

Friday - January 28, 2000 - 1:00 p.m. -

Saturday - January 29, 1999 - 12:40 a.m.

City Council Annual Retreat Highland Lake Inn, Flat Rock, N.C.

Mayor Leni Sitnick, Presiding; Vice-Mayor M. Charles Cloninger; Councilwoman Barbara Field; Councilman Edward C. Hay Jr.; Councilman Brian L. Peterson; Councilwoman Terry M. Whitmire; Councilman Charles R. Worley; City Attorney Robert W. Oast Jr.; City Manager James L. Westbrook Jr.; and City Clerk Magdalen Burleson

Friday, January 28, 2000

Fiscal Year 1999/00 Strategic Plan - City Council was updated on the Fiscal Year 1999-00 Strategic Plan goals and objectives.

Assessment of Street Conditions and Future Funding - City Council heard a review from staff involving street conditions and the recent rating of streets by ITRE. Mark Combs' recommendation was for increasing funding for increased maintenance and preventive maintenance in the sum of \$800,000 per year. The Council discussed the issue in depth. Staff advised the only practical funding that would yield this much money for this type of infrastructure maintenance was a property tax rate increase of approximately \$.02. Council agreed with and approved of the plan for increased maintenance and preventive maintenance, and deferred to a later time the issue of funding.

Assessment of Transit System Services and Funding - Council received a briefing on staff's recommended direction for future funding and operations of the transit system including alternative fuel, vehicles, smaller vehicles for custom routes and amenities such as park benches, signage and shelters. Also discussed was the need to establish a reserve fund for the future purchase of replacement buses. Potential sources of funding for the transit system plan were property taxes and a special \$5.00 vehicle license fee assessment. The City of Asheville has been given authority by the General Assembly for Council to levy the \$5.00 fee specifically for transit system improvements noted by Interim Transit Services Director Bruce Black in his presentation. The consensus of Council was that the improvements discussed by Bruce during the briefing were what was needed to have the kind of transit system that would be more responsive to the public's needs yet more efficient and effective through the use of alternate fuels and smaller vehicles, where appropriate. Council also favored levying the \$5.00 vehicle license fee for the upgrades to the transit system as a funding source, although no approvals were sought or received by staff on the funding source.

Streamlining and Improving the Development Process - City Council was briefed on improvements made in the permitting portion of the development review process by Director of Building Safety Terry Summey and an outlook for additional improvements the City is working on at the current time. Planning & Development Director Scott Shuford presented some initial concepts for Council's review in working with the Unified Development Ordinance and the new urbanism concepts of urban planning. The Council was enthusiastically supportive of both reports and asked staff to pursue those directions.

Diversity in the Workplace - Human Resources Director Jeff Richardson briefed Council on our diversity efforts. The change in Civil Service Law really allowed the City to initiate a tremendous diversity program because we no longer had the Rule of Three to contend with. Although the increased emphasis on diversity just started in August 1999, changes are already seen, particularly in the number of minority applicants for City positions.

Traffic Signal Feasibility Study/DOT - City Engineer Cathy Ball briefed Council on the possibility of

computerizing all the traffic signals within the City so that signalization City-wide would be coordinated. This would be a joint project with the N. C. Dept. of Transportation; the approximate cost would be \$1 million. The City's financial responsibility would be for \$200,000 -2-

based on 20% of the project cost. This program is not scheduled for the upcoming budget but would be scheduled for Fiscal Year 2001-2002. Council agreed with the direction staff was taking and gave initial approval to carry forward with the planning process to place this issue in the Fiscal Year 2001-2002 budget.

Fire Protection at Biltmore Square Area - Fire Chief John Rukavina updated City Council on the City's efforts to provide additional fire coverage to the area near the Biltmore Square Mall which is rapidly developing. Basically, the City needs to build an additional fire station, equip it with fire apparatus and personnel to provide fire service to that area. We need to start on this project prior to 2002 since Insurance Services Office will conduct its next evaluation during that year. After hearing the briefing, Council gave general direction to proceed with plans to build a station in that area understanding that this will be multi-year planning and budget commitment to do so. The Fire Chief estimated the total project cost to be \$1.2 million for the fire station, \$215,000 for the apparatus, and \$485,000 annually for 14.5 full-time equivalent firefighters.

Legislative Issues - City Attorney Bob Oast reviewed the past year's legislative successes in the General Assembly and discussed the current issue we have before the General Assembly which is non-betterment costs of the N. C. Dept. of Transportation projects. (This is a Water Resources Department and Water Authority issue which the City is leading.) Since this is a short session, controversial issues are not normally brought to the General Assembly for action.

Saturday, January 20, 2000

Budget Outlook:

Fund Balance Position - Finance Director Bill Schaefer reported the City's fund balance has gradually declined over the past five years. The City's fund balance as a percentage of operating expenditures, however, remains sufficiently above the legal limit.

Current Budget - Budget Director Ben Durant reviewed the City's current budget with Council, and in particular the following two issues that impact the current budget and, therefore, future fund balances: (1) Change in sales tax distribution from the County - As City staff updated City Council, Buncombe County made an error in its calculation of sales tax distribution to the City which meant we received approximately \$700,000 less than was projected; and (2) Reimbursements to MSD - As Assistant City Attorney Doug Spell briefed Council, the City owes MSD approximately \$223,000 which represents the portion of the Enka-Candler Water and Sewer District annexed by the City in 1994. Our portion on an annual basis is approximately \$37,000. Currently we owe MSD approximately \$260,000 for years since 1994 and the current year. After being briefed on this particular issue, Council requested that staff work with MSD to see if we could receive an extended length of time to make this payment since MSD has not requested it prior to this time.

Budget Forecast - Budget Director Ben Durant said that based on anticipated revenue growth of 2.5 percent and expenditure growth of 3.02 percent, he presented his budget projections for next year showing that expenditures for maintaining existing services are currently outpacing revenue growth. As a part of those projections, we presented areas where we see unfunded needs, in addition to the street conditions and transit system needs which were already presented.

Unfunded Priorities:

Lake Craig Recreation/Beneficial Fill Facility - Council received a briefing on staff actions to date which were based on Council approvals. Council gave direction for staff to -3-

proceed with the current planning in order to purchase the land in the future based on the option which we currently have. Although funding is not available in the budget to develop the property fully, purchase of the property will give the City control and secure the valuable flat area for recreational and beneficial purposes in the future.

Battery Park Parking Deck - City Engineer Cathy Ball updated Council on the current status of the Battery Park parking deck issue including the most recent Council action involving approval for engineering and design services. Council also received from Finance Director Bill Schaefer a recommendation for funding the difference between parking deck revenues generated and the debt service needed for the Certificates of Participation by the annual increase in the sales tax.

Civic Center Improvements - Civic Center Director David Pisha briefed Council on Civic Center improvements that are needed. There have been many numbers used recently and staff wanted to present Council with the factual numbers as we know them at the current time. Council discussed the problems associated with the Civic Center and the need to receive the consultant's report, and for the Task Force to make recommendations to Council.

Due to weather conditions, it was the consensus of City Council to continue the City Council goal setting process and the recycling initiative to it's worksession on February 1, 2000.

Tuesday, February 1, 2000

Waste Management Coordinator Karen Rankin briefed Council on providing an upgraded service by including mixed paper in our recycling program. The impact of including mixed paper in our recycling program would be to increase the recycling tonnage by 27% based on a biweekly collection schedule. The cost for our current service is \$1.59 per month. The cost for adding mixed paper is \$2.06 per month, or a \$.47 per month increase. The Council approved of the change in the recycling program and directed staff to bring the program back to Council on February 22, 2000, for approval and implementation as soon as possible. Staff's original recommendation was implementation on July 1, 2000.

Because of the absence of Councilwoman Whitmire, it was the consensus of City Council to move their goal setting process to Sunday, February 6, 2000.

Sunday, February 6, 2000

City Council tentatively agreed upon the following Fiscal Year 2000-01 Goals:

- 1) Aggressively implement the Sustainable Economic Development Strategic Plan.
- 2) Adopt policies and ordinances that promote "Smart" growth:
 - o Continue to review the UDO and make changes consistent with greater utilization of the property tax base and the concept of new urbanism.
 - o Continue to implement the Housing Action Plan.
 - o Expand recycling program in accordance with staff proposals.
 - o Review and adopt recommendations of the Waste Reduction Plan.
 - o Maintain and expand Asheville's quality of life.
 - o Work with MSD and Regional Water Authority to promote cooperative growth policies.
 - o Increase diversity on boards and commissions and City work-force.
 - o Communicate effectively with the Citizens of Asheville.

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3) Improve all transportation systems through innovative and cost effective planning.

- o Adopt and implement the Transit Improvement Program.
- o Approve an additional five dollar motor vehicle tax dedicated to the transit system capital improvement program.
- o Improve traffic flow by updating the traffic signalization system.
- o Continue to install traffic calming devices in residential areas.

4) Provide new resources to increase street and sidewalk maintenance and repair so as to address the needs identified in the ITRE study.

5) Improve the quality of life for Asheville residents through identification of resources to fund parks and recreation capital needs.

6) Develop a multi-year operational and capital improvement program designed to provide adequate capital funding for the Civic Center as an interim approach pending a decision about the future direction of the Civic Center.

It was the consensus of City Council to review and approve the goals at their February 8, 2000, formal meeting.

Tuesday, February 8, 2000

Due to the length of the City Council meeting held on February 8, 2000, a motion was made and carried unanimously to review and approve the City Council's goals at their meeting on February 15, 2000.

Tuesday, February 22, 2000

Councilwoman Field reviewed with Council a re-worded set of goals as follows:

1) Create opportunities for Sustainable Economic Development

- Aggressively implement the Sustainable Economic Development Strategic Plan.
- Develop an interim multi-year operational and capital improvement program designed to provide adequate funding for the Civic Center pending decisions on the long-term future of the Civic Center.
- Continue Downtown initiatives that support the strong private sector revitalization effort.

2) Adopt policies and ordinances that promote "Smart Growth"

- Define "Smart Growth" for the City of Asheville.
- Maintain and expand Asheville's quality of life.
- Review the UDO and make changes consistent with the concept of "new urbanism" and greater utilization of the property tax base.
- Implement the Housing Action Plan.
- Expand the recycling program in accordance with staff proposals.
- Review and adopt recommendations of the Waste Reduction Plan.
- Work with MSD and the Regional Water Authority to promote cooperative growth policies.

3) Improve all transportation systems through innovative and cost effective planning.

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- Adopt and implement the Transit Improvement Program.
- Approve an additional five-dollar motor vehicle tax dedicated to the transit system capital improvement program.
- Update the traffic signalization system to improve traffic flow.
- Install traffic calming devices in residential areas based on the Traffic Calming Policy.

4) Provide new resources to increase street and sidewalk maintenance and repair.

- Address the needs identified in the ITRE study.
- Implement the Pedestrian Thoroughfare Plan as funds become available.

5) Develop resources to fund parks and recreation needs that improve the quality of life for Asheville residents.

- Implement the Greenway Master Plan as funding becomes available.
- Construct phase I of Pritchard Park.
- Develop the Lake Craig property per the staff's recommendations.
- Build the Skateboard Park.

6) Work towards common sense governance.

- Communicate more effectively with the Citizens of Asheville.
- Work to find better and meaningful participation processes.
- Increase diversity in the City workforce and in City Council appointments.
- Resolve conflicts between new ordinances and existing local, state or federal regulations.
- Adopt new ordinances and resolutions only when there are resources to implement them.
- Examine and revise the "Conditions Use" process, implement the Planning Director's recommendations presented to us at the 2000 retreat.

Councilman Worley moved to adopt the revised goals as presented by Councilwoman Field. This motion was seconded by Councilwoman Field and carried unanimously.

Budget Director Ben Durant confirmed with Council that the adopted goals would provide direction to staff during the budget process. Council further indicated that staff would have the discretion to recommend alternative strategies to achieve those goals.

CITY CLERK MAYOR
