

ADJOURNED MEETING CITY COUNCIL
March 5, 2007

The City Council of the City of Albemarle met in an adjourned session on Wednesday, March 5, 2008, 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, T. Ed Underwood and T.E. White. Absent, none.

The City Council held a Budget Work Session with the following Departments: Public Utilities, Planning and Community Development, Public Housing, Public Works and Police.

Director Public Utilities Ernie Borders discussed the Department's budgetary needs. He began by reviewing some of the major accomplishments of his Department in the past year, which include the installation of the Utility Customer Service and Collection software, inflow and infiltration reductions through sewer line repair and replacement, and continued installation of automated meter reading capabilities.

He indicated he is proposing a 5% water and sewer rate increase for users of 200 cubic feet per month or more as well as a slight increase in tap fees. Councilmember Hall and Holcomb felt the minimum threshold should be raised to 300 cubic feet per month. Councilmember Neel reiterated his feeling that the City should provide a break on water taps for residential structures installing sprinkler systems.

Mr. Borders is projecting a 1.25% electric rate increase to help offset anticipated wholesale rate increases to the City.

Councilmember White joined the meeting at this time.

Mr. Borders reviewed the proposed projects in the Department for Fiscal Year 2008/2009. He indicated that significant upgrades are needed for the Waste Water Treatment Plant. He would also like to undertake a needs assessment of the two Water Treatment Plants. The plans for the upcoming year also include the engaging of a consultant to perform a water system study. Other

projects include a new inventory management system as well as back-up generation capabilities for the US highway 52 Water Treatment Plant.

Director of Planning and Community Development Bob Sasser discussed his budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

He reminded the Mayor and City Council that the City's Land Use Plan Update Committee is working hard on this project. A draft should be ready for presentation to the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Board in the next couple of months. After the Boards have had an opportunity to review the draft, a public hearing will be scheduled to receive public comment.

Mr. Sasser discussed the code enforcement activities. The City is close to finishing work to demolish two additional houses. He said this type of work is very time consuming. Councilmember Neel said that the City should find a way to fix up a house that an owner has neglected and sell the property once renovated to pay for the costs. The City Manager said State law does not currently allow this and special legislation would have to be obtained.

The Historic Resources Commission continues to address projects in the District. He said the Minor Works Committee is now meeting regularly and the full board as issues arise.

He also discussed the Alfred Street Community Development Block Grant and project. Work to define the needed right of way is nearing completion. He advised the Mayor and Council that due to the limited space within the project boundaries, sidewalk will not be installed; however, the entire area will be much improved.

Mr. Sasser concluded his remarks by noting the Department continues to address nuisance situations around the City. He noted that the appearance of the City is greatly improved in recent years and complimented Planner II Keith Wolf for his efforts.

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 and the Finance Department continue to work very closing to integrate the

Department of Public Housing finances with those of the rest of the City. There are some software issues in this process that are not working as they should be, and these are being addressed.

Mr. Lewis discussed ongoing issues with the Mayor and Council such as the condition the apartments are left in once tenants move out and the vacancy rate. He said currently, there are five vacant units. The number is typically been running higher due to the increase unit turnover and the amount of work necessary to refurbish the units.

Director of Public Works Michael Lambert began his presentation by reviewing his Department's accomplishments during the current fiscal year. These include continuation of the street resurfacing program, the downtown service division, sidewalk replacement and a rainwater collection system.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Holcomb, seconded by Councilmember Napier and unanimously carried, the City Council voted to adopt Resolutions thanking employees for cost savings or efficiency improving ideas.

Mr. Lambert presented options for the handling of recycling. One option was to get back into a curbside program. It was noted that the cost to get back into this business is estimated at almost three times the amount as when the City stopped this program. Councilmember Alexander said he thinks recycling should be made mandatory. Another option was for the City to manage and maintain a drop off site. Councilmember Hall said that City Attorney David Beaver mentioned to her recently that he has an acquaintance who is in the recycling business who could work with the City to provide enhanced recycling services at the Landfill. Council asked that staff contact Mr. Beaver about this. Mr. Lambert noted that he is not aware of any recycling activities that are completely paid for through the value of recycled goods collected.

Mr. Lambert noted the State tax on all landfills of \$2.00 per ton is scheduled to be implemented July 1, 2008. None of these funds will go to landfill operations and he noted the City intends to show this charge as a separate State tax on the landfill bills. He does propose the City increase its tipping fees. He noted the City's construction and demolition fees are the fourth lowest in the state out of 177 such disposal sites.

Chief of Police Ronnie Michael presented the budget initiatives for the Police Department for fiscal year 2008/2009. 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 estimated the design / build cost of a new combined Police Substation and Fire Station to be approximately \$700,000.

In the area of equipment, Chief Michael said he will need to address the aging patrol fleet. He is proposing to purchase 7 vehicles a year for the next several years to bring the fleet age and condition to an appropriate level. He also said that he intends to request other equipment replacements similar to previous years, such as video cameras, computers and cameras.

He said that Departmental salaries need to be addressed. He noted that starting salaries are very competitive, but that supervisory salaries are low.

Councilmember Neel said he felt the City is very fortunate to have the School Resource Officers it has. He felt they were top notch at what they do.

Chief Michael provided an update on the firing range and he thanked the various City Departments that have provided their assistance.

Chief Michael requested two additional employees to work drug cases and provided the cost of hiring two officers that work with the Planning and Community Development Department to handle nuisance matters.

Upon a motion by Councilmember White, seconded by Councilmember Underwood, the City Council adjourned to Thursday, March 6 at 5:00 p.m. in the Conference Room of the City Hall Annex for a Budget Work Session.