

Worksession

Present: Mayor Charles R. Worley, Presiding; Vice-Mayor R. Carl Mumpower; Councilwoman Terry M. Bellamy; Councilman Jan B. Davis; Councilman Joseph C. Dunn; Councilwoman Diana Hollis Jones; Councilman Brownie W. Newman; City Manager Gary W. Jackson; City Attorney Robert W. Oast Jr.; and City Clerk Magdalen Burleson

Absent: None

CONSENT AGENDA:

Contract with Carolina Cornerstone to Construct Tennis Facility at

Aston Park

Summary: The consideration of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to sign a contract with Carolina Cornerstone Construction to construct a tennis facility in Aston Park.

The City of Asheville Parks and Recreation Department is in the process of implementing the first phase of development on the Aston Park Master Plan. This phase of significant public park improvements includes a new tennis facility, driveway and handicap parking to replace the current building that is in poor condition and doesn't meet the needs of the tennis program and the community. The project was bid out according to City standards that include the Minority Business Plan. The Director of the Asheville-Buncombe Office of Minority Affairs has reviewed the bid submittal and found that the company provided the appropriate good faith effort documentation along a listing of certified firms that will be participate on this project. Funds for this project are coming from the Irene and Dick Covington Foundation and the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant. This building will also house the memorabilia from Dick Covington who was affectionately known as "Mr. Tennis" for his work in Asheville on enhancing this sport for over five decades.

Pros

- The construction of this portion of the project is an integral-supporting aspect of the unique clay tennis courts.
- The park will provide greatly needed recreation facilities for recreation users, especially the tennis players in the area.
- The tennis facility will be a local and regional attraction that will foster economic development.
- No City tax funds will be used in the development of this facility.

Cons

None

City staff recommends that City Council authorize the City Manager to enter into a contract with Carolina Cornerstone Construction, in the amount of \$361,237, to construct the tennis facility at Aston Park.

There was considerable discussion, initiated by Councilwoman Jones, about the number of people who just hang out at Aston Park. Parks & Recreation Director Irby Brinson explained that they have hired off-duty officers for the last 3-4 months taking shifts at that location, in addition to other measures, including the design of the park and zero tolerance policy in the parks. He felt that to discourage that type of activity a full-time person is needed to police the area. He felt that when positive activities take place in the park, the unwanted element will go somewhere else. He agrees that it is a big problem, which will take some time to resolve.

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At the request of City Manager Jackson, it was the consensus of Council to ask the City Manager to report back to Council with other ideas on improving the security of our downtown parks, along with any resource commitments that may be necessary to accomplish the task.

Setting a Public Hearing to Close an Alley off Clingman Avenue

Summary: The consideration of a resolution of intent to close an unnamed alley off Clingman Avenue and set a public hearing for September 27, 2005.

N. C. Gen. Stat. sec. 160-299 grants cities the authority to permanently close streets and alleys.

Pursuant to this statute, Mountain Housing Opportunities has requested the City of Asheville permanently close to public use as an unnamed alley off Clingman Avenue. This alley is more particularly described as the alley mentioned in Deed Book 1700 at page 471 and prior deeds in the same chain of title, said alley being further described as Lot 1 of a plat of property of Wilson and Teasley as recorded in the Office of the Register of Deeds for Buncombe County, North Carolina, in Plat Book 2 at page 24 in the Buncombe County Register of Deeds.

Public Works Department staff has researched and determined that this alley is not a City maintained street. Closure of this alley will not deny any of the abutting properties a reasonable means of ingress or egress as Mountain Housing Opportunities has submitted to

the Planning Department a recombination request for the parcels affected. There are three parcels that abut this section of alleyway. They are identified by PIN Nos. 9648.05-08-4179, 9648.05-08-5118, and 9648.05-08-4248. The petitioner has authority over all the abutting parcels.

Pros:

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- The closure allows the property to be used to its maximum (density) potential.
- Affordable housing can be constructed on the consolidated site.
- There will be no future compromise of ingress/egress to other property.

Cons:

- In consideration of the proximity of the alley, staff can find no potential challenges regarding the closure of the alley.

City staff recommends that City Council adopt the resolution setting a public hearing for September 27, 2005, to close an alley off Clingman Avenue.

FAA Grant Offer

Summary: The consideration of a resolution authorizing the Mayor to approve a Grant Offer from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in the amount of \$836,729.

The FAA has offered a grant agreement to the Asheville Regional Airport. This grant, in the amount of \$836,729, is for the Airport Improvement Program Project No. 3-37-0005-30. This project consists of expanding the terminal apron (including rehabilitation), Phase II.

Staff recommends adoption of the resolution authorizing the Mayor to execute the grant agreement for Project No. 3-37-0005-30.

Provisions for Possession and Consumption of Malt Beverages and/or Unfortified Wine at the Lexington Avenue Arts & Fun Festival

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Summary: The consideration of a resolution making provisions for the possession and consumption of malt beverages and/or unfortified wine at the Lexington Avenue Arts & Fun Festival.

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The Arts 2 People group has requested, through the Asheville Parks and Recreation Department, that City Council permit them to serve beer and/or unfortified wine at their Lexington Avenue Arts & Fun Festival, scheduled for Sunday, September 4, 2005, from 11:00 a.m. – 10:30 p.m.

City staff requests City Council adopt a resolution making provisions for the possession and consumption of malt beverages and/or unfortified wine at the Lexington Avenue Arts & Fun Festival.

Budget Amendment for Aston Park Renovations

Summary: The consideration of a budget amendment, in the amount of \$260,000, from a \$260,000 grant award from the N.C. Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation in the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

The City of Asheville applied in January 2005 for a grant from the N.C. Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation in the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. The grant was recently awarded in the amount of \$260,000.

The money will be used for the Irene and Dick Covington Center construction, new backboard, trailhead for greenway to Clingman Forest.

Pros:

- Allows for the City to develop improvements to Aston Park without taxpayer investment.
- Completes the construction of the Irene and Dick Covington Tennis Center.
- Completion of the Center will allow for community use in the meeting space provided.
- Allows for the construction of the trail head for the Clingman Forest Greenway.

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Cons:

- None

This action complies with City Council's Strategic Plan in that it deals with the 11 areas of greenway development mentioned in the Strategic Plan.

The Parks and Recreation Department recommends City Council approve the budget amendment in the amount of \$260,000 to increase the budget for the renovation of Aston Park.

Next Community Meeting – August 30, 2005 – Public Works Facility

Mayor Worley asked that the record show that City Council received this information and instructed the City Manager to place these items on the next formal City Council agenda.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS BOARDS & COMMISSIONS STUDY

Ms. Kathleen Balogh, President of the League of Women Voters of Asheville/Buncombe County ("League"), said that the League is proud to present this compilation of two years of

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intensive dialogue and study, documenting the appointment process for Asheville and Buncombe County boards and commissions.

This report represents Phase I of a two-part study. It is not meant to be a definitive work, as the process is in a constant state of refinement. Part I is a baseline, a detailed accounting of the current process, from the point when a board vacancy is identified to the point when an appointment is made to fill that vacancy at both the city and county levels. Phase II will begin at the point of appointment and move forward into how boards and commissions 'work'.

She said the purpose of the study was to create a comprehensive overview of the appointment process in order to establish better understanding of the process and enhance citizen participation in public decision-making and action.

She summarized the issues of concern:

(1) Availability of information/lack of computerized database - (a) information published in the major publications for the City and County is fragmented and incomplete; (b) access to some information requires knowledge of whom to contact and how and when to contact them; and (c) procedures for the City and County are different, and are described differently. This difference could be confusing, especially in the case of a joint city/county board or commission.

(2) Clarify of descriptions and understanding of the appointed bodies and their duties and responsibilities – (a) major publications lack "standard nomenclature." There is no guiding principle as to why there are so many different terms used to name and describe the duties of the appointed bodies; (i) descriptions of the appointed bodies and their duties and responsibilities are vague and unclear; (ii) major publications use different wording to describe the duties, etc., of boards/commissions; and (iii) major publications use words that have subjective interpretations and/or no real definition, such as "assist with," "combat poverty," "ensure/assure," "advance community awareness," "solve human problems," and "fix and revise.;" (c) major publications contain contradictory information (e.g., joint boards/commissions with different names); and (d) websites have limited information and are often out of date.

