

MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL RETREAT
January 22, 2011

The Winchester Common Council Retreat was held on Saturday, January 22, 2011 in the Staff Development Room, Winchester Public School Administration Building. President Buettner called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Elizabeth Minor; President Jeff Buettner, Vice-President Art Major, Vice-Mayor Milt McInturff, and Councilors Evan Clark, John Hill, John Tagnesi, Les Veach and John Willingham (9)

ABSENT: None (0)

STAFF: City Manager James O'Connor, City Attorney Anthony Williams, Deputy Clerk of Council Kari Van Diest, Finance Director Mary Blowe, Planning Director Tim Youmans, and Assistant Public Services Director Tom Hoy

ITEMS OF DISCUSSION

Budget Update

Finance Director Mary Blowe presented a summary of the current budget and a history of fund balance and expenditures. She stated the city should end the year positive with approximately \$250,000 and without spending reserves on operations.

Council requested quarterly updates on Finance at the Work Sessions.

Further discussion centered on the possibility of having to increase real estate taxes 24% if the state cuts BPOL and Machines taxes, replenishing reserves, and maintaining equipment and infrastructure.

Council requested a report on how outside agencies fit into the Mission Statement.

A discussion was held concerning the John Kerr Elementary project and the possible needs at Frederick Douglas Elementary with over crowding.

Council requested a facilities update be given by the Schools at a Work Session.

Staff is looking at a neutral tax rate, holding on department spending, and leveling off schools for this budget cycle.

Mission Statement Discussion

- To provide a safe, vibrant, sustainable community while striving to constantly improve the quality of life for our citizens and economic partners

No changes were made to the Mission Statement.

Organizational Structure

City Manager Jim O'Connor presented the Organization Chart and explained the communications between departments. He also explained how marketing is used in all departments.

Council requested a process for delivering information on programs to customers in the Planning Department, updates on action items be given at meetings and notification when something bad is happening or has happened.

Appointment to Committees/Boards

Council reviewed the liaison positions and meetings that each one would attend and requested a tour of the Landfill and other off site facilities.

A discussion regarding the policy and process for appointments to the City's boards and commissions resulted in the following changes:

- Same policy across the board
- Nominations to be discussed in executive session
- Deputy Clerk to schedule interviews
- Liaison of the board to be on interview panel
- Report from liaison or board chair on reappointments
- Rejection letter signed by Mayor
- Boards to present updates at Work Sessions
- Liaisons to present update at Work Sessions on quarterly basis

It was also decided that term limits would not be put into an ordinance to provide the option to review on a case by case basis.

IT Issues and Improvements

A brief discussion on improving IT issues included updating the website, providing form completion online, providing credit card payments for taxes and online payments, and providing electronic withdrawals and statements.

Council discussed the possibility of having a consultant review the IT Department and structure for improvements including the possibility of consolidation with the Schools and a 3-5 year projection of what needs to be done.

Council also discussed electronic meetings, personal and city email addresses and tablets for meetings. (e.g.: iPads)

Communications between Council, To Council, Council to City Manager, and City Manager to Staff

- What would you like me to start doing?
- What would you like me to stop doing?
- What would you like me to keep doing?

Council discussed the need for communication to flow up and down. In the past, they have given direction to the city manager but have not heard back. Council would like to hear staff's ideas and the back ground for their recommendations.

Having a Second Work Session

After a brief discussion, Council decided to add a second work session each month to be held on the third Tuesday and to change the start time of both work sessions to 6:00 p.m.

Agenda Management

Council requested the agenda packets for the regular meeting and the work sessions to be distributed on Thursday of the prior week. Staff will reset deadlines for items to ensure accuracy and to give time for the City Attorney to review each item.

EDA and the Promotion of Economic Tools Available (TIF, Tax Credits, Etc)

Council requested a presentation on the EDA tools available and where they are best used. Economic Redevelopment Director Jim Deskins will prepare a synopsis of what and where tools have been used.

Council would like to receive consistent updates on EDA items with data at the work sessions.

Use of a Public Relations firm to Ensure the Message gets to the Public

A discussion was held on the possibility of having an in-house or outside Public Relations Firm to get our information out and to self-promote. This group would also help to have more controlled or crafted press releases and to use the best method to reach more people effectively.

The option of putting information on Utility Bills and conducting another citizen's survey were discussed.

Need for Events Coordinator

Council discussed the need for a facility and a location to have events in the downtown area to build our city and differentiate Winchester from others even if it takes some capital investment.

It was decided a RFP would be sent out to explore the cost.

Public Safety Priorities

It was discussed that the Fire and Rescue Department continues to hire more staff to meet the NFPA standards and to be less reliant on volunteers.

Goal Setting

5 Goals Discussed by Council Last January:

- Improvement of median family income
- Improvement in education for graduation rates, job readiness, GED rate and Adult Education
- Improvement in Economic Development in job creation, sales tax revenue, and average salary
- Police to maintain high level of satisfaction
- Fire to meet NFPA standards

Council requested data on the current median income level.

Council also requested quarterly feedback on the status of the goals, what is or is not working, and ways to prevent going in the wrong direction.

Council requested to have regular reports from the Chief of Police including his idea of a flex team to work in hot spots. Council also expressed their concern with traffic enforcement and police presence in downtown at night.

Council set the following two additional goals:

- Make the downtown the “It Spot in Virginia” – increase residency and decrease vacancies
- Commitment to infrastructure – want to keep moving forward, expect rate increases

Executive Session

MOTION TO CONVENE IN EXECUTIVE SESSION PURSUANT TO §2.2-3711 (A)(1) OF THE CODE OF VIRGINIA FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION OF A PERSONNEL ISSUE RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING SUBJECT MATTER: ASSIGNMENTS, APPOINTMENTS, PROMOTION, PERFORMANCE, AND SALARIES OF SPECIFIC EMPLOYEES OF THE CITY OF WINCHESTER.

Council convened in executive session at 2:10 p.m.

Upon returning, each member certified that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act were discussed during the closed meeting, and that only those public business matters identified in the motion which convened the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered during the closed meeting.

A roll call vote was taken, the ayes and nays being recorded as shown below:

| MEMBER | VOTE |
|----------------------|------|
| President Buettner | Aye |
| Councilor Clark | Aye |
| Councilor Hill | Aye |
| Councilor Major | Aye |
| Councilor McInturff | Aye |
| Mayor Minor | Aye |
| Councilor Tagnesi | Aye |
| Councilor Veach | Aye |
| Councilor Willingham | Aye |

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, President Buettner adjourned the meeting.

Kari J. Van Diest
Deputy Clerk of the Common Council