WORK SESSION MEETING

July 30th, 2019

The Bessemer City Council met in work session on Tuesday, July 30th, 2019 at 3:00PM in Council Chambers. Proper notice was given.

Call to Order

Mayor Becky S. Smith called the meeting to order.

Members Present

Mayor Becky Smith, Council Members: Dan Boling, Donnie Griffin, Sonny Boyd, Joe Will, Kay McCathen and Alfred Carpenter were all present. Also present were City Manager, James Inman, department heads, and City Intern Mikel Graham.

Linear Park Concept

City Planner, Karen Floyd and Economic Development Officer, Josh Ross introduced Gary Fankhauser with VIZ Design Consulting. Mr. Fankhauser was hired by the City to develop a Linear Park Plan that includes existing greenspace along the 100 block of West Pennsylvania Avenue, 100 block of West Virginia Avenue, and the 100 block of East Virginia Avenue.

Mr. Fankhauser gave a presentation on the plan showing the preliminary concept drawings. The plan included features including, but not limited to, a first responders memorial, veterans memorial, Ella May Wiggins memorial statue, public art placement areas, a pollinator garden, a covered open air shelter to resemble Bessemer City's historic train depot, landscape improvements, safety features including fencing along the railroad, and other enhancement features.

City Planner Floyd and Economic Development Officer Ross explained that this is a long-range plan that will help guide the City's development as these features are phased in.

Discussion was held between City Council, staff, and Mr. Fankhauser. Some questions presented by Council included: the design of the shelter, the use of the space for downtown events, specifically, Down Home Festival, safety features, recommendations for funding the project over a period of time, and how park features would be prioritized.

Staff explained that as part of Mr. Fankhauser's services, he would help with budgeting, prioritization, and obtaining permission from Norfolk Southern to implement this plan since it is in their right-of-way.

Economic Development Officer Ross explained that the plan had been reviewed by the Downtown Development Board and the board recommended the plan to Council for consideration.

Mr. Fankhauser explained that next steps would include understanding the cost of the project and prioritization. No action was taken on the plan since the presentation was only a preliminary review.

Voluntary Annexation- Hunter Douglas

City Manager Inman presented Council with a petition received by Hunter Douglas expressing their desire to be annexed into the corporate limits of Bessemer City. Mr. Inman explained that he, Police Chief Tom Ellis, and Economic Development Officer, Josh Ross met with Hunter Douglas to discuss the process and benefits of annexation, especially related to public safety.

Council discussed the annexation with staff.

Upon motion by Dan Boling and unanimous vote, the Petition for Voluntary Annexation was adopted. A copy of the resolution is on file at City Hall.

Upon motion of Donnie Griffin and unanimous vote, a public hearing was set for August 12th at the Regular City Council Meeting to hear public comment regarding the petition for voluntary annexation. This public hearing will be advertised as required by General Statute.

Department Head Reports

Bessemer City department heads gave reports on their department's status:

JoD Franklin, Parks and Recreation Director- Mr. Franklin explained that August 10 would be the last day the City pool would be open.

Josh Ross, Economic Development Officer- Mr. Ross explained that Staff was continuing to work on revision to the City's Land Use Plan and Unified Development Ordinance. Staff will continue to work with a consultant, stakeholders, and Council on these revisions. Mr. Ross also gave an update on the City's CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization Program, a new business opening in the Chamber Building, and the continued marketing of the city's property on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Mikel Graham, City Intern- Mr. Graham addressed Council regarding the CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization Grant next steps. Mr. Graham explained to Council that staff would be working to finalize the City's Bee City USA application.

Diane Jenkins, Finance Director- Ms. Jenkins discussed continued implementation of the City's new financial software, auditing, and working through project financing.

Tom Ellis, Police Chief- Mr. Ellis spoke about new employees in the police department and ongoing investigations.

Jamie Ramsey, Assistant City Manager- Mr. Ramsey explained to Council that Duke Energy would be working to clear vegetation from power lines in varios areas throughout the City. Assistant Manager Ramsey explained the City's website and social media platforms will be used to notify the public of the impacted areas. Mr. Ramsey also explained that the City is continuing to work with the City of Gastonia on the water pump station connecting Bessemer City with Two Rivers Utilities. This was through a grant the City received from the NC Department of Commerce for emergency supplies.

James Inman, City Manager- Mr. Inman discussed plans to trim street trees along Highway 274 coming into the City, preparations for the 2020 Census, Stinger Park Project Update, Water Plant Improvement Project Update, and the need to meet with USDA to finalize grant and loan agreements for capital projects.

Council General Discussion

Mayor Smith opened the floor for Council general discussion.

Council Member Griffin asked if the City could do more in code enforcement for repeat offenders.

Council Member Boling gave a report on improvements being made and/or considered at the ABC Store.

Council Member Will asked about a utility box in front of Silver Express along Highway 274.

Adjourn

Being no further business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:42 PM by motion of Alfred Carpenter and unanimous vote.

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Becky S. Smith, Mayor Hydeia Y. Hayes, City Clerk