

REGULAR MEETING CITY COUNCIL
February 3, 2020

The City Council of the City of Albemarle met in a regular session on Monday, February 3, 2020 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 Martha Sue Hall; Bill Aldridge; Chris Bramlett; Martha E. Hughes; Shirley E. Lowder; Dexter Townsend, and Christopher Whitley.

Mayor Michael called the meeting to order.

The Mayor gave the invocation.

The Mayor introduced the new City Attorney, Britt A. Burch. Ms. Burch has begun her duties for the City of Albemarle as of today, February 3, 2020. This is a new role within the City that takes the place of the contract City Attorney position.

Ms. Burch is an Anson County native and a graduate of Anson Senior High School. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Politics and International Affairs from Wake Forest University, a Master's degree in Business Administration from Elon University School of Business, a Juris Doctor degree from Elon University School of Law and holds an active North Carolina law license. Ms. Burch has previous experience in residential and commercial real estate, employment law, healthcare, and transactional matters. Most recently, Ms. Burch worked for Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center where she developed and negotiated a wide array of contracts for biomedical research initiatives.

The Mayor asked if Ms. Burch would like to say a few words. Ms. Burch thanked the City Manager Michael J. Ferris, the Assistant City Manager Nyki Hardy, and City Council for giving her the opportunity to serve.

Council welcomed Ms. Burch to her new position.

The Mayor took a few minutes at the beginning of the meeting to make a few remarks about the 2 law office building (King House and Mark Lowder) fires that occurred in the early morning hours on Sunday, February 2nd. He thanked the City of Albemarle firefighters, as well as all of the surrounding local and regional firefighters who came to the scene to help. A request was made to Fire Chief T. Pierre Brewton to obtain the names of the chiefs of the fire stations who responded so thank you cards can be sent. The Mayor concluded his remarks by stating that one of the fires looks suspicious and asked the public to come forward if they know anything about the fires.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Aldridge, seconded by Councilmember Townsend, unanimously carried, the minutes of January 21, 2020 regular session were approved as submitted.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

The Mayor requested the following agenda adjustments:

1. Placement of introduction of City Attorney at the beginning of the agenda;
2. Placement of New Business item 10 "Consider Agreement with Preformed Line Products for Demonstration of Equipment on City Electric Lines" under Announced Delegations after Pastor Stovall;
3. Addition of consideration of whether to retain contract grant consultants for balance of FY 2019-20; and
4. Addition of closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) Real Estate and N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6) – Personnel.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Aldridge, unanimously carried, the City Council approved the agenda adjustments.

ANNOUNCED DELEGATIONS

Resurrection Community Church Drainage Issue

Pastor Michael Stovall has requested to speak to Council regarding a drainage issue. There is a drainage ditch that runs through the back portion of the property where the Resurrection Community Church is located at the corner of West Main Street and Moss Springs Road. The ditch begins at and runs through the church property. Pastor Stovall took a series of pictures of the ditch and the church property affected by the ditch and provided them to City Council and the City Manager prior to the meeting. The ditch on church property is slow to drain thus creating standing water. The standing water is a health hazard for the children attending church due to the proliferation of mosquitos there.

Pastor Stovall spoke to Public Works staff recently requesting the City pipe the ditch on the church property to improve its appearance. However, this area is off the City right-of-way and therefore not the City's property. Staff believes that when the property was developed the ditch was piped under the Church buildings. This was done to make the property developable and more valuable to the owner.

Looking at the photographs, there was consensus that the ditch by Freeman Avenue has caused the edge of the street to crumble and should be fixed by the City. There was discussion of the length of the ditch and which particular section was problematic for the church. The ditch section of concern for the church is where the ditch reemerges from underground in the back of the church by the parking lot.

The City can take the following actions: check drain and ability of the water to flow freely, and obtain input from the church on how to work in partnership with the City to address the problem. Council agreed that the City should go out and assess the issue and bring back findings to the Council.

The Mayor thanked Pastor Stovall for bringing this issue to the attention of Council.

Consider Agreement with Preformed Line Products for Demonstration of Equipment on City Electric Lines

The intent of the agreement is to use new equipment and technology to install bird flight diverters on City electric lines in the vicinity of the Preformed Line Products facility for demonstration purposes to potential customers. This is an unusual request and needs Council consideration. A video of the product and installation process was provided to Council prior to the meeting.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Aldridge, seconded by Councilmember Hall, unanimously carried, Council excused Councilmember Townsend from the discussion and any motion on this item due to a potential conflict of interest. Councilmember Townsend left Council chambers.

Mr. John Ziebarth, Plant Manager of the Albemarle facility presented the company's request to Council.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Bramlett, unanimously carried, Council gave authority to the City of Albemarle to enter into an agreement with Preformed Line Product and permission to install demo bird flight diverters on City electric lines near the company's facility.

The Mayor thanked Mr. Ziebarth for his presentation.

Councilmember Townsend returned to the meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

2020 Public Power Customer Survey

Scott Hopkins, Customer Account Manager, will be working with ElectriCities staff on a contract with GreatBlue Research, Inc. to conduct a telephone Customer Survey. Residential and non-residential customers will be surveyed beginning March 1, 2020 through May, 2020. The survey data will be placed in a "report summary" in June, with a completed final report submitted by July. In August and September, ElectriCities will present and review the Customer Survey with City staff.

This survey will help the City understand customer concerns and priorities, and will guide us in making decisions that best reflect the goals and needs of our customers. GreatBlue Research, Inc. is a professional market research firm located in Glastonbury, CT.

Mr. Hopkins presented the plan for the survey to Council and took questions.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hughes, seconded by Councilmember Hall, unanimously carried, Council approved the implementation of the ElectriCities Customer Survey.

Quarterly Business Update

Planning and Development Services Director Kevin Robinson presented the 4th quarter 2019 City business activity report to Council. A one-page summary document was also distributed to the Mayor and Council in meeting.

Overall, job growth was stable in 2019 with a total of 261 jobs created, which is in line with 2017 and 2018 new employment activity. There was slower job growth in 4th quarter 2019 as compared to 2018, but was more than 4th quarter 2016 and 2017 numbers. Businesses such as Roll and Bowl, Pelican's Snowballs and Save the Children Head Start were among businesses adding jobs between October-December 2019.

Council thanked Mr. Robinson for his update.

MUNICIPAL CALENDAR

The Mayor noted that the City's updated municipal calendar was in Councilmembers' packets and asked if they had any questions or edits.

CONSENT AGENDA

Consider Approval of Capital Improvement Plan

On October 21, 2019, Council was presented with a printed Draft of the 2021-2025 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). During Council's Fall Strategic Budget Planning Session on November 19, 2019, First Tryon presented the financial model which included discussion of Capital Projects in General and Enterprise Funds. For the 2021-2025 CIP, staff anticipates the need for approximately \$94.71M in capital costs over the next five years.

The CIP is not a guarantee of funding for certain programs or capital needs, but rather a planning tool to help anticipate and plan for the City's capital needs over a five-year span. All projects and needs will be re-analyzed with the adoption of each annual budget and may be adjusted as priorities change and with the availability of revenue. CIP's are generally needed when seeking funding sources as outside agencies like to see appropriate financial planning and growth management tools, and a well drafted CIP displays the City's ability to effectively forecast and successfully plan.

Staff seeks Council's final approval of the proposed CIP. Once approved, Council will receive a bound copy of the approved CIP. The draft plan as attached is a duplicate of the hard copies Council received in October 2019.

Council debated the draft CIP, with the following points highlighted:

- Whether the plan should include downtown development such as the Pfeiffer University Health Sciences Center projects; and
- Whether the plan should include funds to further develop parking options.

Council agreed to defer any decision on this item in order to raise these new topics at the February 11th strategic budget planning session.

Consider Approval of the Audit Contract for FY 20/21

Staff is requesting Council approval for the audit contract for the second year of a 3 year contract. The contract is for \$43,775 which, per the original agreement, is a 3% increase over the prior year. We feel we received a very comprehensive and thorough audit and were pleased with the services provided by Martin Starnes and Associates, CPA.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Hughes, unanimously carried, Council approved the audit contract.

