

REGULAR MEETING CITY COUNCIL

February 17, 2020

The City Council of the City of Albemarle met in a regular session on Monday, February 17, 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 Chris Whitley. Absent: None.

Mayor Michael called the meeting to order.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Townsend, seconded by Councilmember Hall, unanimously carried, the minutes of February 3, 2020 regular and closed sessions were approved as submitted.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Ordinance 20-06: Consider ZMA-20-03 to Rezoning a 3 Parcel on Pennington Road from R-10 to R-8

Planning and Development Services Director Kevin Robinson was called to present the rezoning request. This hearing is to receive public input on the request to amend the City of Albemarle zoning map by considering the rezoning of three adjoining parcels (Tax#14323, 14348, 31281) totaling 8 acres from R-10 single family residential to R-8 two family residential district. The Mayor and Council members received the rezoning application, City staff's recommendations, the Future Plan Use (FLU) map, and Statement of Zoned Plan Consistency prior to the meeting. The owner requested that 3 parcels owned by the J.W. Sr. & S. A. Lambert Family Trust be rezoned from R-10 to R-8. One parcel (Tax Record 14323) is split-zoned, with approximate .02 acres in the south east corner zoned Two-Family Residential (R-8). The owner plans to place a manufactured home on one of the parcels for personal use.

The Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval for rezoning of the one parcel (tax#14323), 9-0 at its February 3, 2020 meeting, but was opposed to rezoning the other 2 parcels to R-8.

There was no public input on the item. Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Hughes and unanimously carried, Council closed the hearing.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Hughes, unanimously carried, the following request for rezoning of parcel tax#14323 was approved with the following Statement of Zoning Consistency with Adopted Land Use Plan:

The Albemarle City Council finds the action to amend the City's Zoning Map tax record 14323 from zone R-10/Single-Family Residential District to R-8/Two Family Residential to be consistent with the adopted 2028 Land Use Plan. The 2028 Land Use Plan calls for general residential on the land of interest. The City's R-8 zone will assist the lands of interest reach their intended goal of general residential and will achieve the public interest.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Lowder, unanimously carried, Council approved maintaining the 2 remaining parcels of the rezoning request tax#14348 and 31281 at R-10 with the following Statement of Zoning Inconsistency with Adopted Land Use Plan:

The Albemarle City Council finds the action to amend the City's Zoning Map tax records 14348 and 31281 from zone R-10/Single-Family Residential District to R-8/Two-Family Residential to be inconsistent with the adopted 2028 Land Use Plan. The 2028 Land Use Plan calls for general residential on the land of interest. The City's R-8 zone does not align well with future general residential and will not achieve the public interest.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hughes, seconded by Councilmember Whitley, unanimously carried, Council approved Ordinance 20-06.

(Ordinance 20-06 – Transfer a 2.78 +/- acre Property on Pennington Road also defined as Tax Record 14323 from R-10/Single Family Residential District to R-8/Two Family Residential District)

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

The Mayor requested the following agenda adjustments:

1. Removal of item 4: Announced Delegations: Mr. Howard Spencer – To Discuss Leaning Trees on Richardson Street;
2. Addition of a request by Stanly County's Visitor's Convention Bureau to consider sponsoring and installing a sign at Morrow Mountain State Park to be discussed at the end of the meeting;
3. Addition of an update on grant submission on behalf of the Fire Department to be discussed at the end of the meeting; and
4. Addition of closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1) Prevent Disclosure of Confidential Information, N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3) Consultation with an Attorney, and N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) Real Estate.

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

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Departmental Monthly Reports

The Mayor and Council members received monthly departmental reports for January 2020 prior to the meeting.

Councilmember Hall had the following questions/comments related to the reports:

- Did the City lose the School Resource Officer (SRO) for the high school? The former SRO Chris Haley is now working for Monroe City Police Department. His replacement is Cameron Harrington.
- “Attaboy” went out to the Police Department for the amount of drugs taken in last month.
- “Attaboy” went out to the Parks and Recreation Department for hosting a sold-out Motown review show on February 7th.
- Per the Human Resources report:
 - A suggestion was made to list the findings of the employee health screening program.
 - Councilmember Hall inquired about next step now that we have generalized information from recent wellness activities. Councilmember Lowder asked if there was a follow up plan for employees with screenings which indicated health issues. The City Manager replied that only the employees received their results directly. Human Resources Director Dana Chaney will look into next steps regarding City wellness activities.
 - It is good to see that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is being used.
 - When is the new Employee Handbook being released? It is slated for release in July, 2020.
 - A plea was made for the City to retain the employees the City has currently rather than let them leave for other local or regional employers.

Census 2020 Update – Jay Voyles, Development Coordination Specialist

Mr. Jay Voyles, Development Coordination Specialist in the Planning and Development Services Department presented an update on Census 2020 planning efforts in Albemarle and Stanly County. A PowerPoint presentation was provided to Council prior to the meeting and was projected during his presentation. Highlighted points of the presentation included:

- Why the Census is important;
- Identifying and building outreach efforts to target populations such as the homeless, veterans, people with disabilities, the underserved, senior citizens, foreign-born immigrants, renters, and those who have limited or no English proficiency;
- Plans for increasing response rates, such as canvassing during City or other large community events, social media blasts showing sample Census forms and questions, and for the first time ever allowing the Census to be conducted online or by phone. The City of Albemarle target response rate is 80% of all residents responding.

- Building partnerships with other city and county groups to spread information about the Census and encourage Census survey completion. Groups engaged include: Stanly County Schools, Stanly County Senior Services, YMCA, the Rotary Club of Albemarle, and surrounding municipalities.
- Outreach tools created include public service announcements to be aired as videos and scripts on social media, sample questionnaires, posters for target populations, flyers, and a media blast in the Stanly County Schools during the Statistics in Schools week from March 2nd through 6th.
- Status update on efforts to update City of Albemarle Census boundaries to include all residents considered in City limits, including 2 recent annexations in 2017 and 2019. The City is ready to deliver Census boundaries changes to the Stanly County GIS point of contact to be added into the Federal Census boundaries map ahead of the March 1st deadline.
- Efforts to ensure confidentiality of respondents per the duty of Census employees to keep information confidential per Title 13, and how the Census Bureau is encrypting information, limiting access to a respondent's record, and will monitor systems used to ensure security.
- More than 200 Census workers are still needed for Stanly County at this point. Qualifications needed to obtain a Census job are: a high school diploma or GED, and a reliable form of transportation.

Council had a few questions after the presentation. They were:

1. What sort of safety net does the Census Bureau have for verifying that the responses received are accurate and truthful? Staff will inquire and provide Council with a response.
2. How does the county and city plan to address outreach to the target populations? Outreach efforts will occur in the EE Waddell Community Center and the senior center. During the recent point-in-time count of the homeless, information about the upcoming Census was provided. There will be Census worker presence at the upcoming ACE event. Census partners also are planning to hold meetings for hard-to-reach populations such as the Latinx community during the Census open period.
3. Will the City get a list of non-responders? The Census Bureau has indicated that from March 24th onward, live updates on response rate by Census tract will be provided.
4. What is the plan to follow up with non-responders? The process will be to first send a mailer, then 2 weeks later if a household has not responded a reminder postcard will be sent, and finally after another 2 weeks, a Census worker will visit the household.
5. How is the hiring process for Census staff coming along for the Stanly County area? How many more Census workers are needed for our area? For those who have applied, are they being notified on a first-come-first-serve or as-needed basis? Staff will inquire and provide Council with a response.

Council thanked Mr. Voyles for his presentation.

CONSENT AGENDA

Ordinance 20-05: Budget Amendment in Public Works Department

This budget amendment moves funds from the closed Employee Facility project to legal work related to this facility. The amendment also reflects revenues from the sale of assets received on trade-in for equipment and insurance proceeds in Public Works General Fund and the Landfill Fund used to purchase new equipment.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Townsend, seconded by Councilmember Hall, unanimously carried, Council approved Ordinance 20-05.

(Ordinance 20-05 – Budget Amendment in Public Works Department)

NEW BUSINESS

Consider Approval of Financing Bids for Equipment

Staff is requesting Council approve financing bids for three pieces of equipment for the Public Works Department as listed below. These items are included in the FY19/20 Budget and are a total principal amount of \$439,885. Finance has prepared a bid tabulation with total evaluated costs of each bid.

- Leeboy Asphalt Paver
- Ford F450 Dump Truck
- Scarab Street Sweeper on a Peterbuilt 220 Dual Drive Cab-Over Chassis

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Aldridge, and unanimously carried, Councilmember Hughes was excused from this discussion/motion due to a potential conflict of interest. Councilmember Hughes left Council Chambers.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Whitley, seconded by Councilmember Lowder, with 5 votes for and 1 vote against, Council approved the lowest total evaluated bid from First Citizens Bank for financing the three pieces of equipment. Those voting in favor of the motion were Councilmembers Lowder, Whitley, Hall, Townsend, and Aldridge. Voting against the motion was Councilmember Bramlett.

Councilmember Hughes returned to Council Chambers.

Reminder: Stanly County Council on Governments Meeting

Stanly County will host the next COG meeting on Tuesday, February 25th in the Commons Meeting Room, Stanly Commons with a meal being served at 6:30 p.m. followed by a presentation from Janet LaBar, President & CEO of the Charlotte Regional Business Alliance.

Reminder: Stanly County Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting

The Stanly County Chamber of Commerce's Annual Meeting will be held from Noon - 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 26th at Atrium Health Stanly.

