

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
November 15, 2011
City Council Chambers – Rouss City Hall**

PRESENT: President Jeff Buettner; Councilor Evan Clark, John Hill, John Tagnesi and Les Veach; Vice-President Art Major; Vice-Mayor Milt McInturff (6)
ABSENT: Councilor John Willingham; Mayor Elizabeth Minor (2)

President Buettner called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Items for Discussion:

Eat for Education – Mary Blowe

Finance Director Mary Blowe presented a brief review of the proposal for the Eat for Education program previously presented in September. She asked for feedback on the program and offered to answer any questions.

Councilor Veach asked when the last meals tax increase was. Ms. Blowe stated the meals tax increased from 4% to 5% on July 1, 2004. Councilor Veach asked what the median tax rate for cities in Virginia is. Ms. Blowe stated the median rate is 5.5%. Councilor Veach stated he fully supports education and would love to do something but he is worried about the timing in this economy. He suggested the doing the full 2% or a tiered option that increased by ½% each year.

Vice-Mayor McInturff agreed. He stated some of the concerns he has is he wants to be careful the School Board doesn't create a situation in their own budget that Council will need to fund if this doesn't work. If it goes forward, he would like to see a more enthusiastic effort on the School Board to market this in the right way with parent involvement, hiring a marketing firm, and marketing it to restaurants. From a marketing standpoint, the program needs to be sold to the general public and the citizens. One bonus is anyone coming in from other areas will also be supporting the Winchester schools.

Councilor Clark stated he definitely wants to pursue this item. Education is a top priority that people consider when they move. This would not change his position in eating out at all.

Councilor Tagnesi stated the AARP just named Winchester as one of the top 5 places to retire because of the low tax structure. He suggested delaying it until the economy gets better.

President Buettner stated Council did Handley High School when the economy was better and got criticized for using property taxes to do it. Council does not have to do

2%. At 0.5%, it is half a million dollars which is a lot of money. Doing a gradual increase over a number of years still adds money to the school system. You can keep a low tax rate but you can't keep it so low that you can't fix sidewalks and make improvements. Council needs to be concerned about where the tax rate is but it also has an obligation to the taxpayers. One thing that defines a community is an excellent school system. If you do not have an excellent school system, there will be a lot of people not coming for that reason. He would be in favor of a graduated tax rate.

Councilor Hill stated he agrees with what has been said but he questions why the city is using Roanoke as a comparable city. He thinks about those who would like to go to the restaurants in the city but can't and may turn to those in the county. He wants to support the school system but would like to find a different way. He would look at this again if the economy turns around but right now, he is concerned with what the restaurant owners think and if they will lose business.

Vice-President Major stated everyone has made great points. Council was supposed to come up with the parameters at the last work session. The major points are to come up with a marketing plan and to look at the options of a 2% or a graduated increase. He would not favor anything that is permanent. Council has been very vocal on career programs and he would not support anything that would go into the schools general fund. As the economy gets better, there will be more money to distribute to departments and to the school system.

Councilor Clark stated people criticized Council when the cigarette tax increase was discussed. He asked Ms. Blowe if the cigarette sales have decreased in Winchester and how much revenue has been seen since the increase. Ms. Blowe stated we are pretty much on budget as projected. There was a slight dip in sales at first but it is now on budget.

Vice-Mayor McInturff stated we are in an economy where everyone is watching their dollars spent. As the economy gets better, it will increase on its own as more go out to eat.

Councilor Veach stated Council asked the school system to focus on Career Training and they have done a great job. We need to support funding for that but he would also like to see it go to teacher salaries.

President Buettner asked for the item to be placed on the January 3rd Ad Hoc Committee meeting agenda for discussion.

FY13 Budget Overview

Interim City Manager Craig Gerhart stated in many respects, it is way too early to start talking about the 2013 budget. Staff has not received information back from the outside agencies for their requests. To begin the conversation, staff would like to present a new summary sheet, the budget calendar and some preliminary numbers.

Finance Director Mary Blowe gave a summary of the preliminary budget number.

Assistant Finance Director Celeste Broadstreet presented a summary sheet completed by the Police Department as a draft of the proposed budget documents. She stated the documents show Council's goals and how each department works toward getting those accomplished. She asked Council for feedback on the document and asked if there is something more they would like to see included.

Councilor Tagnesi asked if a proposed budget amount or estimated price associated with a strategy would be included on the documents. Mr. Gerhart stated if additional funds are recommended, it would be included.

