

The Washington City Council met in a continued session on Monday, November 24, 2008 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the Municipal Building. Present were: Judy Jennette, Mayor; Doug Mercer, Mayor Pro tem; Richard Brooks, Councilman; Gil Davis, Councilman; Archie Jennings, Councilman; Jim Smith, City Manager; Cynthia S. Bennett, City Clerk; and Franz Holscher, City Attorney.

Also present were: Jimmy Davis, Fire Chief; Allen Lewis, Public Works Director; Bobby Roberson, Planning and Community Development Director; Philip Mobley, Parks & Recreation Director; Mick Reed, Police Chief; Susan Hodges, Human Resources Director; Lynn Lewis, Washington Tourism Director; Ray Midgett, IT Director; Anita Radcliffe, Acting Finance Director; Keith Hardt, Electric Director; and Mike Voss, with the Washington Daily News.

Mayor Jennette called the meeting to order and noted Councilman Woolard was not present. Councilman Brooks delivered the invocation.

### **APPROVAL/AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA**

Mayor Jennette amended the agenda as follows:

1. Chris Furlough for an update on the Citizens for Revitalization (added as Item #1)
2. Discussion - Cycle NC
3. Discussion – Debt-Set Off Administrative Review Panels
4. Report – Financial Reports
  1. General Funds
  2. Enterprise Funds
5. Closed Session - Under G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) Acquisition of real property – 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church property; G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3)Attorney/Client Privilege; G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel
6. Adjourn meeting until December 8, 2008 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers

On motion of Councilman Jennings, seconded by Councilman Davis, Council unanimously approved the agenda, as amended.

### **INTRODUCTION OF APRIL CORBETT – PROJECT NEXT STEP COORDINATOR**

Chief Mick Reed introduced April Corbett as the new Project Next Step Coordinator. Chief Reed reminded Council that in July 2008 they authorized and supported a project where the Police Department is taking the community policing from a concept to a practical part of dealing with target areas of the community. Ms. Corbett is originally from Greenville, holds a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice and has experience in the corrections field as well as experience in case management working with troubled youth. Her office is located at 232 East 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **CITIZENS FOR REVITALIZATION UPDATE - CHRIS FURLOUGH**

Chris Furlough reminded Council of the following:

1. Purpose of the Revitalization Committee
  - a. Review the Renaissance Plan and the Dickson Plan
  - b. Determining the best elements of both plans
  - c. Develop a broad based, consensus driven vision of what our downtown and waterfront should look like in the future
2. Committee endorsed by City Council and has its support and involvement
3. Membership is broad based with all stake holders represented
4. Why is a unified vision needed:

- a. Current gridlock
  - b. Need public understanding and support to enable City Council to make economic and investment decisions
  - c. By agreeing on potential locations for hotels, green space/parks, we encourage development by reducing risk
  - d. An agreed to vision will lead to a master plan enabling us to systematically make improvements, obtain grant monies etc.
5. Process:
- a. Stakeholder Organization (Start here)
  - b. Review Existing Plan
  - c. Stakeholder Vision Input
  - d. City Council Update
  - e. Property Owners Update
  - f. Merchants Update
  - g. Public Input
  - h. Consultant Decision
  - i. Stakeholders/Merchants/Property Owners Public Input
  - j. Develop Vision Plan
  - k. Plan Draft
  - l. Generate Public Consensus
  - m. Commitment
  - n. Implementation (Finish here)

Councilman Jennings stated that when the Committee comes back to Council we will have a comprehensive plan for the downtown area. Mayor Jennette offered assistance to the Committee if they needed someone to review drawings or prepare drawings rather than having developers influence the process. Mr. Furlough stated that Council will only receive a consensus decision from the group, not just ideas from one or two individual members.

### **CYCLE- NC**

Lynn Lewis, TDA Director stated that Washington has been selected by NC Amateur Sports to host the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Cycle NC Spring bicycle event. The event will be held April 17-19 with more than 700 bicyclists from across the United States. This year we were competing with Edenton, Oriental and New Bern, so we had to step up our game to attract this event. Prior to building of the skate park, the events headquarters was 7<sup>th</sup> Street Rec. Center. This year we have chosen the area to west of Estuarium (site of Pickin' on the Pamlico) for outdoor camping and the Civic Center as events headquarters and indoor camping area. Ms. Lewis noted she is working the Public Works and Parks and Recreation to determine the best location for the shower trucks.

### **DEBT-SET OFF ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PANELS**

Jim Smith, City Manager stated that at the last audit report it was determined there is approximately \$600,821 in unpaid accounts receivable for past fees and assessments. The 2008 audit considered these accounts which are still carried on the City's books questionable assets prompting the Finance Department to send out delinquent notices to customers with old miscellaneous accounts receivable bills. Some of the approximately 550 accounts are more than a decade old, but unless discharged by the City have no statute of limitations. Out of the 550 notices sent to customers, so far only six have been appealed, but feels that number may increase. He further stated it is time to either collect them or get them off the books. The Governing Board or their designee must hold the hearing. Mr. Smith suggested that Council appoint three persons to a "Debt Set-off Administrative Review Panel" to conduct the required hearings as provided by Statute. Beaufort County pays its Board of Health

\$25.00 per meeting to hold appeal hearings and he suggested we consider a similar arrangement with a per meeting honorarium set by Council. This would be a limited term panel which could complete its work in 90 days with perhaps 3 or 4 meetings.

Councilman Davis and Mayor Pro tem Mercer offered to set on the panel at no charge to the City.

Councilman Jennings stated this is an embarrassment when you receive a notice of a bill that is more than 10 years old. He feels that an apology is due to all those sent bills as this was out of line. He further stated the majority of this should be written off as it is more than 10 years old and if we can't do any better than that then we deserve not to get this money. Councilman Jennings stated this is the first he has heard of it coming up in an audit. Mayor Jennette asked what are we going to do to prevent this from happening again. Mayor Jennette asked Anita Radcliffe to get information in chronological order for Council by the December meeting which shows the year the bill originated, amount of invoice, number of letters sent out, how many have been paid/unpaid. Council also suggested that Ms. Radcliffe send out a letter to all of those sent invoices explaining that we are reviewing the issue and that some of the invoices may have been sent in error. Mayor Jennette stated we need to be better at explaining matters such as this to those who will be receiving an invoice, instead of just sending an invoice that is ten years old with no explanation. Mr. Smith suggested sending a post card which would save postage.

### **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

Anita Radcliffe, Acting Finance Director stated the audit is complete and she is pleased to announce that last fiscal year all the Enterprise Funds and General Funds ended with a positive bottom line. The auditors will present the audit to Council at the December meeting. Ms. Radcliffe presented information on the General Fund and the Enterprise Funds, and accepted any questions from Council. Ms. Radcliffe stated she plans to meet with Allen Lewis, Director of Public Works and Keith Hardt, Director of Electric Utilities in the next week or so to have some more accurate projections for the December meeting.

### **IMPROVING CITY WEBSITE**

Ray Midgett, IT Director stated he met with the City Manager and he stated there was an interest in improving the City's website. Mr. Midgett is asking for feedback from Council regarding what needs to be added/changed to re-design the website. Mr. Midgett will set up a meeting with Mayor Jennette and Councilman Jennings to review ideas for improving the City's website.

### **EXTEND MEETING**

On motion of Councilman Jennings, seconded by Councilman Brooks, Council agreed to extend the meeting to 6:30pm.

### **CLOSED SESSION - UNDER G.S. 143-318.11(A) (5) ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY – 1<sup>ST</sup> PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PROPERTY; G.S. 143-318.11(A)(3) ATTORNEY/CLIENT PRIVILEGE; G.S. 143-318.11(A) (6) PERSONNEL**

On motion of Councilman Davis, seconded by Councilman Brooks, Council agreed to go into closed session under G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) Acquisition of real property – 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church property; G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3) Attorney/Client Privilege; G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel.

On motion of Councilman Davis, seconded by Councilman Jennings, Council agreed to come out of closed session.

On motion of Mayor Pro tem Mercer, seconded by Councilman Davis, Council adjourned the meeting at 6:50pm, until Monday, December 8, 2008 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the Municipal Building.

---

**Cynthia S. Bennett  
City Clerk**