

CITY OF CHERRYVILLE
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
MONDAY MARCH 30, 2015 @ 3:00 PM
CHERRYVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT
TRAINING ROOM

Present at the meeting was the Honorable H.L. Beam III, Council Member's Brian Dalton, Malcolm Parker, Jill Puett and David Kiser. Also present was City Manager Ben Blackburn, City Clerk Paige Green, City Attorney Palmer Huffstetler Jr., Public Works Director Brandon Abernathy, Police Chief Chad Hawkins, Fire Chief Jeff Cash and EDC Director Richard Randall.

Former Mayor's Robert Austell and Jack Davis were present.

Michael Powell was present for media coverage.

The Honorable Mayor Beam called the work session meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION OR ACTION:

CONSIDERATION OF ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH ELECTRICAL UPGRADES, BRANDON ABERNATHY & SAM LOCKRIDGE:

Mr. Sam Lockridge 403 Old Post Rd. addressed the Mayor and Council sharing with them that St. John's Lutheran Church is currently doing a major renovation at the church that will include a new heating and air system and a kitchen renovation that is currently at \$400,000 and growing. The city gave the church a price on the electrical upgrade that the church would need. The cost of the new service would be \$21,750.00. Mr. Lockridge shared that just like the city the church also has a finance committee and he is at the meeting to ask some questions that they have. The committee is wanting to know why they would be responsible for paying for a new service upgrade, and also are there any credits for the old transformers that will be replaced. Brandon Abernathy shared that you can get credits on the old transformers and those prices vary. Brandon also shared that he does not see an increase in usage after the renovation because the church will be more energy efficient and little or no load will be added. Mr. Lockridge also asked the Mayor and Council to consider a recommendation from the church's finance committee for a payment plan. The payment plan would include making payments on the service upgrade over a six year period.

Former Mayor Jack Davis was present and he shared that St. John's Lutheran Church had been a good customer and he was wanting to know if Electricities offered any grants or other help that would benefit the church with the renovations. Staff will check and see.

After discussion by Mayor Council and staff this item will be placed on the April 15, 2015 City Council agenda for consideration.

METROPOLITIAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) PRESENTATION TO DISCUSS REGIONAL HIGHWAY PROJECTS, BEN BLACKBURN & BJORN HANSON:

Mr. Bjorn Hansen, Senior Transportation Planner for the Gaston, Cleveland, and Lincoln County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), was present to ask for feedback from Cherryville for the presentation to the MPO Board for the widening of Hwy. 279. Also present was David Kielson from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). Mr. Hansen gave an overview stating that the NCDOT is asking the transportation planning organization to review their candidate project lists from the previously project ranking process (SPOT 3.0) in preparation for the development of the next Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The next project ranking process will be called SPOT 4.0. The MPO can choose to add, delete, or modify projects by September 2015. MPO staff have initiated this process by evaluating the existing highway projects in the database and making recommendations on phasing or modifying the projects to increase competitiveness in the next iteration of the STIP. In several instances MPO staff have recommended removing the project from the STIP database due to a lack of demand in the near future for the project. Mr. Hansen had a presentation of maps showing SPOT 3.0 candidate projects and suggestions for SPOT 4.0 revisions. He then shared the next step for MPO members would be to review the existing projects in the SPOT database and consider a local resolution to add, delete or modify projects by the end of May in order to submit to the MPO staff for presentation to the TCC and MPO Board at their July meetings. The MPO Board will be asked at its July meeting to approve amendments to existing projects and to approve adding or deleting projects at its September meeting. Mr. Hansen explained the way the NCDOT determines the need for a project is they consider traffic counts, crash data, cost and congestion and they are not high enough on Hwy. 279 to widen it at this time. Mr. Hansen shared that Cherryville may want to look at splitting Hwy. 279 into sections and doing upgrades in phases. He shared that we could improve intersections that would not cost very much. Mr. Hansen stated that this is what was being offered because the NCDOT has to focus on congested area now and Hwy. 279 is not as congested as some other targeted areas.

Mayor Beam shared that Gaston County just allocated \$80,000 to perform a study on a western county industrial park. The study is complete but the results are not back. Mayor Beam asked if Cherryville would rank any higher if we were able to get an industrial park knowing that products would need to be moved.

Mr. Hansen shared that the state has different levels and an industrial park would not be considered at all. The MPO has a ranking process that looks at land use and development and if Hwy. 279 feeds to this industrial park they would consider it.

Former Mayor Robert Austell shared that he has spent a good bit of his life working toward getting Hwy. 279 widened and what he had to share he knows Mr. Hansen has heard it before but he is going to state it again. Mayor Austell shared that with his ten years of effort and only having missed one meeting because of heart surgery, two years as vice chairman and two years as chairman and finally having Hwy. 279 ranked as high as it can be ranked, it still does not fare well in Raleigh. Mayor Austell shared that there are several areas on Hwy. 279 that need to be taken into consideration as an exception. These areas cannot be determined by a group setting around a table coming up with a formula. Many members of the group around the table only sees what the sheet shows and have never traveled the road. Mayor Austell shared that it's one thing to have a road count but we are not able to pass on that road. Exceptions need to be taken and traffic counts can be taken but a large portion of Cherryville's traffic is driving extra miles and going through Kings Mountain and taking Hwy. 74 to Interstate 85 rather than deal with the issues on Hwy. 279. If Hwy. 279 was not like it is, the traffic count would be higher than it is today. Mayor Austell stated that the second thing he wanted to point out was there are still no places to pass. He stated that he drives that road several times a week and he has never been able to pass in the areas that have been opened up. Mayor Austell also stated that the government requires these routes for a reason and Cherryville's voice should be heard more than they are today. He thanked the gentlemen for their hard work but shared that the guys around the table are not interested in local circumstances.

Former Mayor Jack Davis shared that he was so happy when he read in the paper that the Governor was willing to help the rural areas and economic development. Mayor Davis shared that we need to complain about this because Cherryville has been trying for thirty years to get better transportation. He shared that we cannot grow or thrive without better transportation. Our manufacturing is gone, our local trucking company is gone and we cannot wait another thirty years because we cannot survive. Mayor Davis stated that he does not want to be arrogant about it but he and Mayor Austell as well as Mayor Beam have worked very hard to make this happen. Mayor Davis stated that the points system needs to be changed in order to help economic development.

City Manager Ben Blackburn shared that Hwy. 279 is our lifeline to our jobs, our families and the hospital. Mr. Blackburn shared that the young people that graduate from our high school do not come back because there is nothing to come back to. Cherryville is living off of retirement money and once that is gone what will Cherryville do. He shared that we all recognize everyone else's needs but this is literally our life line. It's a safety issue as well as an economic issue. If there is any way we can express how critical this is to officials then we need to do that because it means everything to Cherryville.

This item will be placed on the agenda for the April 13, 2015 City Council meeting.

CONSIDERATION OF HANDICAP PARKING ACCESS AT CHERRYVILLE MINI PARK, SLOAN FORTENBERRY:

Ms. Sloan Fortenberry owns Its Your Feet Plus on Main Street in the mini park. She specializes in feet, hands and skin care of senior citizens. Most of her clients are diabetics and are disabled. She has a client who is legally blind and a number of them use walkers or canes. Many clients are in their 80's and a few in their 90's and they have been citizens of Cherryville all or most of their lives. Mrs. Fortenberry also has clients that come to her from Shelby, Morganton, Lincolnton, Vale, Hickory, Charlotte, Concord and Rock Hill just to name a few. Ms. Fortenberry requested a handicap parking space be put beside her business in order for her clients to be able to access her business. She also shared that she schedules her client's appointments forty five minutes apart so the handicap spot will not be abused.

After discussion between the Mayor, Council and staff, this item will be placed on the agenda for the City Council meeting for April 13, 2015.

CONSIDERATION OF BRANDING STUDY FOR MAIN STREET PROGRAM, BEN BLACKBURN:

City Manager Ben Blackburn shared that the final steps of the branding study for Cherryville's Main Street Program will be presented at the April 13, 2015 City Council meeting.

DISCUSSION OF CEMETERY POLICY, PAIGE GREEN & BRANDON ABERNATHY:

Paige Green, City Clerk and Chairman of the Cemetery Committee addressed the Mayor and City Council with issues concerning the City Memorial Cemetery. Paige explained that at one time city employees cleaned the cemetery off twice a year, once before Christmas and again before Easter. The employees would remove any old faded flowers and any other items that were on graves and should not be. With this clean off not being done currently or in the past five or six years, things have gotten out of hand. The rules and regulations are not being followed and items that are not allowed on graves are being left on graves. Paige shared that the cleaning will start back up and wanted to make the Mayor, Council and staff aware because they may receive calls from citizens. The city will run an article in the Eagle for two weeks prior to the cleanings and it will also be posted on the website.

Paige also shared with the Mayor and Council that an area is being looked at for a columbarium. This will be discussed at the next cemetery meeting held later in April.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mayor Beam asked about the new playground equipment for Kenwood Park. Brandon Abernathy shared that the equipment is coming in but we do not have it all yet.

Mayor Beam also asked about OSHA's requirement for flame retardant clothing for our electrical employees. Brandon responded by saying that we do follow OSHA requirements and our uniforms are flame retardant. Each year the city does an arc flash study and we have been in compliance for the past four or five years. All of the uniforms that we rent from Sunshine Uniform have to meet the OSHA standards and they are replaced every two years. The city also has a written policy about uniforms and what the employees have to wear.

Mayor Beam received a letter from Tara Jones about having a Little Miss Cherryville Contest. Mayor Beam asked if the city had a policy against it. The city does not and she would need to contact Terry Fisher about rental of the Little Theater. Ms. Jones wants to hold this contest for Relay for Life. Mayor Beam will also refer her to Todd Hagans.

Mayor Beam also shared that because of time restraints the Council need to vote on the beer garden for the Cherry Blossom Festival that will be held on Friday April 17th and Saturday April 18th. Council Member Kiser made a motion to amend the agenda to vote on the contract between the City of Cherryville and the Chamber of Commerce for the sale of alcohol at the Cherry Blossom Festival. Council Member Puett seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous. Mayor Beam shared that he spoke with Council Member Dalton who had to leave the meeting early and he agreed with the beer garden and the contract. Council Member Puett made a motion to accept the contract for the beer garden and it was seconded by Kiser. Vote was unanimous.

Council Member Parker had a concern about grass that is over grown on Hwy. 150 and N. Mountain Street. He shared that the over grown grass on the sidewalks look bad and the city needs to get this cleaned up.

Council Member Kiser asked about the mowing contract for the cemetery. The bids are due in by April 6th.

Council Member Kiser also asked if a decision had been made about the planning and zoning position. City Manager Ben Blackburn shared that he has conducted four interviews and hopes to do a follow up this week. Mr. Blackburn is considering making the position part time. He is not sure that part time will work because this person also need to help with the Main Street Program. Mr. Blackburn shared that the position needs to be filled soon.

City Manager Blackburn shared that Electricities vote was favorable for restructuring but we will know more in May.

City Manager Blackburn shared that the budget work session will be held Monday April 6. He asked what time the Mayor and Council would like to meet and everyone agreed to 9:00 am.

Each department head will present their proposed budgets to the Mayor and Council on that day.

Police Chief Chad Hawkins shared that they are receiving a lot of complaints on a certain business in town and at this time the calls and complaints are civil. The police cannot do anything about a civil issue. It must become a criminal issue. Chief Hawkins assured the Mayor and Council that his department is very aware of what is going on and if they need to they will handle it.

Police Chief Hawkins also shared that Cherryville will host the Police Memorial Service this year. It will be held on May 7th at First Baptist Church at 10:30 am. A breakfast will be held for law enforcement personnel that morning from 8:00 am until 10:00 am.

Mayor Beam asked about a Proclamation that Mayor Upchurch did for Police Memorial Week. City Clerk Paige Green will get that for Mayor Beam and have it ready for him on May 7th to present to the police department.

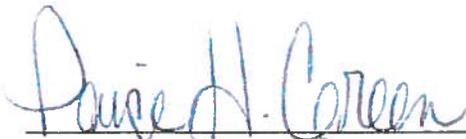
ADJOURNMENT:

Council Member Kiser made a motion to adjourn the work session meeting. Council Member Parker seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 5:40 pm.

Adopted this 13th day of April, 2015.



Mayor, H.L. Beam



City Clerk, Paige H. Green

(SEAL)

