

Friday - January 10, 1997 - 1:00 p.m.

Kanuga Conference Center, Hendersonville, N.C.

City Council Retreat

Present: Mayor Russell Martin, Presiding; Vice-Mayor Barbara Field; Councilman M. Charles Cloninger; Councilman Edward C. Hay Jr.; Councilman Thomas G. Sellers; Councilman James J. Skalski; and Councilman Charles R. Worley; City Attorney Robert W. Oast Jr.; City Manager James L. Westbrook Jr.; and City Clerk Magdalen Burleson

Absent: None

Friday, January 10, 1997

Each department reviewed their current and future projects with Council.

Saturday, January 11, 1997

Budget Update - Audit/Budget Director briefed Council on the five year long range budget forecast. He reviewed the summary of General Fund revenues and appropriations. City Council instructed the City Manager to meet with the County Manager to discuss the Patrol and Investigation portion in the Water Agreement and if the City is receiving the correct amount.

Annexation - Ms. Julia Cogburn reviewed the current history of annexation in Asheville and asked for future direction from City Council. Because it is recommended to have a map on file and since the last map of consideration expired on August 17, 1995, City Council instructed Ms. Cogburn to prepare a map of consideration to be considered at a future City Council meeting.

Staff was instructed to study the Skyland II area to see if it qualifies for annexation, along with a recommendation from staff. Also, staff was asked to look for any other areas in the City that might qualify for annexation.

It was the consensus of Council to look at the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction ("ETJ") area in order to determine whether or not to expand the ETJ in additional areas. This was requested to be reviewed at a future worksession with a staff recommendation regarding future expansion.

Asheville Transit Authority - Mr. Carl Ownbey, Transportation Planner, briefed Council on the history of the public transportation system in Asheville. He then reviewed the current status of the system with comparative information from other North Carolina systems with regard to ridership by routes, major capital equipment, operating expenses and funding and transit fares. He briefly spoke about future funding by reviewing the five-year service plan and budget projects.

The following recommendations of the Transit Authority were agreed upon by Council: (1) maintain local transit funding at a minimum of \$813,485; (2) continue working toward increasing performance enhancements which are directly linked to the amount of state funding combined with federal funding received; (3) look at possibility of fare increase up to 75 cents, which would allow BOOST fare to be raised to \$1.50; and (4) re-evaluate contract in 1998 to find better ways to provide services.

When Councilman Skalski asked the City Council enroll Asheville as a member of the N.C. Coalition for Public Transportation, Mr. Tom

Tomlin, Chairman of the Asheville Transit Authority, said that the Authority would research the benefits and report back to City Council. He noted that it would cost Asheville approximately \$6-7,000 annually to become a member.

Mayor Martin asked staff to explore on a trial basis the use of electric buses.

Affordable Housing - Mr. Marvin Vierra, Community Development Director, reviewed the history of affordable housing in Asheville, along with the legal and regulatory issues. He touched upon the affordable housing needs and the financial resources for affordable housing.

Vice-Mayor Field felt that Council should be clear on our policy concerning affordable housing stressing that Council needs attainable goals.

Council asked the Housing & Community Development Committee to investigate the pros and cons of the City keeping the CDBG funds in house versus making grants to non-profit organizations as a way of being able to address large problems in a single area over a shorter period of time. Council was also interested in seeing how other cities are handling the CDBG funds.

Bele Chere - Mr. Irby Brinson, Director of Parks & Recreation, reviewed the Bele Chere Strategic Plan which represented the future of the annual Bele Chere Festival from 1997-2001. He said the Bele Chere Mission is to host and produce a quality community celebration which: celebrates the region's cultural diversity, sets the stage for creative expression, is fun for the entire family, is self-sustaining, and contributes to the long-term economic benefit of Asheville, Buncombe County and Western North Carolina.

Mr. Brinson then reviewed each Bele Chere goal and objective which are critical to the improvement of the festival. Said goals are (1) to develop financial stability for the festival by becoming self-sustaining, without effecting the quality of the event; (2) to enhance the festival's image with the media and throughout the community; (3) to enhance the quality of the vendors, entertainment events, and overall festival logistics; (4) to restructure the festival by re-evaluating the roles and responsibilities associated with producing the festival; (5) to improve relationships with the downtown merchants; (6) to resolve the issues surrounding the selling and consumption of alcohol at the festival; (7) to use the excess revenue generated to foster improvements in festival operations, downtown and at the river; and (8) to make the festival as safe as possible for those attending.