COMMENTS/UPDATES

The Mayor started by thanking all of the Public Utilities department personnel and all City Staff who dedicated a lot of time to ensure electricity was restored and storm cleanup was addressed related to the storm that came through earlier in the month.

City Manager Michael J. Ferris provided the following requests/updates:

FY2020-21 Winter Budget Sessions: A reminder was given that the placeholder date of February 18th is no longer needed to hold a second budget session, as the goal of the February 11th budget session was accomplished.

Stanly County Visitor's Convention Bureau Request

Mr. Chris Lambert with the Stanly County Visitor's Convention Bureau (CVB) recently contacted the City Manager about the City of Albemarle's in donating a utility pole and installing the pole at Morrow Mountain for a CVB sign project. The CVB is coordinating the issues related to the State Park System.

The Mayor called for a motion about the City donating a utility pole and installing the pole for the sign project. purchasing and placing the signage. Upon a motion by Councilmember Hughes, seconded by Councilmember Aldridge, and unanimously carried, Council approved the purchase and installation of signage at Morrow Mountain State Park.

Fire Department Grant Update

Meeting with new Fire Chief Pierre Brewton, the City Manager was apprised of a new grant application being developed by the Fire Department in conjunction with Keller Partners for FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant. The grant would cover confined space rescue equipment and extrication equipment, which are costly. An application was submitted to the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation for these items, but the City was not selected for funding.

Councilmember Updates/Comments:

Councilmember Hall provided the following comments:

- As a delegate of the Centralina Council on Governments (CCOG), handbooks and educational materials are regularly handed out to her. CCOG materials were given to the Clerk/Assistant to the City Manager to be distributed to various Administration staff for City staff use.
- An FYI was given about a January 26th article about opportunity zones.

- CCOG would be happy to facilitate a session on mixed use planning and development for Council at no cost.
- FYI: There is a grantwriting workshop at CCOG on March 18th.
- FYI: The NC General Assembly has passed changes to the zoning codes.
- FYI: “Love Where you Live” grant opportunity is available through CCOG to support projects that would enhance community pride and engagement in regional communities.
- FYI: David Hollars, Workforce Development Director at CCOG, recently gave a report on training and economic development activity occurring in the region. He is someone with some good ideas about economic development who might be a resource for Staff.
- Have the thank you letters gone out to fire chiefs supporting our firefighting efforts a few weeks back? The letter is drafted and is being reviewed by the City Manager.
- A clarification about the fatal shooting recently was sought: was the shooting in the public housing complex? Police Chief Dulin came to the podium to respond. He stated that the shooting did not occur in the public housing complex.

The dialogue continued with a concern raised about a recent online posting citing Albemarle as one of the highest ranked regional small cities for crime. This prompted a query about the police department’s call in program and whether that was netting any additional information towards solving crimes. Chief Dulin replied that the program was effective in bringing in offenders to talk about their knowledge of crimes that had been committed and informing them that they would be prosecuted at the highest level possible if they did not cooperate. However, he noted that the District Attorney had advised the Police Department that it could not continue the program as it had been set up because the theoretical exchange of information about offenders’ possible knowledge of crimes would violate client-attorney privilege. That effectively quashed the program. It takes significant efforts from all areas of law enforcement to make a program like the call in program succeed. As a result, the Police Department is looking to develop other strategies to address the crime problem.

A comment was made that an aspect of the call in program that made it effective was the application of other supportive resources for offenders, such as aid with finding employment. Chief Dulin agreed that the supportive approach is something that the Police Department would like to revive now. The position that Shanta Williams vacated is about to be filled by Sergeant Starr Gaines, who could be an asset to reworking the call in program.

Councilmember Hall concluded this segment of her comments by asking the current status of vacant positions in the Police Department. Chief Dulin responded that there are 5 positions open currently. For 2 positions, they are looking at finalists now and are awaiting psychological testing results, and for 1 position they are hoping to hire a local resident and are just waiting on the results of a background check.

CLOSED SESSION

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Whitley, unanimously carried, Council approved moving into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1) Prevent Disclosure of Confidential Information, N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3) Consultation with an Attorney, and N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) Real Estate.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

Upon motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Hughes, unanimously carried, the Mayor and City Council reconvened to open session. Mayor Michael stated that a closed session was held pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1) Prevent Disclosure of Confidential Information, N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3) Consultation with an Attorney, and N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) Real Estate. No Council decisions or actions will be taken as a result of the closed session.

The Mayor asked if there were any further comments Council members wished to make. Councilmember Hall reminded Council that there is a Special Events Committee meeting scheduled for this Wednesday, February 19th at 6 p.m. at the Niven Center. She wanted to know if other members of the City Council would be in attendance, as the fall 2020 City special event schedule will be discussed.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Aldridge, seconded by Councilmember Hughes, unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned to the next regular City Council meeting on Monday, March 2, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers.