

City of Mount Holly, North Carolina
Mount Holly City Council
Work Session
May 7, 2007
6:30 pm

The Work Session of the City Council, Mayor, and staff of the city of Mt. Holly took place on Monday, May 7, 2007, in the City Council Chambers, Mt. Holly City Hall, from 6:30 pm until 9:15 pm. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Robert Whitt and the Invocation was given by Councilman Moore.

Mayor and City Council present: Robert Whitt, David Moore, Jim Hope, Phyllis Harris, Jerry Bishop, and Pat Hubbard.

City Council member absent: Frank McLean.

Staff present: Ed Munn, Interim City Manager, Kemp Michael, City Attorney, Jamie Guffey, Assistant City Manager, Danny Jackson, Assistant City Manager, David Belk, Chief of Police, Dale Oplinger, Fire Chief, and Mike Santmire, Director of Utilities.

Guest: Robert Black, Former Mayor of Mt. Holly.

Mayor Whitt asked for any changes or additions to the agenda before the agenda was set. Mr. Munn stated that he would like to add information on Tuck Park to the agenda and that Mr. Jackson would provide this information as part of Item 4, Other Business. There were no objections.

Mayor Whitt entertained a motion to Set the Agenda with the item Tuck Park added to Item 4, Other Business. Councilperson Harris made the motion to approve the agenda as presented with Mr. Bishop seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA

1. Open Space Leadership Conference Update, presented by former Mt. Holly Mayor, Robert Black

Mr. Black stated that he and other local community leaders attended the Urban Open Space Leadership Institute in Charlotte on April 25 through April 27 at the Charlotte Community Design Studio, a branch of the College of Architecture at the University of North Carolina. The purpose of the conference was to provide local community leaders living in the 14 county Centralina region with knowledge and skills necessary for designating, financing and developing urban open space in their municipalities. He stated that one of the topics discussed at this conference was a Pedestrian Bridge. Thirteen bridge sites had been selected then narrowed to 6 sites, then to 3 sites. Most importantly, these sites, also known as sites A, B, and C are located in Mount Holly.

He stated that Mt. Holly is the only city that is within 6 miles of a river and that 8 miles of a river border Mt. Holly. Mt. Holly's Downtown is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the river. Destination spots are the most important criteria for bridges. Mr. Black stated that at this time there is no funding for this pedestrian bridge. However, this could change in the future with major donors. He informed

the Council and Mayor that on June 18, there will be a PowerPoint presentation regarding the bridge along I-85 with possible future development such as town homes, retail establishments, and restaurants. He pointed out that since a pedestrian bridge was built in Greenville, South Carolina, there has been huge economic growth in that area.

Mr. Black said he hoped the Council, Mayor, and staff would review the handout he presented and added that he would inform staff and Council about the presentation on June 18 as soon as he gets more information. Mayor Whitt stated that he would not be able to attend due to a previous commitment.

2. Status Reports

Tuck Park

Mayor Whitt asked Mr. Munn to proceed at this point of the meeting with the Status Report on the contract with W. K. Dickson regarding Tuck Park. Mr. Munn asked Mr. Jackson to begin the presentation. Mr. Jackson explained that before grading the site would occur, making the changes as reflected in the handout would be advantageous. Some of these changes included reducing the amount of parking and to use some of the savings to build a greenway, adding a 5' concrete sidewalk into the park, regrading the amphitheater area and reintroduce the pier in the river. When City Council authorizes W. K. Dickson to proceed, they will make changes to the master plan and meet with the contractor to find out if the contractor wishes to complete the job at a similar price. If the contractor is not willing to complete the job at the similar price or the bid is significantly higher, the project must be rebid since the original offer in the 90 day contract will expire May 22, 2007. Mr. Jackson said he wanted to be sure that Council and the Mayor felt comfortable moving forward with the changes as well as with a possible rebid of the project if necessary. Mayor Whitt polled Council members to see if they wished to move forward. All members were in agreement.

Brief Status Report on Audit for 2006-2007 Fiscal Year

Mr. Munn stated that the auditor the city has used for 37 years will not be doing the city audit for this year and asked Mr. Guffey to explain the procedures necessary to bring in another auditor. Mr. Guffey stated that there are about 5 local accounting firms in the area and an RFQ will be sent out to them. Staff will present their findings to Council and the Mayor. Selection will be based on fee and recommendation.

Response to Request to Water Downtown Flower Baskets

Mr. Munn stated that the city's insurance will cover volunteers watering the downtown flower baskets. This is a small matter but hoped that Council and Mayor could arrive at some guidelines regarding watering downtown flower baskets.

Mayor Whitt hoped that this issue can be solved at this meeting and asked members to give their thoughts on this matter.

Councilman Bishop was concerned about burdening city staff with watering or asking for more personnel to do this type of work. Volunteers can use all the water they want but not the city gator since it is city equipment.

Ms. Hubbard agreed that city employee time shouldn't be use for this activity. Looking back, irrigation methods would have been better but too costly.

Mr. Moore stated that the Mt. Holly Community Development Foundation does a lot for the city and he wanted to keep the good relationship that presently exists between them and the city. He also felt that city employees should not be responsible for watering the plants because the Foundation has many volunteers, like himself, and the job can be handled by volunteers. He was concerned about the use of the gator by the volunteers since it is city equipment.

Mr. Hope asked Mr. Santmire how much time and manpower would be involved to take down these plants and store them? Mr. Santmire said it would take about an hour to take them all down and he could do it himself. Mr. Hope felt that there should be a line item in the beautification budget to cover this activity and if there is a city policy about the use of city equipment by others, the policy should be laid out. He felt that watering should be voluntary and that it would be alright for the Foundation to use the gator as long as it complies with the city's insurance policy requirements and policy.

Ms. Harris said that the Foundation has 200 members. They want something to do. They need to do the same job they did last year and not ask for the gator. Ms. Harris said that if we let the Foundation use the gator, perhaps other groups would like to use it as well and she felt that would create a problem.

Mr. Black added that last year was a learning experience for the Foundation. He felt that the Foundation has plenty of volunteers to put up and take down the plants as well as water them.

After further discussion and consensus, Mayor Whitt asked Mr. Munn to let the Foundation know that the gator is not available for their use since it is not covered under city policy for them to use and that the Foundation is encouraged to put up and take down the plants and water them. In addition, city employees who wish to volunteer after work hours to help water do so without any compensation.

Linear Park Contract from Greenways, Inc.

Mr. Munn said that the original contract totals \$39,000 for the Linear Park from downtown to the river. Attached to that is \$5,600 for the Civil Engineering firm from Mooresville for the pedestrian bridge and this item will be put on the consent agenda.

3. Review of the Budget

Mr. Munn made a few comments about the Budget. Mt. Holly has had a very successful capital improvements program. Operating budget takes the pressure from the Capital Budget. As we sell property, it will help us by replenishing our capital position but it won't help the operating budget.

The Budget this year doesn't solve ambulance service. There is a change in Code Enforcement in that it will relieve the police officer who presently performs code enforcement duties and puts that officer back into police duty. A full time code enforcement officer will be hired.

Mr. Munn continued by stating that there is pressure on Mt. Holly because we are annexing and growing. At some point in time you can't stretch present personnel to handle the future annexation and growth needs. Mr. Munn stated that he already cut 1.1 million out of the budget.

There has been an increase in HR costs of \$336,000 for salaries, health insurance, retirement, etc. Mr. Munn stated that if you want to cut the budget, you can cut personnel or look to the capital projects.

Mr. Munn stated that we balanced the budget by cutting it 1.1 million dollars from it and by putting an extra penny in the Capital Reserve for projects like Whitewater payment. For utility funds – rates are not to be increased at this time but with multimillion dollar projects like the water tank and land purchase, there will be a distinct possibility of rate increases. Projects like piping would come out of the General Fund. There is no money for transportation to widen roads or improve intersections. As we grow, there will be more serious transportation needs.

Mayor Whitt asked Mr. Munn and members where they think the tax rate should be? Ms. Hubbard thought that the tax rate should not be lowered. Ms. Harris agreed. Mr. Moore agreed. Mr. Bishop thought it could be lowered a penny.

Mayor Whitt wondered how can city absorb a \$70,000 medical insurance cost increase? Mr. Munn said that in talking with other cities, a 5% increase or more is common. Mr. Guffey added that because there is an increase of 21% in health insurance costs, our city employees will have pay more for dependent coverage to offset this increase. Mr. Munn said that all cities wrestle with this. For the employee, there is an erosion of benefits such as higher copays and deductibles. The city of Charlotte puts more money into wages and less in benefits. Some towns use benefits to recruit such as offering 100% dependent coverage. Mr. Hope asked if we would benefit from being in a state pool? Mr. Guffey said the costs have been too high but we are getting a quote from them nonetheless this year as well as around five quotes from various insurance companies to compare rates this year.

Mayor Whitt asked Mr. Munn to work on a policy for dependent coverage. He asked that Whitewater needs to be addressed in an account. Mr. Munn stated that one penny of the tax base has been placed in the Capital Reserve for such instances.

Mr. Munn stated that there is no budget for Archives and added that we need to safeguard archived items as we move into the other building. We can partner with the library.

Mr. Guffey stated that city employee uniforms were severely under-budgeted last year and this year we have made up for it.

Mr. Hope felt that the Rotary Dues for \$4,000 in the budget could be cut.

Mr. Guffey informed Council that the IRS will treat City Council as employees with FICA and Medicare taxes taken out of their pay.

Mr. Munn said that vehicle fleets and equipment must be purchased every year because it can catch up with the city later as equipment degrades. Mayor Whitt asked if 6 police vehicles purchased in a year is a large number of purchases? Mr. Bishop stated that we used to buy 4 police vehicles a year. Mayor Whitt asked Council to consider buying these at one time or spreading these purchases out. Mr. Munn said we could put priorities on this equipment and he felt that \$80,000 could be spent on equipment at this time.

For Special Events budget, there will be a dedication of the new building and Streetscape. Mr. Harris added that other events are Alive after 5, the Senior Dinner, Miss Mount Holly pageant, and the Christmas Parade. Mr. Guffey added that there was \$20,000 in city costs for Spring Fest.

Mayor Whitt suggested that at the next budget meeting, line by line review would be the best. He will not be at this meeting on Thursday due to a previous commitment.

4. Other Business

Ms. Harris said that she and Mr. Jackson will be going to a meeting on Friday with the Police Department regarding activities at the river such as a river float starting at River Street Park.

Mr. Hope stated that we need a handicapped parking spot outside city hall.

Mr. Moore stated that the new banners we ordered cost us nothing due to the original order being cut incorrectly and we can keep this set free of charge.


Mr. Moore asked about the new stop lights status. Mr. Munn stated that he is working on a schedule with NCDOT, the subcontractor, and Duke Power to move some poles. He added that we need to know how much money we are holding for this project and how much more we need and this information will be known at the next Council meeting.

Mayor Whitt stated that the City Fest Committee Chairman and Committee would be honored sometime in June.

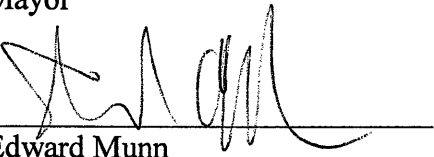
5. Adjournment

There being no other business to discuss at this time, Ms. Hubbard made a motion to adjourn with Mr. Moore seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.



Robert Whitt
Mayor



Edward Munn
Interim City Manager

Cass Roberts
Secretary

City of Mount Holly
CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
MOUNT HOLLY CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, May 14, 2007
City Hall
7:00 pm

Call to Order

Mayor Robert Whitt called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. The following were present:

Mayor Robert Whitt
Mayor Pro-Tem Phyllis Harris
Councilman David Moore
Councilman Jerry Bishop
Councilman Jim Hope
Councilwoman Pat Hubbard
Councilman Frank McLean

Ed Munn, Interim City Manager
Jamie Guffey, Assistant City Manager
Greg Beal, Planner
David Belk, Police Chief
Dale Oplinger, Fire Chief
Kemp Michael, City Attorney

Invocation

The invocation was led by Reverend Joe Mullins, Pastor of the Grace Baptist Church.

Pledge of Allegiance

Boy Scout Troop 59 of the 1st United Methodist Church led the Council and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Presentation

A Proclamation for the East Gaston High School Wrestling Team was read by Mayor Whitt. Council members and the Mayor congratulated team members on their fine records.

Consent Agenda

Motion: Councilperson Hubbard made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented and Councilman Moore seconded the motion and the motion was passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Mayor Whitt stated that Ms. Charlene Wooten had signed up to speak under the Public Comment period but at this time, she was not present. He added that if Ms. Wooten arrives later in the meeting, he would consider giving her time for public comment regarding Dixie Youth Baseball. Mayor asked members of the audience if any of them wished to speak to please sign in. No one else signed up to speak.

Consent Agenda #1: To accept and approve the minutes from March 6, March 12, April 3, and April 9, 2007 as presented.