



MINUTES

August 26, 2020

SPECIAL CALL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

ASSEMBLY ROOM - OPERATIONS CENTER | 305 WILLIAMS ST. 4:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Barbara G. Volk, Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Smith, Council Members: Jeff Miller, Dr. Jennifer Hensley, and Lyndsey Simpson

Staff Present: City Manager John F. Connet, City Attorney Sam Fritschner, Angela Beeker, Assistant City Manager Brian Pahle, City Clerk Angela Reece, Communications Manager Allison Nock, Interim Chief of Police Bill Hollingsed

1. Consideration of Agenda

Mayor Volk requested to add a short presentation by Burntshirt Vineyards.

Council Member Jeff Miller moved that City Council approve the agenda as amended. A unanimous vote of the Council followed. Motion carried.

2. Ratification of Interim Police Chief Contract - Presenter: John Connet, City Manager

City Manager John Connet introduced Bill Hollingsed to City Council. Mr. Hollingsed is a retired Chief of Police from the Town of Waynesville, NC and has been selected to serve as Interim Police Chief for the City until a replacement is selected. City Council welcomed Chief Hollingsed.

Council Member Jeff Miller moved that City Council approve the resolution to ratify the employment agreement for the appointment of an Interim Police Chief for the City of Hendersonville. A unanimous vote of the Council followed. Motion carried.

Resolution #20-0568

RESOLUTION BY THE CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE CITY COUNCIL TO RATIFY AN EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERIM POLICE CHIEF FOR THE CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE

WHEREAS, the position of police chief became vacant at the close of business on August 24, 2020; and;

WHEREAS, it was in the best interest of the Police Department for the City Manager to appoint an Interim City Police Chief as soon as possible to provide continuity for the Department; and

WHEREAS, the City Manager has signed an employment agreement to appoint William Hollingsed as Interim Police Chief, a copy of which is attached to this Resolution as Exhibit A; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Council wish to ratify the actions taken by the City Manager;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA that:

1. The Employment Agreement, attached hereto as Exhibit A and incorporated herein by reference, is specifically ratified and approved by the Mayor and City Council retroactively, the intent being that the Employment Agreement be in full force and effect as if approved by the Mayor and City Council on the date it was signed by the City Manager.
2. All actions taken in furtherance of the purposes of the Employment Agreement by the City Manager, City Attorney, and City Staff are hereby ratified and approved.
3. The City Manager, City Attorney, and City Staff are authorized to take such other actions as may be necessary to carry out the terms and provisions of the Employment Agreement.

Adopted by the City Council of the City of Hendersonville, North Carolina on this 28th day of August 2020.

/s/Barbara G. Volk, Mayor

Attest: /s/Angela L. Reece, City Clerk

Approved as to form: /s/Angela S. Beeker, City Attorney

Exhibit A, Interim Police Chief is omitted from these minutes but is attached to the resolution on file with the City Clerk.

3. Presentations

A. Burnshirt Vineyards

Sandra Oates, Owner, and Dereck Frost, Wine Maker of Burntshirt Vineyards presented a new wine in honor of the City of Four Seasons which will be available to the public to purchase on Labor Day weekend.

B. Family and Medical Leave - *Presenter: Lyndsey Simpson, City Council Member*

Council Member Lyndsey Simpson presented information on expanding paid family and medical leave to City Council. Council Member Simpson presented quick facts stating inclusive paid family leave can help close the gender wage gap, reduce costly turnover, and improve productivity in the workforce. Council Member Simpson stated this is different than the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) in that FMLA entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave. Council Member Simpson further clarified that employee sick days are for short absences from work due to illness, whereas paid family leave would be for longer absences from work due to the birth of a child, an employees own serious health issue, or to care for an ill family member or loved one. Council Member Simpson stated a successful policy would apply to all employees and all parents (birth, adoptive, and foster); would allow 12 weeks of parental and 6 weeks of FMLA; and would be easily accessible. Council Member Simpson outlined the potential savings and costs associated with this type of program and discussed the City's current leave policies.

Council Member Jerry Smith clarified that the City of Durham currently has this policy in place.

City Manager John Connet stated the City currently has employees who take FMLA for a variety of illnesses and said this is tracked by HR and clarified the intent would be to cover a consistent long term event and said there would need to be checks and balances put in place.

Council Member Jeff Miller stated he is interested in looking into it but cautioned there will be a cost for implementation. Council Member Dr. Jennifer Hensley agreed with Council Member Miller and expressed concern for additional tax burden on citizens.

Council Member Simpson stated she agreed with cost concerns but stated this would be an employee benefit and recruitment tool. Council Member Jerry Smith agreed with Council Member Simpson stating this benefit would be particularly useful for employees who are now taking care of aging parents along with their children.

City Manager Connet clarified any new policy could be implemented along with the next budget cycle.

Council Members directed staff to pursue policy options and bring back recommendations to City Council.

4. Discussion

A. Diversity Initiatives / BLM - *Presenter: John Connet, City Manager*

City Manager Connet discussed events that have occurred over the last few months stemming from the death of George Floyd (Minnesota) and said there is a movement to celebrate and understand diversity in Henderson County. Manager Connet recalled various gatherings or meetings held individually by the Mayor, Chief Blake, and Council Members Miller and Simpson to discuss racial tension and opportunities to celebrate diversity with other community stakeholders.

Manager Connet stated there are several proposals including the following: painting a Black Lives Matter (BLM) Mural on Main Street or 7th Ave; establishing an African American Culture Center; erecting a larger sign for Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard; enlarging or moving Martin Luther King Jr. Park; replacing the wooden Green Meadows Community sign with more permeant brick monument signs; placing Black Lives Matter Banners on railroad crossing on 7th Ave; hosting African American history events during February; creating an African American history exhibit for the Heritage Museum; creating an African American history exhibit for City Hall; creating a historical marker explaining the history of Brooklyn community; displaying history of the Brooklyn community in the new Police Headquarters; and erecting a monument to honor slaves within our community.

Manager Connet requested direction of how staff should vet the ideas and costs associated with implementation of various requests in an equitable fashion when dealing with public infrastructure and posed the following questions to City Council:

- What role should the City play in the implementation of these ideas? (We still must adhere to the restrictions of spending taxpayer money on items that are not considered a public purpose.)
- Will they be privately funded?
- Who speaks for the Hendersonville African American community?
- Which items should we work on first and how much staff time do you want devoted to these initiatives?
- Do you want staff to start putting some of these items in the Capital Improvement Program?
- How are these initiatives vetted by the community or City Council?
- Should other ethnic groups be included?

Manager Connet posed the following suggestions:

- City Council establish a diverse ad hoc committee to discuss how to celebrate and understand diversity in our community. This group will make recommendations to City Council on projects or events.
- Direct staff to develop a list of low-hanging fruit that can be implemented in accordance with the North Carolina General Statutes.
- Develop a vision or value statement that recognizes the City's commitment to improve the lives of all citizens.
- Discuss how the City Council wants to move forward.

Manager Connet provided the following list of historic actions taken by the City that he believes shows commitment to improving the lives of all citizens:

- Council Conversations in all areas of the City
- New playground and bathrooms at Sullivan Park
- 7th Avenue improvements
- Partnership with Housing Assistance Corporation (i.e. Oklawaha Village and Gravel Street)
- Creation of Homeless Coalition
- Ashe Street Neighborhood Improvements
- Donation of land to Henderson County Boys and Girls Club
- Special Appropriation Funding (i.e. Apple Country Transit, IAM and various non-profits)

Mayor Barbara G. Volk and Council Member Jeff Miller have formed an unofficial advisory committee consisting of African American stakeholders and constituents in the community. Council Member Jeff Miller stated the meetings have been productive and said the African American community has been very productive and open. Council Member Miller further stated he believes the African American community needs to have a designated person of whom they feel comfortable speaking with. Council Member Miller said he has spoken with the City Manager and suggested this may be better served through a staff position with the City who would be able to advise Council and speak with department heads about the issues. City Manager Connet stated it is important to have diversity and inclusion and to keep policies in check and said typically those positions are in the HR department. Council Member Miller said having a committee is critical to establish relationships with the African American Community.

Council Member Dr. Jennifer Hensley praised the City Council members for forming an unofficial committee and establishing trust with the African American community. Council Member Hensley stated she wanted to make sure there will be a positive life-long change beginning with children in the community and reminded everyone that that children are oftentimes taught racism. Council Member Hensley stated increasing outreach to children through education such as a museum would create a positive impact to the community.

Council Member Lyndsey Simpson stated she supports the idea of a new position with the City so that the change may be long lasting and impactful. Council Member Simpson discussed implementation of smaller projects but said she was more in favor of a staff position and praised fellow council members for outreach and conversations.

Council Member Jerry Smith stated whatever we can do as a City that will allow people to come together and communicate learn about each other will certainly benefit many generations. Council Member Smith stated he believes it is historically appropriate to recognize the sacrifices that slaves have made and

proposed that the City create a monument to be placed on City Hall property. Council Member Dr. Hensley stated she wanted to be inclusive of the African American community’s opinions regarding this proposal.


Council Member Jeff Miller stated he spoke with the informal advisory committee members who indicated support of a staff person to address diversity and inclusion issues in the City. City Council agreed and directed Manager Connet to provide information to Council for a coordinator position.

5. Staff Update

B. Downtown Parking Deck- *Presenter: Brian Pahle, Assistant City Manager*

Assistant City Manager, Brian Pahle addressed City Council regarding the downtown parking deck project reviewing the terms and budget. Assistant Manager Pahle stated the City has closed on one property and has the option to close on second property in December of this year. He discussed the timeframe for project construction stating bidding would begin in January or February 2021 with construction completion in 2022, which is when parking meters would be turned on. Assistant Manager Pahle provided preliminary renderings to City Council and said he will provide additional information along with community input and additional design impact on budget soon. Manager Pahle reminded City Council the Dark Sky Initiative has been incorporated into design.

Assistant Manager Pahle discussed early schematic design estimates and budget impacts and stated we are about \$800,000 over budget at this point and said staff and project engineers and architects have identified some elements that can be removed from the design to reduce costs as outlined below.



Hendersonville Downtown Parking Deck
5th Avenue West and North Church Street
Hendersonville, NC

Schematic Design
Summary
7/30/2020

Assistant Manager Pahle stated even with proposed value engineering cost reductions and projected parking meter revenues the project will still be approximately \$130,000 short. Assistant Manager Pahle stressed these are estimates and asked direction from Council to determine next steps.

Council Member Jeff Miller stated he was comfortable allowing staff to make value engineering decisions for project cost effectiveness and suggested bringing any major decisions back to City Council. City Council Members agreed and expressed a desire to keep the parking fees below \$2.00.

City Manager Connet stated staff will work with the construction manager to reduce costs and keep the project within the budget. Council Member Lyndsey Simpson asked to keep in mind any sustainability measures.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:28 p.m. upon unanimous assent of the Council.

ATTEST:

Barbara G. Volk, Mayor

Angela L. Reece, City Clerk