

ADJOURNED MEETING CITY COUNCIL  
March 6, 2008

The City Council of the City of Albemarle met in an adjourned session on Thursday, March 6, 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: Parks and Recreation, Engineering, Finance, Human Resources and Fire.

-----

Director of Parks and Recreation Toby Thorpe discussed the Department budget and projects for FY 08/09.

He began his presentation by reviewing some of the major capital needs of the upcoming fiscal year. The Greenway project continues to move forward and the City is working with the North Carolina Department of Transportation on this matter. He felt that groundbreaking could take place within the next few months. Pool repairs at Rock Creek Park are also needed. Some of the repairs have already begun in the current fiscal year and will need to continue if the overall refurbishment project is to be completed. He also noted that a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant application has been submitted for improvements at the EE Waddell Community Center. If awarded, renovations will include work to the restrooms, banquet hall, kitchen and a terrace outdoors.

Other Departmental needs include temporary help for seasonal programs. Mr. Thorpe also said program equipment needs to be replaced for use and safety reasons.

Major future needs will be renovations to the Niven Center. Also, a move to the Niven Center will necessitate disposal of the current office. Mr. Thorpe thought that given the current condition of this facility, demolition might be the most cost effective disposition option. He suggested the possible construction of restroom facilities at its location.

Councilmember Holcomb asked if there were safety concerns from the users of the walking trail at Rock Creek Park. Mr. Thorpe said that the trail is fairly heavily used and the number of other walkers helps with safety. It was suggested that the Department recommend walkers take their cell phones with them.

Mr. Thorpe reminded the Mayor and City Council that the meeting to discuss an update to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is scheduled for March 18. To date there has been limited conveyed interest in the meeting. Council felt like the City needs to move forward with a Plan update even if the other jurisdictions in the County do not want to participate.

-----

Councilmember Hall joined the meeting at this time.

-----

Jon Mendenhall, Director of Engineering Services, discussed with the Mayor and City Council his Departmental priorities and goals for the upcoming fiscal year.

He will be working with the City Hall project which currently involves abatement issues and will then transition to construction management. Technology needs include a re-evaluation of the GIS system. The Little Long Creek stormwater project will also take place in the upcoming year.

Current year projects include the biennial bridge inspection program, City Hall project, Safe Route to School Grant and continued work on the 2010 Federal Census.

-----

Finance Director Colleen Jones reviewed the Departmental accomplishments in FY 2007/2008, which include continuing the implementation of the new Utility Customer Service and Collections software, utilization of a new auditing firm, continue the process to integrate the Department of Public Housing financials with the rest of the City, received Local Government Commission approval on the financing for both the City Hall and the Landfill construction projects, and that a majority of her Department has completed a move to the building on North Third Street, while the remainder will relocate to the building on North First Street.

The major capital needs in her Department are primarily in the Information Technology area. She indicated their responsibilities and number of tasks continue to grow exponentially. She commended the current staff for their dedicated work, but said they are stretched too thin to complete the tasks they have placed upon them. Chief of Police Ronnie Michael said the demands of his Department alone could use one person full-time and supported the addition of an employee in IT.

-----

Director of Human Resources Robert Whitley began his budget presentation with a discussion of health insurance costs. He said it is early in the process, so the final price is not known. He indicated he would expect an increase of approximately 10% to 15% because of the high utilization of our employees.

Mr. Whitley said he would also like to budget for participation in a wellness program through Stanly Regional Medical Center. The cost is estimated at \$33,000 and it is standard to budget for approximately two-thirds participation. This program would differ from the Life Smart Program the City currently participates in as it would more actively try to involve all City employees, not just those identified as high risk.

The Health Fair is once again on the calendar and scheduled for May 15 from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Whitley concluded his presentation by noting that he will budget for the routine replacement of one computer in his Department and he discussed a possible new identification badge system that could be linked to a time and attendance system.

-----

Fire Chief Eddy McDaniel discussed the Department's fiscal year 2008/2009 needs. He noted that five desktop computers and one laptop computer are scheduled for replacement. He also said a defibrillator is in need of replacement. He would like to transfer the Fire Marshal's vehicle for use elsewhere in the Department and purchase the Fire Marshall a small SUV. Chief McDaniel would also like to continue pursuing grant opportunities, such as for video conferencing capabilities. Councilmember Hall suggested the possibility of working with Stanly Community College to address any video-conferencing needs. Chief McDaniel felt like it would be more efficient if such equipment could be secured through a grant

He said that due to recent City Council budget allocations and grants received by the City, the equipment in the Department is in very good shape.

Chief McDaniel discussed the possibility of an addition to the existing Fire Station #2, estimated at approximately \$178,000. This would be a temporary solution to space needs until such time as a permanent location for a new building could be secured.

Chief McDaniel also requested the addition of one additional full-time personnel to replace the one that has been reassigned to the Fire Marshal's office. He also said he would like to increase the numbers on the call force to 12-15. These individuals would work as a City force and would be paid for training and calls. This theory is loosely based on the relationship between the US Army and Army National Guard.

Chief McDaniel concluded his presentation with a video of two fires in identical rooms, except one had a working sprinkler system. The key points he noted is the termination in the progress of the fire in the room with the sprinkler system. He noted the progress of the fire without a working sprinkler system and the jeopardy that would place on occupants and firefighters responding to a call.

-----

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Underwood, the City Council adjourned to Wednesday, March 12 at 6:30 p.m. at the Rosebriar Restaurant to meet with the members of the Planning and Zoning Board and the Zoning Board of Adjustment.