City Council endorsed the Bele Chere Strategic Plan with the understanding that issues involving alcohol are to be brought back to the full Council for recommendations and approval at a later date. It was suggested that the Strategic Plan be reviewed annually.

Community Oriented Government - Ms. Robin Westbrook, Community and Public Information Coordinator, reviewed with Council events and developments that have been occurring over the past six months since Community Oriented Government has started. She reviewed a Neighborhood Matching Grant Program to begin with the next couple of months.

Ms. Westbrook then updated Council on the criteria and application process for the All American City & Community Award. City Council approved proceeding with applying for this award.

Fire Accreditation & Station Locations - Fire Chief John Rukavina reviewed information on fire and emergency incidence in Asheville to date, including fire loss, life loss and injury-related data.

City Council endorsed the pursuit of Fire Service Accreditation with the understanding that costs of accreditation over the two-three year span of the process (estimated at \$20,000) would be subject to the annual budget process.

Fire Chief Rukavina briefed Council on new computer software used for the evaluation of fire station locations. Council endorsed the use of the software to relocate Station Six with the understanding that this would require a public hearing as a part of past annexation efforts.

Police Resource Centers - Police Chief Will Annarino reviewed the status of the Police and Community Neighborhood Resource Centers. He felt that the future of Resource Centers in the City of Asheville looks very positive. Based on the results of the West Asheville and Montford surveys, it is apparent that communities like and support the concept of Resource Centers. The Centers have provided an avenue for the police to address neighborhood concerns and strengthen the relationship between the police and citizens. The Centers are becoming an integral part of customer service throughout the City.

He said that other communities have shown great interest in establishing resource centers in their community. The City is currently working with the Oakley community to establish a Center on Fairview Road and it is anticipated this will be achieved in the very near future.

Resource Centers must be established as a stand-alone organization operated and controlled by the community based on specific guidelines. The community must remain active in its involvement for the centers to grow and meet the needs of the community.

A police substation is planned for the City of Asheville Fire Department's portion of the Skyland Volunteer Fire Department building and will come back to Council for funding and approval.

Other Issues

Several miscellaneous issues were discussed by Council and staff received direction and/or input on current projects and issues.

Sunday, January 12, 1997

The following are the 12 top goals arrived at by City Council: (1) Housing - (a) develop comprehensive housing plan; (2) Boards and Commissions - (a) continue new boards and commissions quarterly process; (b) develop community leadership program; (3) Community Oriented Government - (a) televise City Council meetings; (b) continue to support Community Oriented Government; (c) better utilize "CityWorks"; (4) City Facilities - (a) continue efforts with Grove Arcade; (b) continue the work on the future of the Civic Center; (c) prioritize stormwater needs; (d) complete Transit Transfer Center; (e) complete funding for and begin construction of Stephens-Lee Recreation Center; (5) Land Use Planning - (a) complete Unified Development Ordinance; (b) develop process to update 2010 Plan; (c) review land use variances; (6) Public Safety - (a) encourage and support Police Resource Centers and Substations; (b) support accreditation of the Fire Department; (7) Employee Relations - (a) review City pension plan; (b) revisit Civil Service Law; (c) support Legacy of Excellence; (d) encourage "risk taking"; (e) continue Pay Plan improvements; (f) decentralize government and empower employees; (8)

Economic Development - (a) economic development equals good schools; (b) develop strategy to recruit "clean" industry; (c) continue efforts in City development; (d) continue efforts in downtown development; (9) Fiscal Policy - (a) adopt Fiscal 1997/98 budget with no tax rate increase; (b) maintain or improve City's bond rating; (c) adhere to City's Fiscal Policy; (d) maintain or improve the City's fiscal reserves; (10) Education - (a) use community forums/focus groups/task force for School Board selection process; (11) Parks and Recreation - (a) continue and expand greenway system; (b) move forward with plans for Richmond Hill; (c) implement Bele Chere Plan; (d) implement Parks & Recreation Long-Range Plan; and (12) City/County/ Regional Cooperation - (a) improve relations with legislators; (b) continue relationship with County Commissioners; (c) pursue ISTEA funding from State; (d) investigate consolidations of City/County functions. These top 12 goals were arrived at after 38 small topics were introduced and combined.

Mayor Martin adjourned the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

CITY CLERK MAYOR