(3) Limitations with the appointment process – (a) it is difficult to discern where information about board/commission openings is being distributed; (i) the current list of contacts are for internal use by staff; and (ii) we were not able to identify a formal list for the general public; (b) major publications do not provide references for citizens to define key terms used in the descriptions and assigned duties of boards and commissions; and (c) county booklet does not list meeting dates or locations.

Specific recommendations include: (1) language used in describing duties and roles of boards and commissions should be standardized; (2) descriptions of jointly appointed boards should be standardized; (3) City and County might wish to consider computerized management systems for tracking vacancies and appointments; (4) more administrative support for appointment process – especially for recruitment and community education on the important role boards and commissions play in governance; (5) better use of websites for both the appointment process and the work of the boards and commissions – like vacancies, minutes, and meeting schedule (time/location); (6) develop and upkeep of "Boards and Commissions" sections in branches of the public library; and (7) standardize applications – available on the website with an on-line application process.

The League recommends that City Council and the County Commissioners, in collaboration with the League, follow-up on the findings in this study.

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She thanked Dr. Alison Climo, League member, who contributed time and expertise in data gathering, formulation, and comparison for this study.

Councilwoman Jones suggested a review be made about specific boards or commissions that have served well in the past, but have out-served their existence.

Vice-Mayor Mumpower, Chair of the City's Boards and Commissions Committee, said that he would review the study in depth with City Clerk Burleson and possibly bring back some items for implementation for Council's approval.

On behalf of City Council, Mayor Worley thanked Ms. Balogh and the other participants for their participation, support and assistance in this study. He said that City Council will look forward to the report on Phase II.

ASHEVILLE DRUG COMMISSION

Vice-Mayor Mumpower asked for Council's endorsement and support of the Asheville Drug Commission. He said the mission of the Drug Commission is to "Focus, learn and act on the causes, sources, and impacts of hard drugs on Asheville and our neighbors..."

He explained our problems consist of (1) A factor in an estimated 80% of the crimes committed in our community; (2) The foundation for much of the child abuse and neglect that occurs; (3) A tremendous drain on the service and financial resources of Asheville costing millions each year; (4) A persisting foundation for violence, fear, and impaired quality of life for the poor and disadvantaged in our community.

Our methods include (1) Monthly meetings – one hour +/-; (2) Monthly target issues which we learn, focus, act on, measure, and assess; (3) Sub-committees to enhance and solidify policy commitments using outside resources, time, and energy.

Initial target areas include (1) treatment; (2) education; (3) enforcement and adjudication; (4) social interventions; and (5) local, state and national policy.

Our methodologies include (1) solid pre-meeting preparation; (2) stay on task and realistic; (3) emphasize action over reaction; (4) assure tangible outcomes; and (5) emphasis on practical and realistic follow-up.

Sample issues for the Commission include (1) Bottleneck in SBI lab processing; (2) Economic and social impact of hard drug users who misuse resources at Mission Hospital – lack of availability of more cost-effective and appropriate inpatient "social detox" resources in the community; (3) Coordination of intelligence and communication between enforcement agencies; (4) Inconsistencies in our treatment network; and (5) Harmful exposures to children and elderly in public housing developments.

He suggested the following Commission members: Mr. Gene Bell – Housing Authority of the City of Asheville; Judge Gary Cash – Senior District Court Judge; Dr. Buddy Corbin – Senior Minister, Calvary Baptist Church; Mr. Joe Damore – CEO, Mission Hospital Systems; Dr. Cliff Dodson – Superintendent of Buncombe County Schools; Ms. Beverly Jeter – President, Bartlett Arms Resident's Council; Dr. Robert Logan Superintendent of Asheville City Schools; Chief Bill Hogan – Asheville Police Department; Mr. Jerry VeHaun – Director of Buncombe County Emergency Services; Mr. Rick Lutovsky – Executive Director, Asheville Chamber of Commerce; Mr. Bobby Medford – Buncombe County Sheriff; Mr. Ron Moore – Buncombe County District Attorney; Ms. Valerie Collins – Director, Helpmate; Nathan Ramsey – Chairman, Buncombe County Commission; Mr. Bob Smith – Director A-B Buncombe Community Relations Council; Mr.

