

ADJOURNED MEETING CITY COUNCIL
March 10, 2009

The City Council of the City of Albemarle met in an adjourned session on Tuesday, March 10, 2009, at 5:00 p.m. in the City Hall Annex Conference Room. Mayor Elbert L. "Whit" Whitley presided and the following Councilmembers were present, to wit: Troy E. Alexander, Martha Sue Hall, Judy Holcomb, Jeanette M. Napier, Jack F. Neel, Dexter Townsend and T. Ed Underwood. Absent, none.

The City Council held a Budget Work Session with the following Departments: Police, Public Housing, Park and Recreation, and Human Resources.

Chief of Police Ronnie Michael presented the budget initiatives for the Police Department for fiscal year 2009/2010. Chief Michael began his presentation by stating the Department will have to find a new building to serve as the Department's West Community Policing Substation in the near future. He reminded the City Council that he has recently updated them on this issue and he is continuing to work on the matter.

He said that given the current economic climate, he is not asking for the expansion of his staff, but is requesting there be no decrease in staffing. He noted that he typically requests 7 vehicles, but is only requesting 5 in the upcoming year to replace extremely high mileage units. He concluded his presentation by stating that the Department has been awarded a federal grant and that he will request utilizing these funds for in-car camera replacements.

Councilmember Hall joined the meeting at this time.

Mr. Garry Lewis, Director of Public Housing, presented the budget needs for his Department.

He reminded the Mayor and the City Council that Public Housing has suspended taking Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher applications in order to work on decreasing the size of the waiting list.

Councilmember Neel asked about HUD's policy for the participation of illegal immigrants. Mr. Lewis stated that any applicant who is approved must prove United States citizenship.

Mr. Lewis stated the Department has been awarded federal stimulus funds. These funds will be used for the upcoming Capital Fund Program for exterior improvement to Amhurst Gardens. Bids for this project have already been received and will be presented to Council at an upcoming meeting.

Councilmember Alexander said he was contacted by window contractor Mr. Jim Goins who was complaining that local contractors did not have a chance to bid on this recent CFP project. Mr. Lewis explained that he spoke with Mr. Goins about this current project and referred him to the City's architect for additional information. He said Mr. Goins has also participated on previous CFP bids and should be very familiar with the process. Councilmember Neel said that Mr. Goins needs to refer to the Dodge report, which lists projects statewide. This is commonplace for contractors wanting to participate on bids and is the clearing house for bid information statewide. Councilmember Alexander also said Mr. Goins was wondering why bids for each individual scope of work are not bid separately so local contractors would have a chance to bid. The City Manager explained that the City does take bids for similar items if that is the scope of the project. However, on complex projects, such as the City Hall project, single-prime bids are sought for a general contractor and the general contractor is responsible for hiring the sub-contractors. He said this way the City only has to deal with the general contractor instead of trying to coordinate the work of several sub-contractors. Mr. Goins has the opportunity to partner with any of the general contractors who might be bidding on a project to be one of their sub-contracts.

Councilmember Townsend asked Mr. Lewis if the Public Housing staff can enforce nuisance violations on Section 8 tenants. Mr. Lewis explained that Housing only inspects these units once a year, but if they notice nuisance issues, they can have the tenant clean up. He said the City's Code Enforcement can also address these issues as well as the landlord, as the rental agreement for housing is between the tenant and landlord, not the City.

Parks and Recreation Toby Thorpe presented his Department's priorities and budget needs for FY 2009/2010. He noted that he would like the Department to be able to provide at least the same level of service and maintenance in the upcoming year. He said he has also held staff discussions

concerning ways to conserve costs and have implemented several of the suggestions.

Mr. Thorpe said he would like Council to consider increasing Parks and Recreation fees in the upcoming year. There has been no significant change to the fee structure since the early 1990's and this is a recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Advisory board. They would like to have the participant fees recoup a greater percentage of actual costs.

Mr. Thorpe also said Oliver Webster, Program Superintendent, has been developing a plan for summer camp for kids. He said this is an area where the Department can fill a gap in the community and they are looking at ways to implement the program at no additional impact on the budget.

He also mentioned that he wants to work through the completion of ongoing projects such as the Greenway system, renovations to the EE Waddell Community Center and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Capital needs in his Department include renovations to the Niven Center, renovate the restrooms at Montgomery Park and a new pick-up truck.

Mayor Whitley joined the meeting at this time.

Human Resource Director Robert Whitley presented his major Departmental initiatives for the upcoming fiscal year. He said given the current economic situation, he is not requesting any funds for major purchases or new initiatives.

He reported that medical costs for the new year are not yet known, but the industry trend he is hearing is for an approximate 8% to 12% increase in premiums. He also stated that he would like to continue with the Life Smart and Wellness Programs. These are both aimed at improving employee health and reducing medical insurance costs to the City.

Councilmember Neel said he is aware of someone who is a legal alien to the country who has an MBA who is looking to work at no pay. He said this person also has very good computer skills. It was suggested this individual contact Stanly Community College.

Mayor Whitley asked what the City pays for in the way of insurance for employee and spouses. Mr. Whitley said the City only pays for employee medical. Spouse medical costs as well as spouse and employee costs for dental and vision are completely funded by the individual participants, not by the City.

Mayor Whitley said he has been contacted by a School Board member and Mr. Steve Chambers about a problem involving the proposed construction of a field house at Albemarle High School. Neither the contractor nor the School System has obtained a building permit for this project, nor submitted an application to the City for a Conditional Use Permit. The project is ready to begin. To obtain a Conditional Use Permit will take approximately 60 days.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Holcomb, seconded by Councilmember Hall and unanimously carried, the City Council voted to waive the zoning requirements requiring a Conditional Use Permit for the construction of a field house at Albemarle High School.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Neel, seconded by Councilmember Napier and unanimously carried, the City Council voted to direct the Planning and Zoning Board to make a recommendation regarding the possible change of all school property from a conditional use in a residential district to a separate, educational district.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Alexander, seconded by Councilmember Hall and unanimously carried, the City Council adjourned to Thursday, March 12 at 5:00 p.m. in the Conference Room of the City Hall Annex for a Budget Work Session.