

**February 13, 2015**  
**Special Meeting of the City Council**  
**Fire Station 2, Sugarloaf Rd.**  
**8:00 a.m.**

Present: Mayor Barbara G. Volk, Mayor Pro Tem Ron Stephens and Council Members: Steve Caraker, Jerry Smith and Jeff Miller

Staff Present: City Attorney Sam Fritschner, City Clerk Tammie Drake, Planning Director Sue Anderson, Police Chief Herbert Blake, Engineering Director Brent Detwiler, Zoning Administrator Susan Frady, Fire Chief Dorian Flowers, Public Information Officer Tara Ledbetter, Utilities Director Lee Smith, Finance Director Lisa White, Public Works Director Tom Wooten

Others Present: Several members of the Seventh Avenue Advisory Board and the Downtown Advisory Committee

Facilitators: Erica Anderson, Danna Stansberry

Mayor Volk called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Mr. Connet welcomed those in attendance. He introduced the facilitators from the Land-of-Sky Regional Council: Erica Anderson, Danna Stansberry. Five members in attendance established a quorum. Ms. Erica Anderson reviewed the ground rules for the meeting including keeping the participants on schedule.

### **1. Project Updates:**

**A. Seventh Avenue Update and Future Plans:** Mr. Connet provided an update stating the City Council formed the Seventh Avenue Advisory Committee (SAAC) and the non-profit still exists. He reported the Downtown Advisory Committee (DAC) will hold a joint meeting with the SAAC and begin discussions of joint work plans. The SAAC will begin following the Main Street four-point process.

Mr. Connet reported the SAAC has been discussing the streetscape proposal, off-street parking and is working with the School of Government's report as far as economic restructuring and how to improve the district. The SAAC has been studying the expansion of the Municipal Services District in phases and would like to move forward with Phase I (Locust and Ashe Street area). There is presently not a timetable for future phases.

*MSD Expansion Discussion:* There was discussion from various members of the SAAC regarding the study by the School of Government and the proposed urban redevelopment area. Council Member Miller expressed reservations about condemning any property for redevelopment purposes. Council Member Caraker voiced many property owners are in favor of the MSD expansion because of extra services provided.

**Consensus: The Council agreed by consensus is to move forward with Phase 1 of the Seventh Avenue MSD expansion.**

*Incentives:* There was a suggestion made and discussion of a tax rebate program for property owners who reinvest in their property and increase its value. The suggestion was for the rebate of taxes applied to the increased value of the property over five or more years, e.g., a five-year rebate with a declining amount over the following six to seven years.

**B. Seventh Avenue Parking:** Council Member Caraker reported he has spoken to property owners of two parcels for a possible land lease for parking and/or greenspace and a mural. He stated it appears the property owners are excited to work with the City and he has heard a lot of support for off-street parking. Mr. Dunlap suggested acquiring leased parking for business owners that would be a means of additional revenue for the City and would solve parking needs on the upper end of Seventh Avenue. Council Member Miller agreed stating many business owners agree the most important issue to resolve is parking.

Council Member Miller relayed the support of some business owners for not using the funds for painting. He suggested walking Seventh Avenue from one end to the other with an engineer and judge each bulb-out on an individual basis to determine which ones are effective and which are not. He relayed some business owners prefer the expansion of the sidewalk for possibly outdoor dining safely instead of a proposed bulb-out.

Council Member Miller also conveyed many business owners would like to see regulations against boarding up windows and store fronts of buildings long-term. He stated they want to maintain the Seventh Avenue/ Depot historic identity. There was discussion of the proposed bulb-outs which have been proven to reduce the speed of traffic making it safer for pedestrians. Discussion followed on the turning radius of trucks which is also an important issue. Painting the street to show possible changes has created energy, excitement and change. Mr. Connet explained no funds have been allocated at this point to complete the streetscape; only for

paint on the ground. **Council Member Smith asked staff for the estimated cost to finish the parking lots. The Council agreed by consensus.**

**C. Berkeley Mills Park:** Ms. Anderson reported a grant for a \$250,000 PARTF grant has been submitted and we will hear in July whether we have been awarded the grant. She explained the City may reach out to Board members and personally invite them to visit the site.

Ms. Anderson reported an expert from Greenville who designs mountain bike has offered to review the proposed mountain bike trail and give suggestions. The work on the bike trail also has some grant possibilities.

Mr. Connet explained if the PARTF grant is received, those funds in addition to the City's required match will be used to move the main entrance away from the curve, put in a portion of the roundabout, create parking and the destination playground, the memorial tree garden and restrooms. Grant funds may not be expended on infrastructure. He stated staff will be requesting direction about the City's funds included in the CIP if the grant is not received. Mr. Connet reviewed the priorities for Berkeley Mills Park previously established by the Council.

Ms. Anderson stated staff is looking for a grant to prepare a required report to have the ball field listed on National Register. She emphasized the uniqueness of the site given its history and that it is still in use today.

Mr. Detwiler reported the greenway expansion will be bid by June 2015 and will take approximately nine months to complete. There will be a parking area at the trailhead of the greenway and a crossing installed on Balfour Road. The greenway will connect about five parks.

**C. Skate Park Concerns:** Mr. Connet reported a letter was received from a citizen who uses the skate park with concerns about the activities at the skate park including bullying, drugs, and vandalism. He stated he has spoken to the Police about enforcement. He asked for direction on the request to staff the skate park for supervision. Mayor Volk reiterated the problems at the skate park because of a bad experience.

Discussion followed on monitoring the cameras and possibly funding a position to monitor/supervise activities and any liability. **Mr. Connet stated staff will submit a proposal for Council's consideration.**

**2. Presentation of Comprehensive Parking Study by Dixon Unlimited:** The Council heard a presentation by Julie Dixon and David Cooker of Dixon Unlimited on the comprehensive parking study they conducted. She explained they spent time with the stakeholders to understand their needs, how to find downtown Hendersonville, how to find parking in downtown Hendersonville and ensure parking stays available so more people can come and have a place to park.

Ms. Dixon stated they talked about making Hendersonville a destination location and taking it to the next level. She explained this study is a roadmap for parking solutions and should be adaptable. The study should be revisited on a quarterly basis. She recommended keeping the stakeholder group engaged.

Mr. Cooker reviewed the scope of the study, the study boundaries, the public involvement (focus groups) and the on-site occupancy and turnover surveys, the current system, special event procedures, comparable cities, and recommendations. He reviewed the OccuApp and photos from the t-box that tracked parking.

Recommendations from the study includes:

- Wayfinding – spread the image of Main Street (from the Dogwood lot to Main Street); could tie in with mile markers for “Stayfit”
- Bolstering enforcement of existing parking rules, enforce policies consistently, educating business owners and employees of regulations
  - Increase parking penalties to \$20 or \$25 to encourage people to participate in the permit program because some take advantage of the system
  - Parking ambassador program for summer/peak times
  - Take advantage of existing technology
  - Allow customer service to take parking penalties and allow people to pay penalties online
- Parking permit program for residents, employees in parking lots: remove names from spaces and allow open permit, different categories of reserved parking may be allowed:
  - “R” permits: Mon.-Sat, 8 a.m.-6 p.m., spaces not assigned, small percentage with 24/7 reserved spaces
  - “S” permits: shared open paid parking lot, “R” permit valid in any space
  - “C” permits: specialty permits, shared open paid parking lot, R&S permit valid in any space, small percent of 24/7 reserved spaces
  - Install parking kiosks to replace aging meters
  - Keep permit program affordable to encourage participation and get cars off of Main Street
- Consistent branding: use “H” logo more
  - Wayfinding critical during special events/peak times
  - Give visitors positive branding/signage for parking

- Post all parking regulations on the website; distribution list for downtown business for notification
- Convert 15-minute parking spaces to “Active Loading Zone”
- Signage for special events
- Cross-utilization of parking lots, e.g., church parking lots, etc.
- Add parking on King Street; may slow traffic down; possibly install sidewalk
- Setback policies should be the same as the State; may add spaces

*Planning for the future:*

- shared parking opportunities with local businesses and identify future lots for the future for the east side of Main Street
- a transit center with public restrooms
- consider transitioning Main Street into a pedestrian mall in the summer months

*Revenue:* Revenues typically increase ten to 30 percent with kiosks, citation revenue may decrease

Ms. Dixon recommended taking this approach to the immediate and interim solutions first and then reevaluate. She reiterated the City’s parking policies are good, they should be enforced and published. No action was taken by the Council.

### 3. How do we improve our status as a destination city?

**A. America in Bloom/Gateway Improvements:** Mr. Connet introduced Ms. Mia Freeman who submitted the City’s application for the America in Bloom competition. Ms. Freeman explained American in Bloom envisions communities across the country as welcoming and vibrant places to live, work, and play - benefitting from colorful plants and trees; enjoying clean environments; celebrating heritage; and planting pride through volunteerism. America in Bloom also promotes nationwide beautification through education and community involvement by encouraging the use of flowers, plants, trees, and other environmental and lifestyle enhancements. It is a beautification program and an economic driver. The program has an extensive written evaluation, provides annual detailed recommendations, improvements and enhancements. They judge on six criteria. Judges were in Hendersonville and based on the criteria, the City received three out of five blooms. She stated the City did very well in the streetscape for the work on Main Street.

Mr. Connet sought Council’s interest in replicating, to some degree, the award-winning look of Main Street at our gateways: Highway 64/Dana Road, Highway 25 at Fire Station 1, Highway 64 near Oakdale Cemetery and from the south. Discussion followed on reuse of curbstones with the “H” brand replicated at every entrance of the City and working with NCDOT and master gardeners for the areas. **Staff will prepare a design and cost estimates for Council’s consideration.**

**B. Downtown Improvements/Wayfinding:** Mr. Lew Holloway reported the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) has been focused on an overall rebranding of all materials that markets the county overall. In concert with that, they are pursuing a wayfinding signage design that will be specifically focused on vehicular signage. The initial study is for 50 signs throughout the county that will be guiding people to 20-25 destinations. The study will produce the conceptual design for the signs, suggest the location of signs and provide suggestions for culling existing signage and lower signs for pedestrians. He reported the wayfinding part is on hold until the rebranding process is complete and it may be up to one year before completed.

Mr. Connet explained another critical element is lighting/security on side streets/avenues to Main Street to get pedestrians safety to the parking lots. He reviewed the conceptual plan from 2004 with a strong focus on Fourth Avenue. Some preliminary work has been done to make a connection to Jackson Park. Mr. Wooten addressed the Council and proposed removing signage that lists business down the avenues from the decorative light poles and placing the existing signs on a new stand placed next to the crosswalk. This will bring the signs down to eye level to direct potential customers to the businesses on the avenues. The signs are updated annually. A fee is assessed when the request for a sign is made.

**Lighting:** Mr. Wooten explained the street lights are leased from Duke Energy and the number of lights vary from avenue to avenue because of pole placement. He proposed adding decorative street lights similar to those on Main Street along Church and King Streets. He stated the lights could be added in conjunction with paving program. He estimated the cost of the lights at \$2,300 each, four to six lights on each side of the avenue plus wiring estimated at \$15,000. There was discussion of doing the work off-season to minimize disruption to the businesses. Council Member Miller asked about lowering the lighting near residences. Mr. Connet stated staff will come back with a plan. He stated when the lights are placed, the hanging basket poles will be removed and the baskets will be placed on the lights. Council Member Caraker reminded the Council of the request for memorials. **The consensus of the Council was to lower the signs for businesses on the avenues, place existing signs on poles and will consider a proposal for the avenues beginning with the avenues that lead to parking lots.**

**C. Flat Rock Playhouse Funding:** Mayor Volk reported a request from the Flat Rock Playhouse for assistance in funding the mold remediation they are facing. Mr. Connet reported a conversation with Lisa Bryant about additional funding, a backup plan, and whether they have asked for a second estimate. They

have not received a second estimate at this time. He stated he also asked how they will prevent this in the future, etc. He stated Ms. Bryant reported they have now formed a facilities committee that will address how to provide annual maintenance going forward.

Mayor Volk reported the Village of Flat Rock voted to contribute \$50,000 toward their efforts, Henderson County will consider the request at their next meeting and Tourism Development Authority will also discuss it at their next meeting. Mayor Volk stated they feel they are in a desperate situation. Mayor Pro Tem Stephens commented they cannot open unless the work gets done. He believes it is not an issue of over-spending. **Mayor Pro Tem Stephens moved the Council to participate in funding the mold remediation at the Flat Rock Playhouse for \$50,000.** In discussion, Council Member Miller stated the City has shown great support of the Playhouse with their expansion on Main Street and he agrees with that decision. He stated the has supports the Playhouse but has a problem using taxpayer funds with this project. Council Member Caraker stated he also supports the Playhouse but feels this was a lack of maintaining their property and asking for funds to bail them out of the mismanagement. He stated he would endorse a loan to them if they could repay. Council Member Smith stated he supports the request but it may have an impact if they make a request for special appropriations. Mayor Volk agreed with Council Member Caraker that the City should not bail out those who do not maintain property but she considers the economic impact of not having the Playhouse open. She supported making a contribution but will look closely at any future request. Council Member Caraker agreed but stated it appears to be a recurring theme. Council Member Miller commented they should be required to get more than one estimate. Mayor Pro Tem Stephens commented time is of the essence. Council Member Smith stated the different government entities working together to solve the problem they did not create is a positive. **The vote was three in favor (Volk, Smith, Stephens); two opposed (Miller, Caraker). Motion carried.**

**4. Lunch/Service Excellence Awareness Training:** The Council heard and participated in the Service Excellence Awareness Training provided by LuAnn Welter, Rhonda Brissie and Jeff Tankersley during lunch.

**5. Hendersonville Water and Sewer Visioning Process:** The Council heard a presentation by Mr. Jeff Hughes, UNC School of Government Environmental Finance Center, about what a regional water system might look like. Many partnerships already exist throughout the State in order to move water. Hendersonville provides a significant amount of service outside the City.

Mr. Hughes discussed authorities, task forces, joint-management commissions, regional commissions, etc. that deal with water issues. He reviewed how Hendersonville's rates compare to others in the State.

Mr. Connet acknowledged others present: Keith Webb of McGill and Associates, Will Buie, Alison Melnikova, Laurel Park Town Manager, Marcus Jones and Mark Williams, and Andrew Tate, of Partnership for Economic Development, and facilitated a discussion of stakeholders present: potential water needs in the county and region where opportunities exist to create partnerships, agreements, etc. He stated the Hendersonville water system may have the capacity to provide water where needed.

Discussion followed on the Cane Creek sewer system and district, potential project areas, the City cooperating with economic growth opportunities - having sites identified and having the infrastructure ready, capacity and safe yield from the river(s), and growth. Mr. Webb stated the City already provides water regionally: Saluda, Fletcher, Mills River, Laurel Park and Etowah.

Mr. Hughes explained a good first step would be to organize a stakeholders group or task force. Discussion of the purpose of the group included:

- defining the needs and goal for Hendersonville and Henderson County
- existing coverage
- capacity and sharing and/or financing costs - expansion to continue legacy of being a regional supplier
- growth potential and service area boundaries including surrounding municipalities (and ownership)
- identify where service needs to be improved
- adequate existing service (currently have 15 miles of two-inch galvanized line)
- long-term goals or master plan
- governance and information sharing
- establish partnerships, possibly in phases, through Interlocal agreements

**The Council agreed by general consensus to work with an outside neutral facilitator to determine the stakeholders, etc. to be expanded it as necessary.** Mr. Connet stated staff will investigate the resources provided by Mr. Hughes and other models, do some comparisons and come up with a proposal for Council's consideration.

## **6. Additional Council Items**

**A. Camera Truck Usage Policy:** Council Member Caraker asked if the City would be willing to consider a policy to allow the use the City equipment, specifically the Water/Sewer Department camera and video truck, by outside companies that normally do not have access to that kind of equipment. A rate for the use of the equipment will be established and included in the policy and a liability agreement will be drafted. **The Council agreed by general consensus to consider an equipment use policy.**

**B. Mills River Partnership Funding:** Council Member Caraker explained the City's funding commitment to the Mills River Partnership will expire at the end of the fiscal year and he asked Council to consider continuing the funding for another two year. He stated they have been responsible and are doing a lot of good things. The fee comes from the users. They are also supported by the City of Asheville who has made a three-year commitment for funding.

Council Member Caraker reported they will be putting back 5 percent in an emergency contingency fund. **Mr. Connet stated this will be included and considered by the Council as part of the budget.**

**7. Adjournment:** Being no further business, **the meeting adjourned at 4:03 p.m. upon unanimous assent of the Council.**

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Barbara G. Volk, Mayor

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Tammie K. Drake, City Clerk