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Virgil Smith – President, Asheville Citizen-Times; Mr. Paul Vest – Director, YMCA; Ms. Mandy Stone – Director, Buncombe County DSS; and Dr. Carl Mumpower – Vice-Mayor, City of Asheville.

He said that they are scheduled to meet with The Asheville City Council, Buncombe County Commission, C-T Editorial Board, and Asheville Housing Authority Board to secure their official endorsement of this effort. We will move forward with the Chamber Board, Mission Hospital System Board, and others. Community buy-in is one of several foundations for future success.

He said our people are being harmed by a force that affects every child, adult, family, school, church, and business in our community. It's a growing problem – too many of our friends, neighbors, family members, and loved ones are gazing into the abyss. We are beginning a bold adventure in community responsibility. We must match the energy, enthusiasm and resources of those who traffic in hard drugs. We can make a major difference and we will, we must – together.

Council members spoke in support of endorsing the mission of this Commission and felt it was a good approach in a comprehensive way.

Councilwoman Bellamy moved to waive the rules and take formal action at this meeting. This motion was seconded by Councilman Dunn and carried unanimously.

Councilman Newman felt that if this is going to be a Commission of the City, he felt Council might want to take some time to think about the charge of this group, the lifetime of this group, the terms of the group, the structure of the group, the relationship of group to City Council, etc.

Vice-Mayor Mumpower said that if Council endorses this effort, he would like to come back to Council in approximately 3 months to update City Council with a sense on what they have done. where they are, and how it's going. Then, Council can have some more

detailed discussion about ways to improve or enhance their effort. He would also make sure that City Council receives copies of their meeting minutes.

Councilwoman Jones moved to endorse the initial effort of the Commission. This motion was seconded by Councilwoman Bellamy and carried unanimously.

DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION UPDATE

Building Safety Director Terry Summey said that this is a Status Report on the 2004 Development Review Task Force Recommendations.

As part of the Fiscal Year 2004-05 budget approval process, members of City Council requested the creation of a task force to evaluate the current development processes. Approximately 50 citizens were invited to participate. As many as 34 citizens attended the various meetings. Citizens representing the following groups submitted recommendations: Architects, Engineers, Designers, Surveyors, Business Owners, Managers, Commercial Contractors/ Developers, and Residential Contractors/Developers. City Council was last updated on the recommendations at the February 15, 2005, worksession.

Based upon the guidance given by Council, staff has worked to implement some of the 32 recommendations, which have been categorized into four areas:

- Items that will require additional input and decisions by City Council (5 items)
- Items implemented by staff (7 items)

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- Items staff is working on (9 items)
- Ongoing issues being worked on (11 items)

Considerations in the ongoing implementation of the recommendations:

- Greater reliance on staff expertise, and facilitation on development projects
- More business friendly approach to development
- More timely review and approval of projects
- Better communication and coordination with citizens and industry

City staff recommends City Council receive this report as information.

Mr. Russ Martin, Chair of the Development Review Task Force explained how significant progress has been made with the implementation of some of the recommendations, e.g. the consolidation of six forms into one. He explained why some of the recommendations had not been implemented after further review. He passed out to Council a "Asheville Development Guide to Building in Asheville, N.C." which serves as a tool to identify the review and permitting process that corresponds to a particular project. In addition, it contains an outline of key contacts for specific areas that provide technical support to the Development Services Center staff. The Building Safety Department has a DVD that is very informative (and is shown on the Government Channel), however, people do not know that is an available resource, thus identifying the need for communication. He suggested Council appoint a small advisory committee made up of people in the contracting business and representatives from homeowners associations who could meet on a quarterly basis with staff to come up with ideas to improve the process. He also suggested the Task Force members meet one last time to be updated and let them know of the suggestion to form a small advisory committee.

Mr. Summey and City Engineer Cathy Ball responded to various questions from Councilman Dunn about some of the recommendations, in particular the consistency of inspectors and the one-stop shop.

City Manager Jackson said that he understands this is a priority of City Council. He requested comments from the Development Forum and asked the citizens for their on-going involvement. He asked them what was going well and ways where we can improve. He said some of the improvements were that they are seeing better customer from the staff, electronic permitting, the additional code seminars, communication with the building profession, and the form consolidation. Areas to improve include the standardization of the process, streamlining the process, the one-stop shop, the need for tracking, and trouble-shooting.

City Manager Jackson said he has met with individuals in the construction field, development field, neighborhood representatives, individuals for more regulation and individuals for less regulation. As a result of these meeting, he determined that the interpretations in the gray areas meant that we were not doing sufficient enforcement. He cited a couple of examples - accepting streets that had been built; and requiring a developer to extend a waterline. He felt this hands-on involvement has been very beneficial. In some cases he reached the conclusion that staff had a very sound basis for their decisions. He has met with every staff member associated with the permitting process. His first conclusion is that the recommendation that was made by Chair Russ Martin is a sound one. He felt Council needs to commend and compliment the Task Force for the work that they did. He also thinks we need an on-going forum for issues. He would support the recommendation that there be an advisory committee made up of representatives of the development community (including developers, staff, realtors, neighborhood representatives, people from the construction and trades) and that they meet monthly.

Regarding the one-stop shop, it is his personal view that we need to explore that further. It does require resources, additional staffing, and technology for tracking. He would like to explore that with the new future

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Building Safety Director. He felt we need to have better reporting of performance measures, in that the development community should be able to track their project on the Internet. There will always be a dynamic tension, gray areas and a regulatory role. Our goal in a regulatory role should be to do that in the most efficient and effective way. He said that he would like to position the Economic Development Director to be on top of the technical issues as they relate to the development activity, real estate changes, etc.

On behalf of City Council, Mayor Worley thanked Mr. Martin and the Task Force for their hard work on these issues.

At 5:07 p.m., Mayor Worley announced a short recess.

UDO AMENDMENT REVIEW

- City Attorney Oast said that this Unified Development Ordinance amendment is being brought before City Council in order that staff may respond to questions Council may have prior to the public hearing, which has been scheduled on September 13, 2005. He advised Council that it would be inappropriate for Council to receive comments from the public at this worksession.

Addition of General Retail Sales as a Use of Right in the Neighborhood Business District.

- Mr. Joe Heard, Director of Development Services, said that this is the consideration of amending the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) for the purpose of adding general retail sales as a use of right in the Neighborhood Business District.

- This proposed ordinance was drafted in response to requests from local businesses and property owners to allow a broader range of retail activities in the Neighborhood Business District (NBD). In reviewing this proposal, staff noted that many types of specific retail uses are already allowed within the NBD, including bakeries, bicycle shops, bookstores, candy/snack shops, delicatessens, florists, fruit/vegetable markets, gift shops, grocery stores, hardware/garden supply stores, pharmacies, and video stores. Both Planning staff and the Planning & Zoning Commission gave careful consideration to types of retail uses that would not be desirable in this district. More objectionable uses, such as the sale of adult-oriented items, are subject to more restrictive standards and are not classified as "retail sales". As the NBD does not allow drive-thrus or outdoor storage and limits the size of any building to 3,000 square feet for commercial use, uses are not of a scale or character that could significantly impact a neighborhood.

The intent of the NBD is to provide for the daily convenience and personal service needs of the surrounding residential neighborhood while minimizing conflicts with surrounding residential uses. The district is designed to be located within or adjacent to residential neighborhoods where large commercial operations are inappropriate, but small neighborhood oriented businesses are useful and desirable. Examples of existing NBD districts include small, traditional commercial areas within Emma, Montford, Oakley, Shiloh, and West Asheville.

Pro –

- This amendment would allow a greater variety of opportunities for the establishment of businesses in the NBD.
- The additional uses allowed would not have a greater impact than the uses presently allowed in the NBD.

Con –

- None.

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The Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval of these code amendments on August 3, 2005 by a unanimous vote of 7-0. Staff recommends approval of the proposed ordinance amendment as well.

- Mayor Worley asked that the record show that City Council received this information and instructed the City Manager to place this item on the next appropriate formal City Council agenda.

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

- Assistant City Manager Jeff Richardson said that this is a quarterly status report of the progress made in key areas of the city's Strategic Operating Plan.

Staff continue to make significant progress in a number of the core focus areas outlined in the plan. Specific progress includes:

Focus Area: Economic Development

- Implementation of the 2004 Development Task Force recommendations, in an effort to facilitate a more efficient and economical permitting process.

Focus Area: Sense of Place, Heritage & Arts

- Completion of the College Street improvement project as part of the gateway/corridor improvement focus.

Focus Area: Housing Opportunities

- Continuing to facilitate community involvement through forums to increase support of affordable housing funds and expand the Housing Trust Fund to include private investment.

Focus Area: Planning

- Successful public transportation partnerships with UNC-Asheville and the Town of Weaverville to increase the effectiveness of the transportation system.

Focus Area: Partnerships to Improve Critical Services & Infrastructure

- Severance of the Water Agreement, which has led to an improved water system governance that better serves our community and its citizens.
- Increased resources and efforts aimed at reducing drug-related crime.

Focus Area: Natural & Built Environment

- Adoption of the Stormwater Utility program, allowing the city to comprehensively address and improve the city's stormwater infrastructure.

Focus Area: Community Building

- Expansion of the city government cable access channel capability by producing over three times the amount of programming over the past year.
- Creation of the Citizen's Academy (62 city residents have graduated thus far)

Staff is prepared to answer any additional questions that City Council may have regarding this document. We would appreciate Council direction on the future steps as follows:

- November, 2005: Next Quarterly Strategic Plan Update

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- January, 2006: City Council Annual Retreat: City Council may choose to comprehensively review and update the plan at this time. Staff will align the Fiscal Year 2006-07 annual budget based on council direction at this time.

Council felt the even though the completion of the College Street improvement project as part of the gateway/corridor improvement focus, fits well in the focus area of sense of place, heritage and arts, they felt that was not something Council took the lead on or envisioned when the Strategic Operating Plan was developed.

Councilwoman Jones felt it was time to update the document but felt it was very important to get citizens involved in next stage.

City Manager Jackson felt that the Strategic Plan is an important document and agreed it was important to involve the citizens in the front end. Council should then hold their retreat and be clear about what are the business plan initiatives. Staff will not implement those initiatives without having a follow-up by this Council because it is a commitment of time and resources, and that is a policy decision.

FEDERAL CLEAN AIR ACT

Councilman Newman read the following resolution and asked for City Council's support: "WHEREAS, air pollution is a significant contributing cause of respiratory and other ailments in the population of Western North Carolina, especially in the very young and very old; and WHEREAS, air pollution has harmful effects on the ecology and environment, including depletion of the ozone layer, and weakening and destruction of vegetation at high elevations; and WHEREAS, air pollution has a harmful effect on the economy of Western North Carolina, in that it interferes with mountain views which have long been an attraction for the tourism industry; and WHEREAS, a substantial amount of the air pollution that affects Western North Carolina originates in other states and drifts into this area on prevailing winds; and WHEREAS, in 2001, the State of North Carolina adopted the Clean Smokestacks Act in order to reduce air pollution originating from within the State; and WHEREAS, federal law, like the federal Clean Air Act, is the most effective way to control interstate air pollution. NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT: (1) The City Council of the City of Asheville does hereby support full implementation of the federal Clean Air Act, and the adoption of laws that would make the standards established by the N. C. Clean Smokestacks Act applicable in other states; and (2) The City Council of the City of Asheville urges the N.C. Congressional Delegation to oppose any legislation that would weaken the federal Clean Air Act or that would undercut or delay North Carolina's legal authority to seek reductions in pollution that originate from upwind states."

Although all of Council supported the resolution, discussion surrounded introducing resolutions about issues that are not within Council's power to solve or that City Council does not have direct responsibility for.

Vice-Mayor Mumpower wanted to be supportive but would not because he felt that Council should limit their resolutions to issues

that they have a direct impact on or control over.

Mayor Worley asked that the record show that City Council received this information and instructed the City Manager to place this item on the next appropriate formal City Council agenda.

ASHEVILLE-BUNCOMBE FLOOD REDUCTION TASK FORCE

Councilwoman Jones said that our community witnessed the devastating power of the back-to-back floods that tore through western North Carolina last summer. Millions of dollars in

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property were destroyed, businesses were washed away, our rivers suffered serious environmental contamination and lives were lost. The whole region was hit hard. Locally, the flooding was most severe in the Swannanoa Valley, and especially where the Swannanoa River flows through Biltmore Village.

Since the floods, many people have worked hard to help our community recover. Legislators helped secure flood relief and local agencies helped families and businesses who were dislocated. Although it inflicted great pain, the floods also brought out the best in our community.

She believes that we need to do more to understand what we can do to minimize the threat of future flooding in our community. Climate scientists tell us we may be entering an era where severe weather events will become more common. In order to protect the safety of our properties and our families, and the health of our economy and environment, it is vital for us to be prepared and plan for the future. It is not a matter of if Asheville and Buncombe County will experience another severe rain episode, it is only a matter of when.

One of the major lessons that should be learned is that floods have no respect for political boundaries. The Swannanoa Watershed includes large areas within the Asheville city limits, the unincorporated areas of eastern Buncombe County and the towns of Black Mountain and Montreat. The floods of 2005 sent a clear message – we are all in this together.

The Asheville City Council has indicated its willingness to take steps to minimize future flooding by commissioning a study of possible new reservoir management strategies for the North Fork Reservoir. We don't know if the study will indicate if alternative reservoir management studies could meaningfully reduce flooding during heavy rain episodes, but Council is doing the right thing by asking such questions and determining best management practices.

In the big scheme, the management of the reservoir levels represents only a minor part of what can be done to minimize future flooding. Our community is growing and developing at a rapid rate. We know that how we grow and develop can have a huge impact on future flood events. Poor planning can lead directly to more severe flooding. It would be the height of irresponsibility to grow in a manner that increases the threat to property, businesses, the environment, and the safety of families in our community by exacerbating future flooding.

Addressing the threat of future flooding requires a cooperative, regional approach. No single entity can effectively address the challenge alone. With this in mind, she would like to suggest that the Asheville City Council begin conversations with the Buncombe County Commissioners and other local governments (Black Mountain and Montreat) regarding the creation of an Asheville-Buncombe Flood Reduction Task Force.

She suggested that the task force include representatives appointed by all local governments that are located in the Swannanoa Valley. The purpose of the task force would be to: (1) study strategies to reduce future flood levels in the Swannanoa Valley Watershed during heavy rain episodes; (2) study strategies to minimize the economic, environmental and social impacts and the risk to human life when floods occur in the future; and (3) make recommendations to the local governments on those matters.

She has spoke with several members of the Buncombe County Commissioners about the concept and some members of the community who have strong interests in these issues, such as RiverLink. Everyone she has spoken to has either been supportive or at least open to the concept.

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If members of City Council believe this would be a worthwhile effort, she would be willing to continue talking with other members of the County Commissioners and other local municipalities, and members of the community who may have an interest in this issue.

Vice-Mayor Mumpower was supportive of this effort and wondered if we would want to limit this to the Swannanoa Valley or look to other flood-prone areas as well.

In response to Councilman Dunn about development along the River, Councilman Davis said that in reality the bottom line is good planning and development tools. He felt you can build in the floodway responsibly.

Mayor Worley felt this is a good concept and that the task force should be technical in nature.

Councilwoman Bellamy moved to waive the rules and take formal action at this meeting. This motion was seconded by Councilman Dunn and carried unanimously.

Councilwoman Bellamy moved to endorse the concept of the Asheville-Buncombe Flood Reduction Task Force, as envisioned by Councilwoman Jones. This motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Mumpower and carried unanimously.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:

It was the consensus of City Council to instruct the City Clerk to arrange interviews with Janet Whitworth, Darryl Hart and Leslie Fay for vacancies on the Planning & Zoning Commission. Mr. Harry Weiss will be a candidate, however, it is not necessary to bring him in for an interview.

It was the consensus of City Council to instruct the City Clerk to arrange interviews with James Rentz, Eric Scheffer, Elizabeth Sims and Joseph Malki for a vacancy on the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Worley adjourned the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR