aldridge, and unanimously carried, the City Council approved construction services associated with the installation of water, sewer, fire protection, and electrical building services for the new cosmetology building at Stanly Community College supplying the manpower and equipment and SCC supplying the materials and also a hold harmless agreement between the City and SCC and an acceptance and maintenance release drafted and executed by SCC prior to the work being executed.

The Mayor and City Council considered adopting a commercial maintenance code upon recommendation of the ADDC. After making some modifications to the draft from ADDC, the Planning Board, on July 21, 2015, recommended the City Council consider adoption of the current proposed version of the Commercial Maintenance Code.

The City Manager indicated in his agenda comments that staff would like guidance from City Council on how they would like this issue to proceed. Normally a public hearing would be set, hearing held and a decision made, but in this case, it is a much more complicated issue that may take outreach, education and input sessions.

Mayor Michael suggested that Council not make a decision this evening but rather table this until the next regular session meeting, giving everyone time to read over and study suggested codes presented.

Councilmember Hughes stated that we need to compare Albemarle to other NC municipalities our size and what they do.

Mayor Michael stated that we may want to have a work session with the public involved at a later date.

It was the consensus of City Council to table this item until the next regular session meeting on Tuesday, September 8.

The Mayor and City Council considered staff nominations for house demolitions for FY 2015-2016. On July 23, 2015 Michael Ferris, Christina

Alphin, Keith Wolf and Nasser Rahimzadeh personally reviewed several structures in Albemarle on a list compiled by the Planning Staff. Seven houses that were in the worst shape and appear to meet the requirement of being damaged more than 50% of their value were recommended to Council for demolition.

Planning and Community Development Director Keith Wolf stated he would like to make every effort to complete the demolition process as soon as possible once Council confirms the structures for removal. It was also noted that since the houses chosen for demolition last fiscal year were not completed until July of 2015, the City had to spend money in the current budget on these. As a result, a budget amendment will be submitted in the near future to move the unspent 14/15 funds to the current year to cover the cost of the demolitions they were intended to fund.

Council reviewed photos of the top choices made by City staff.

- 141 Arey Avenue
- 124 Cleveland Avenue
- 408 Moose Street
- 724 Long Street
- 421 Peachtree Street
- 316 and 320 Sides Street.

Upon questioning, Mr. Wolf stated that 316 and 320 Sides Street has been purchased and the new owner is planning renovation for them. The City Attorney confirmed that these properties have been bought and closed on. The City will work with the first five properties and hopefully one of those owners will volunteer compliance.

Mr. Wolf answered any questions that Council had.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Dry, seconded by Councilmember Townsend, and unanimously carried, the City Council approved the recommendation of City staff to begin condemnation proceedings on the top five choice properties.

The Mayor and City Council considered a proposal for a downtown streetscape plan. The City Manager that the City has undertaken an RFQ and interview process to select a vendor to undertake the development of a streetscape plan for downtown Albemarle. The RFQ was provided to 12 firms that City staff

was aware of to be potentially qualified to undertake this project. Proposals were received from 4 firms. All 4 proposals were reviewed by Shannon Johnson, Nina Underwood, and the City Manager. Two firms were selected for interviews and it was the unanimous choice to recommend Stantec for the project. Additionally, reference checks proved very positive. References include individuals of former clients such as the Town of Pineville, Beaufort, SC, and the Town of Huntersville.

The City Manager stated that their proposal is within budget \$55,000 and work could begin in September. If City Council is comfortable, the Mayor can be authorized to execute a contract on the City's behalf.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Dry, seconded by Councilmember Hughes, and unanimously carried, the City Council approved a proposal for a downtown streetscape plan and the project to be awarded to Stantec.

The City Manager will have Stantec make a presentation to City Council at a future regular session meeting.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Townsend, seconded by Councilmember Hall, and unanimously carried, the City Council approved the grant ordinance for the Public Housing Capital Fund Program

(Ordinance 15-23. To approved the grant ordinance for the Public Housing Capital Fund Program.)

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Dry, and unanimously carried, the City Council approved amending the 2010 CKA Project Ordinance for 10-37 and 13-37.

(Ordinance 15-24. To amend the 2010 CKA Project Ordinance for 10-37 and 13-37.)

The Mayor and City Council considered participation in a Service Line Warranty Program. The City Manager was contacted by Utilities Services Partners, inquiring if the City would be interested in expanding on the services currently provided. The City currently participates in a water line and sewer line

protection (insurance) program with USP. The City is now being asked to consider participating in a program that would offer inside water and sewer line coverage to residents.