NEW BUSINESS

NOTE: Discussion of the Albemarle Business Center Infrastructure, Monroe Corporate Center Visit and Centralina Council of Governments Mixed Use Information items were discussed together since they were interrelated.

Background: Albemarle Business Center Infrastructure, Monroe Corporate Center Visit and Centralina Council of Governments Mixed Use Information

Albemarle Business Center Infrastructure

The Mayor and Council received infrastructure options prior to the meeting. Council specifically asked the Mayor to seek additional options concerning the road.

It is important to note that there is a considerable amount of infrastructure work that will need to be performed to get utilities to the site. If Council is ready, we can begin mobilizing City forces to begin work to extend the water and sewer and electric infrastructure to the site.

Review of Monroe Corporate Center Visit

The Mayor and some members of Council were recently able to participate in the visit to the Monroe Corporate Center. The visit was very informative. The Director of Economic Development Chris Plate' and Assistant Economic Development Director Ron Mahle, who is in responsible for existing business support, both spent a considerable amount of time answering questions and showing the site. Albemarle Economic Development Director Mark Donham was the Monroe Economic Development Director and lead when this project was initiated and began to develop.

A few useful takeaways came out of the visit:

- Monroe phased their project in manageable increments.
- The Monroe contacts stressed the importance of local government control of the site to the success of the center and a beneficial differentiating characteristic from private sites.
- The Monroe contacts encouraged strong buffers and keeping residential development a safe distance away. From their perspective, this is what businesses are seeking.
- The Monroe contacts noted the need to have a site prepared to be ready for building construction. Monroe has also constructed flexible spec buildings.

Information – Mixed Use Development Information from Centralina Council of Governments

Economic Development Director Mark Donham received information regarding mixed use developments from the Centralina Council of Governments and forwarded them to Council and the Mayor prior to the meeting to inform further discussion in meeting.

Discussion: Albemarle Business Center Infrastructure, Monroe Corporate Center Visit and Centralina Council of Governments Mixed Use Information

The Council discussed the three topics with the following points emphasized:

- Points discussed related to moving the Albemarle Business Center (ABC) project forward included: whether City staff could move forward to prepare the infrastructure (water, sewer, electric) leading into the ABC site; and timing of the vote on Rocky River Regional Planning Organization (RPO) road projects to move forward for consideration by NC DOT in March, 2020 and whether any road development for the ABC should be added to that list;
- Points for further consideration before making any definite development decisions included whether current development efforts would be diverted or stalled due to the ABC;
- Features of the Monroe Corporate Center which could be considered for the ABC, such as: building on a small scale first then expanding incrementally in phases; use of modular buildings which could be constructed to meet the needs of individual business clients' space and facility needs; whether Albemarle was properly situated to be a target for business location/relocation and business growth;
- The relative Return On Investment (ROI) for the ABC and how long it could take for the City to realize any measurable gains from it (would it be 2 to 3 years or 20 years before the City could enjoy a ROI?)
- Per the mixed use plans, the Council discussed: whether full parcel or partial parcel plans would be better given other development projects underway and availability of funding; whether mixed use should be used at the ABC or not; the trend of the City of Albemarle already starting to develop in this manner given areas like the Woodhurst/Benson/Leonard corridor and whether further development projects

should incorporate mixed use; and what kind of business should be the target for mixed use development, among other points.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Lowder, seconded by Councilmember Hall to provide Council's permission for City staff flexibility in building in time to perform site preparation projects from Central Avenue to the ABC when they are able, the motion carried with a vote of 5 Council members for the motion and 2 members opposed. Voting in favor of the motion were Councilmembers Aldridge, Hall, Lowder, Townsend and Whitley. Voting in opposition to the motion were Councilmembers Bramlett and Hughes.

Further discussion of these items was tabled.

Information – Naming of Tuckertown Water Treatment Plant to Jack W. Neel Water Treatment Plant

Council previously approved the recommendation to rename the Tuckertown Water Treatment Plant the Jack F. Neel Water Treatment Plant, as he was instrumental in making this facility a reality. The most challenging part of the change has been navigating the process to change the name of the facility on the multitude of permits for this facility. According to Director of Public Utilities Judy Redwine, all permits have now been changed.