R-2011-55: Resolution – Adoption of the 2011 Winchester Transit Development Plan

Utilities Director Perry Eisenach presented the WinTran Transit Development Plan. He stated adoption of the plan is required from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation. However, it does not commit Council to the recommendations or expenditures in the plan. The plan recommends changing some of the routes some of which have already been implemented, possible expansion of service into the county, extending hours of service, more passenger amenities, a new transit administration building and to hire an operation supervisor to help with day to day operations.

Mayor Elizabeth Minor arrived at 6:40 p.m.

Mr. Eisenach presented a summary of the current funding for the Transit Department – 50% Federal, 15-20% State, and 30-35% City.

Councilor Hill asked if there was interest in transportation on Sundays. Transit Director Renee Wells stated the survey showed a slight interest in service on Sundays but there was more interest in extending the Saturday routes. Ms. Wells also explained the changes to the northern routes.

Councilor Veach asked how the funding is divided per bus. Ms. Wells stated the funding is broken into 80% Federal, 10% State, and 10% City.

Vice-President Major moved to forward R-2011-55 to Council. *The motion was seconded by Councilor Veach then approved 8/0.*

Report of Liaisons

Vice-Mayor McInturff reported on the following:

- Communications Committee – the city has assumed control of Channel 20. The guide will show it as the City of Winchester Communication Channel.
- IT Committee – the city has received 3 responses on the RFP for the assessment and to create a plan. The responses were distributed today for review and ranking. The presentations will be the first part of December.

- Parks & Rec – the board is discussing the donation of a small parcel of land along Jubal Early Drive and the consideration of a naming rights policy for when naming a facility. There is one vacancy on the board due to the resignation of Susan Roberts.
- LEPC – the commission held its bi-monthly meeting in October and discussed the early winter storm, the CERT, and upcoming events with NIMS and CERT 100 which is individual preparedness.

Councilor Tagnesi stated the Planning Commission is losing 2 members in December.

Vice-President Major stated he attended the first RFP meeting for the wide band communications. Staff did a great job on the RFP. The RFP is asking for 4 different systems with interoperability with Frederick County.

Councilor Veach stated he attended the School Board meeting last night and a Personnel Committee meeting today. The next Ad Hoc Committee meeting is January 3rd. The State is requiring a teacher evaluation be in place by July 1st.

Vice-Mayor McInturff stated the first TRC meeting with Shenandoah University is this Thursday.

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, EVALUATION, AND CONSIDERATION REGARDING THE SUBJECT OF APPOINTMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF SPECIFIC PUBLIC OFFICERS AND APPOINTEES OF THE GOVERNING BODY INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO COUNCIL-APPOINTED BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS WHERE SUCH ACTION WILL NECESSARILY INVOLVE THE DISCUSSION OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS AND PURSUANT TO §2.2-3711(A)(3) OF THE CODE OF VIRGINIA FOR PURPOSE OF CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL REGARDING SPECIFIC LEGAL MATTERS AND TO RECEIVE LEGAL ADVICE AND STATUS UPDATE ON MATTERS OF PROBABLE AND PENDING LITIGATION AND PURSUANT TO §2.2-3711(A)(3) AND (6) FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSION OR CONSIDERATION OF THE SUBJECT OF THE DISPOSITION OF AN INTEREST IN REAL PROPERTY FOR A PUBLIC PURPOSE AND FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSION OF THE SUBJECT OF INVESTMENT OF PUBLIC FUNDS WHERE BARGAINING IS INVOLVED, AND WHERE IF MADE PUBLIC, THE BARGAINING POSITION OR FINANCIAL INTEREST OF THE CITY WOULD BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED.

Vice-President Major moved to convene into executive session at 6:53 p.m. *The motion was seconded by Councilor Tagnesi then approved 8/0.*

Mayor Minor moved to reconvene in open session at 7:48 p.m. *The motion was seconded by Councilor Veach then approved 8/0.*

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:

<u>MEMBER</u>	<u>VOTE</u>
President Buettner	Aye
Councilor Clark	Aye
Councilor Hill	Aye
Vice-President Major	Aye
Vice-Mayor McInturff	Aye
Mayor Minor	Aye
Councilor Tagnesi	Aye
Councilor Veach	Aye
Councilor Willingham	Absent

Submitted Written Reports

Fire & Rescue Department
Police Department

Adjourn

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.