The City Manager noted that the City first began participation in the sewer program in 2012, with participation in the water program following shortly thereafter. Currently there are 216 participants in the outside sewer program, and 185 in the outside water program. The City Manager stated that staff can say that it is our experience that most of the problems experienced by customers are inside the home, which is what the new proposal is designed to cover. The cost to customers is \$6.99 per month. Just like the existing programs, the City would receive 10% of the revenues for our participation, which is allowing our name to be used in the promotion of the product.

Councilmember Dry stated that he would like to review more information such as if they use local plumbers for Albemarle citizen requests.

This item was tabled until the Tuesday, September 8 regular session meeting.

The Mayor and City Council considered attendance at the Stanly County COG Meeting on Tuesday, August 25, 2015 beginning at 6:30 pm. The Town of New London will host this meeting at the New London Community Center on August 25th beginning at 6:30 pm. The Community Center is located at 114 West Gold Street, New London, and is adjacent to the Town Hall.

The Mayor and Council all confirmed their attendance.

City Attorney David Beaver stated that the only thing he is presently working on for the City is the agreement between the City and the residents adjoining the unopened alleyway between Church Street and NC Highway 73.

City Manager Michael Ferris stated that Council was sent an email concerning the POW/MIA Ceremony on September 18, 2015 at 6pm at the VFW POST 2908 located at 111 Anderson Road, Albemarle, NC 28001.

The City Manager stated that City offices will be closed on Monday, September 7 for the Labor Day holiday.

The City Manager also stated that on the next agenda Council will be considering the appointment of a representative to the CVB Board to replace Jack Neel. He has stated that he does not want to consider reappointment.

Councilmember Townsend inquired about the status of road improvements on Leonard Avenue to address the traffic congestion in light of Hobby Lobby announcing they plan to open on September 21. Mayor Michael stated that he and Economic Development Director Mark Donham spoke with Senator Tom McInnis and Representative Justin Burr in Raleigh last week asking for funds and the City Manager is working with commercial property owners. Upon questioning, the Mayor stated that NCDOT are doing surveys for the NC 24/27bi-directional median installation. This project may be delayed another year due to funds.

Councilmember Hughes thanked IT Support Specialist Nhia Ly with the City for his work on the 911 system. He went above and beyond and she appreciates all his hard work and efforts.

Councilmember Aldridge thanked Ms. Burnetta Maske, Stanly County NAACP Vice-President, and Brenda Stanback for coming out and speaking about the school board plan tonight.

Councilmember Aldridge stated he would like for Captain Dulin and Assistant Police Chief is aware that there is still a traffic issue at Greenwood Park Circle where the speed limit was changed from 35mph to 25mph.

Councilmember Dry thanked candidates running for City Council for attending the meetings and seeing and understanding procedures and having the interest to do so.

Councilmember Whitley mentioned attending the Centralina Council of Governments meeting on August 12 and he left at the dais a copy of the CONNECT Our Future magazine for each Councilmember.

Councilmember Hall stated that there was a great article in the Stanly News and Press over the weekend about how great the tourism industry is in our county.

Councilmember Hall congratulated Parks and Recreation Director Toby Thorpe and his staff for a successful Tour de Elvis 5k runs on Friday, August 14 and Tour de Elvis Bike Ride on Saturday August 15.

Councilmember Hall stated that she had been questioned by a citizen of why there is a Do Not Turn Right on Red sign at the square. The Mayor stated that this is a NCDOT street.

Councilmember Hall stated that downtown there are some parking issues with 2 hour parking in places and no time limit parking in others. The Mayor stated that a study was performed with an outside firm several years ago that recommended where there are issues to place a time limit for parking and where there is no problem to leave parking with no time limit. The Mayor asked that we need to do the streetscape first before looking further into parking changes.

Councilmember Dry stated that ADDC Director Shannon Johnson and Communications Specialist Victoria Sites will be leaving ADDC to pursue other interests. He asked that everyone thank them both for their service.

Mayor Michael stated that he and Economic Development Director Mark Donham were in Raleigh last week on August 12 at the Historic Tax Credit Rally and the Tax Rally. He stated he is curious to see if they both pass.

Councilmember Hall stated that she will be in Raleigh this Friday, August 21 to attend some of the action committee meetings.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Hughes, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned until Wednesday, August 19, 2015 at 5:30 in the Raymond I. Allen Room at City Hall for a joint meeting with the County Commissioners and North Star on the branding project.