Additionally, staff are receiving the quotes to replace the facing of the sign at the Plant entrance along NC Highway 49 with the new name. It is the City's intention to have the new sign installed within the next month.

Consideration of whether to retain contract grant consultants for balance of FY 2019-20

The Mayor noted that he and the City Manager met with NC DOT recently about status on a series of City projects. There are a few projects which are ready to move forward but which have not due to lack of funding, including:

- Five Points: Pipe replacement to fix the flooding issue and new vehicular and pedestrian signals are needed. The City could qualify for an Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant for this work because we were designated a disaster area during Hurricane Florence. The City could apply for this grant but is currently waiting on information from DOT to proceed. The grant application could be quick turnaround once the supporting documentation is provided by DOT.

The Mayor asked for guidance from Council on whether they should remain with the contract grant consultants at least through the end of FY2019-20, or begin to work with the COG federal liaison for helping with grant funding. The grant consultant contract costs the City approximately \$78,000 annually. The grant consultant group helped the City win 1 grant totaling \$300,000 thus far out of 4 grant applications submitted.

Council reached consensus to maintain the current grant consultant contract through the end of FY 2019-20.

COMMENTS

The Mayor asked if Council members had any comments they would like to make. The following Council members provided remarks:

Councilmember Aldridge:

- A thank you went to the City of Albemarle fire department, other firefighters, and the police department who helped with the fires yesterday.
- He thanked Peter Ascitutto for putting on the “Fellowship of Idiots Run” last Saturday. It was well attended.
- Since the 2020 election season is starting, a reminder was sent to the public to research candidates well and to look for common sense approaches to issues (national as well as local). He opined that elected public officials should have common sense, which leads to good decision-making.

Councilmember (Mayor Pro Tem) Hall:

- Carolina Treetop Challenge is still going strong even over the winter. There are many people out there these days.
- Reminder that the Opportunity Now Summit featuring President Trump is this Friday, February 7th in Charlotte at Central Piedmont Community College focusing on the topic of community revitalization.
- For the HGTV remake a small town/city competition, Police Chief Dulin has helped Main Street Manager Joy Almond create a video to use for the City’s submission. Hopefully footage will be updated to include this weekend’s fires.
- Another plug was made for this Friday’s Motown Revue event at the Albemarle Neighborhood Theater. The seat sales show that the event is close to selling out.
- A reminder that the Stanly County Habitat for Humanity BBQ fundraiser is February 27th.
- An FYI was given about reconvening the homeless committee at Homes for Hope now that Shanta Watkins has taken the helm there.
- An “attaboy” went out to Public Works for road repair work done on the road leading to Troy Alexander near the YMCA.
- All fire departments in the County did something yesterday. It truly was a community effort. Thanks to all who helped out yesterday

Councilmember Bramlett:

- Albemarle is positioned to have the quality growth that we would like to have in this county, per Michael Walden’s comments in a lecture a few years ago. He noted that like the firefighters working together last night, he expects that Council will continue to work together to bring development to Albemarle whether it be a business park or an academic village, or both.

Councilmember Lowder:

- A plug was made for a local delegation to go to the Opportunity Now Summit to hear the President's ideas on community revitalization. She plans to attend.

The Mayor asked Public Works to check out the 18-wheeler truck traffic on Woodcroft and Anderson Roads and provide a recommendation to Council on whether it is feasible to completely stop large trucks from coming through that area.

CLOSED SESSION

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Aldridge, unanimously carried, to appoint Councilmember Hughes as acting clerk for closed session.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Lowder, seconded by Councilmember Hall, unanimously carried, to move into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) – Real Estate and N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6) – Personnel.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

Upon a motion by Councilmember Aldridge, seconded by Councilmember Hall, unanimously carried, Council returned to open session. Mayor Michael stated that a Closed Session was held pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) Real Estate and N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6) – Personnel. No Council decisions or actions will be taken as a result of the closed session.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hughes, seconded by Councilmember Hall, unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned.

City Council will convene on Tuesday, February 11, 2020 at 4:00 PM in the Ray Allen Community Room for a strategic budget planning session.

The next regular City Council meeting will be held at 7:00 PM on Monday, February 17, 2020 in City Council Chambers.