

Worksession

Present: Vice-Mayor Terry M. Bellamy, Presiding; Councilman Joseph C. Dunn; Councilman James E. Ellis; Councilwoman Diana Hollis Jones; Councilman R. Carl Mumpower; and Councilman Brian L. Peterson; City Attorney Robert W. Oast Jr.; City Manager James L. Westbrook Jr.; and City Clerk Magdalen Burleson

Absent: Mayor Charles W. Worley

CONSENT:

Clerk to Advertise for Upset Bids on Disposal Parcel 218 on Water Street

Summary: The consideration of a resolution establishing the minimum price and directing the City Clerk to advertise an offer to purchase for upset bids regarding Disposal Parcel 218 on Water Street.

Louise Gardner has submitted a bid for the purchase of Disposal Parcel 218 in the East Riverside Redevelopment Project in the amount of \$1,500.

Disposal Parcel 218 is a residential lot near the corner of Water Street and Camby Street comprising 4,350 square feet. The assessed tax value on the lot is \$8,300. Disposal Parcel 218 has been in the Community Development inventory for over 20 years and no previous bids have been received. The lot has been "shopped" to several non-profits and individuals and the upset bid process will determine the actual market value of the lot.

The bid from Louise Gardner for Disposal Parcel 218 includes the proposal to incorporate the lot with her property at 36 Water Street.

Approval of the resolution will establish the minimum price for Disposal Parcel 218 at \$1,500 and initiate the sale of the property through the upset bid process as provided in N. C. G. S. 160A-269.

Community Development staff recommends adoption of the resolution establishing the minimum price and directing the City Clerk to advertise an offer to purchase for upset bids regarding Disposal Parcel 218 on Water Street.

Abandonment of Waterline Easement on Buckstone Place

Summary: The consideration of a resolution abandoning a waterline easement and authorizing the City Manager to execute documents to effect same.

In 2000 and 2001, during construction and development of the Spring Hill Suites Hotel on the north side of Tunnel Road, a waterline was damaged, resulting in its relocation by the developer on the same property, but in a different place. Appropriate easements and agreements have been executed for the relocated waterline, and the property owners are now requesting the City to abandon and release the old water line easement.

The Water Resources Department advises that it has no further use for the waterline (which will remain in the ground, but not be used) or the easement. The Water Authority's attorneys have reviewed this request, and concur. The resolution declares the waterline and

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easement to be abandoned, and authorizes the City Manager to execute appropriate documents to effect the abandonment.

Adoption of the resolution is recommended.

Vice-Mayor Bellamy asked that the record show that City Council has received this information and instructs the City Manager to place these items on the next formal City Council agenda.

AIRPORT PROPERTY REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

- Director of Economic Development Mac Williams said that this is the consideration of a resolution authorizing the City to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to developers soliciting proposals for development of city-owned land located across from Asheville Regional Airport.

The City owns a 13.08-acre parcel located directly across from the Asheville Regional Airport. A portion of the site had previously been used to house a small office building for the Federal Aviation Administration. The building was destroyed by fire and has since been demolished and the site cleared.

The location of the parcel in proximity to the Airport and I-26, the frontage and access off Airport Road, and the nature of existing development around the site make the parcel a valuable asset. Thus the City objectives (as stated in the proposed RFP) are *“to leverage this asset to enhance the City tax base, generate income to support other economic development initiatives, and establish high development standards for this important City corridor.”*

The proposed RFP has been created to provide guidance to developers interested in partnering with the City to develop the site. In accordance with City procedure, the RFP has been circulated internally among department directors.

Staff recommends City Council authorize the City to issue the Request for Proposals as drafted.

Vice-Mayor Bellamy asked that the record show that City Council has received this information and instructs the City Manager to place this item on the next formal City Council agenda.

COUNCIL REVIEW OF I-240 IMPROVEMENTS

- Using a page from the Florida Highway Capacity Manual and information regarding traffic volume, projected traffic demand and concerns for air quality, Councilman Peterson explained why he was requesting City Council consideration and adoption of the following resolution: “City Council commits to cooperate with the I-26 Connector Project to the fullest possible extent and request the Federal Highway Administration, the N.C. Dept. of Transportation and the Transportation Advisory Committee of the Asheville Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization to (1) expedite the construction of the new I-26 Connector bridge over the French Broad River to the earliest possible date by concurrent study and design of the various lane options, the possible interchange alternatives, and the Connector bridge alternatives; or by reducing the number of interchange alternatives that would need to be studied in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); (2) recognize that it is the preference of Asheville City Council that any widening of I-240 through west Asheville be limited to six lanes; (3) study in the EIS for I-240 through west Asheville the options of varying cross sections for less than eight lanes; (4) as part of the EIS or other planning processes, provide for the City of Asheville possible options to reduce traffic demand in the I-26/240 corridor; and (5) minimize the future right-of-way

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purchases needed to accomplish this project so as to reduce the negative impact on the businesses and affordable housing.” He said that since the Transportation Advisory Committee will be making their recommendation to the N.C. Dept. of Transportation on June 20, 2002, he requested City Council take action on the drafted resolution at this meeting.

Each Council member explained their comments/concerns with regard to adopting the resolution, and after discussion mostly surrounding procedure, Councilman Peterson moved to waive the rules and take formal action at this meeting. This motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones. Said motion failed on a 3-3 vote, with Vice-Mayor Bellamy, Councilman Peterson and Councilwoman Jones voting “yes” and Councilman Dunn, Councilman Ellis and Councilman Mumpower voting “no.”

Councilman Mumpower felt that it might be beneficial to arrange a trip to Raleigh to visit N.C. Dept. of Transportation representatives on this very important project.

SPECIAL RETIREMENT SEPARATION ALLOWANCE PROPOSAL FOR FIREFIGHTERS

- City Manager Westbrook said that he has investigated the special retirement separation allowance proposal for firefighters that Fire Captain Mike Knisely presented at the budget public hearing on June 11, 2002. He explained the history of the Asheville Firefighter social security contribution in which they voted not to join the Social Security Retirement Plan in 1953. Referendums were held again in 1978, 1988 and 1992 and each time firefighters voted not to join the Plan. He said that City Council must approve reimbursement of the City of Asheville employer contribution prior to the State entering into an agreement to accept the firefighters under the system and the estimated cost to the

City annually would be \$500,000. If instituted, the majority of the Fire Department would have to vote in favor of joining the system and they would begin contributing 7.65% of their gross pay as the required employee match.

He said that even though an actuarial study would be necessary, a ballpark estimated cost of instituting the firefighter special separation allowance would be \$285,000. He said that if the benefit is adopted, it in no way relieves the City of responsibility to provide employer Social Security contribution if the benefit is later approved. Also, since there is no "catch-up" provision related to this benefit, based on the number of retirees within the next five to seven years, the cost of this program to the City may increase significantly.

City Manager Westbrook explained how based upon an annual salary of a firefighter upon 30-year retirement, their projected retirement earning would equate to 62% of the employee's annual gross salary.

He said that whenever a special retirement plan is set up, an actuarial study should be performed. An estimated cost would be approximately \$1-2,000.

After an investigation of the proposal and due to the current budget crisis, City Manager Westbrook recommended that the City not enter into this proposal for a special retirement separation allowance for firefighters. He stressed that firefighters are valuable City employees and have a good retirement plan, however, this supplemental but Council needs to be careful about setting a precedent in allowing allowance would make it better.

City Manager Westbrook said that he would like to look at several fringe benefits items regarding all City employees, i.e., raising the 401-K to 5%, pay and classification issues, etc.

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Fire Captain Mike Knisely spoke in support of the plan. He realized that the City is in a budget crisis, however, he explained why he felt there was a savings to the City. He said police officers receive a special separation retirement allowance, but their allowance was mandated by the State.

After discussion from Council about possible compensation to firefighters, the possibility of firefighters reconsidering joining the Social Security Retirement Plan, and if new hires can be required to join the Plan, it was the consensus of Council to have the City Manager let them know before the end of August the cost of an actuarial study and then consider this proposal again at the retreat when City Council sets it's goals and priorities.

Vice-Mayor Bellamy announced a short recess.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

It was the consensus of City Council to (1) reappoint Arlis Queen to the WNC Regional Air Quality Agency; (2) reappoint Rhett Grotzinger and Albert Anderson to the Airport Authority; (3) reappoint Jimmy Hungerford and Betty Budd to the Citizens-Police Advisory Committee and readvertise for the East, Central and North representatives; (4) reappoint Denise Goodson to the Civic Center Commission and interview Leonard Jones and Max Alexander. In addition, Kathryn Nash is to be a candidate, but no interview is necessary; (5) reappoint Leslie Hennessee to the Crime-Stoppers Board of Directors and to interview Bill McGuire; (6) readvertise for one month the vacancies on the Historic Resources Commission; and (7) reappoint Ann Babcock and Jim Drummond to the Recreation Board; and to appoint Chuck Cloninger to the Board. In addition, City Council would like to interview Christopher Barkley.

MISCELLANEOUS

Councilwoman Jones asked City Council to reconsider changing the venue of the June 25, 2002, City Council public hearing on the Super Wal-Mart conditional use permit. After discussion, Councilwoman Jones moved to suspend the rules to take formal action at this meeting to change the venue of the June 25, 2002, City Council meeting. This motion was seconded by Councilman Peterson. Said motion failed on a 3-3 vote, with Vice-Mayor Bellamy, Councilwoman Jones and Councilman Peterson voting "yes" and Councilman Dunn, Councilman Ellis and Councilman Mumpower voting "no."

Councilman Dunn asked that the City Council recognize Bob Pressley (racing icon) for his contributions in our community.

At the request of Councilman Dunn, City Manager Westbrook said that he would provide Council with a budget report showing actual expenditures through May of 2002.

ADJOURNMENT:

Vice-Mayor Bellamy adjourned the meeting at 5:41 p.m.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR