

Friday – February 3, 2012 - 9:00 a.m.  
UNC-Asheville, Wilma M. Sherrill Center

## City Council Annual Retreat

Present: Mayor Terry M. Bellamy, Presiding; Vice-Mayor Esther E. Manheimer; Councilman Cecil Bothwell; Councilman Jan B. Davis; Councilman Marc W. Hunt; Councilman Christopher A. Pelly; Councilman Gordon D. Smith; City Manager Gary W. Jackson; City Attorney Robert W. Oast Jr.; and City Clerk Magdalen Bursen

Mayor Bellamy convened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the annual City Council retreat.

Mayor Bellamy thanked UNC-Asheville for hosting City Council's retreat and introduced Ms. Anne Ponder, Chancellor, who thanked City Council for coming to the new Wilma M. Sherrill Center, home of the North Carolina Center for Health & Wellness. She briefed Council on things going on at their campus, along with student initiatives and community partnerships.

Mayor Bellamy thanked Vice-Mayor Manheimer and Councilman Pelly for their assistance on the retreat agenda. She then introduced Dr. John B. Stephens, Associate Professor of Public Administration and Government, who explained that the purpose of the retreat is (1) prioritize goals for 2012; (2) set clear direction for senior staff in supporting Council's priorities; (3) continue to build strong working relationships among Council members and with senior staff; and (4) understand and apply information on economic and financial projections.

The agenda was approved and expectations/guidelines for the retreat were agreed upon.

City Council went through an ice-breaker exercise. Using the Six Thinking Hats exercise, Dr. Stephens worked with Council on the different ways of thinking/engaging in a group.

Dr. Stephens then provided Council with the summary results of his pre-retreat interviews.

Dr. Stephens said that in preparation for the February 3, 2012, City Council retreat, he conducted individual, confidential telephone interviews with the Mayor and Council Members; however, he was not able to interview Councilman Bothwell. Because the following summary did not include Councilman Bothwell's points, his are highlighted in **bold**. In addition, other items mentioned by Council at the retreat are also highlighted in **bold** and are not necessarily common areas.

Some interviewees based their comments on the Strategic Operation Plan for 2011-12 and others did not. One interviewee requested that he read the January 4, 2010, report from City Manager Gary Jackson, "Asheville, NC 2010: A Financial Crossroads."

Dr. Stephens noted that while some Council had common areas of interest, Section 2 below are areas with distinct interest or goals.

There was considerable general discussion throughout the day on the common priorities outlined below, with each member voicing their opinion on the different objectives.

### **Section 1. Areas of common or overlap of priorities**

General categories were addressed by several interviewees; the subpoints varied by interviewee

#### City financial resources

- a) Stretch dollars, plumb all sources for support
- b) Maintain 15% fund balance

- c) Seek firm/dedicated revenue sources for particular needs or goals
- d) Support city employees: include raises in next budget

#### Economic Development and Jobs

- a) Riverfront Redevelopment Commission – great opportunities – **How can we help rejuvenate the River District; Possible County help for office staff**
- b) Implement Downtown Business Improvement District (BID)
- c) Clearer focus for community development funds; re-energize + Need to be careful on how we allocate these funds – monies will need to be stretched. Likely to have to say “No” for the first time to some recipient agencies
- d) Entrepreneurship – lower barriers for new businesses and expand current businesses
- e) Support green, local employers; targeted development efforts
- f) More funding for Economic Development Commission
- g) Other possible job impacts: outside agency funding; contracts with local vendors and minority-owned businesses
- h) Support Chamber of Commerce via “5 by 5” plan for economic development
- i) **Moving City money into local banks**
- j) **Finish the Eagle-Market Street Redevelopment Project**

#### Affordable-Green-Sustainable

- a) Extend PACE to commercial property owners
- b) Sustainability/Safety – pedestrian and bicycle – continue infrastructure work
- c) **Look for partnerships for Community Energy Audit**
- d) **Funding for Tree Commission for education**
- e) **Revisit water fluoridation**
- f) **Consider a bond referendum to support goals**
- g) **Maintain 80% carbon reduction goal**
- h) **Direction on funding outside agencies**
- i) **Partnership with the Asheville Sports Commission**
- j) **Need to revisit density bonuses for other areas of smart growth**
- k) **Extend transit service to holidays and on Sundays that has service on the main routes.**

#### Various Master Plans: coordination – resources – concrete progress

- a) Examine how various master plans overlap, focus on how to move forward effectively and demonstrate pay-off to residents
- b) Progress on specific corridors
- c) Wilma Dykeman Riverway: Work with other stakeholders in river district to identify funding – is a big project, need to seek monies, but do not forfeit smaller projects; **request to define and focus on one area of the River to work on regarding implementation the Riveway Plan; apply density bonuses to entire River District; why is \$50 Million Riverside Drive Project on the DOT Transportation Improvement Plan if it is a City-maintained street**
- d) Example - plans on transportation, and arts and culture: see some results by June 30, 2012.
- e) Longer-term work: overhaul the Unified Development Ordinance

#### Neighborhood Advisory Committee

- a) Council and staff time to complete development
- b) Questions: What are the goals and powers? How to assure a representative make up?
- c) **Discussion and consensus to have draft ordinance be taken to the Housing & Community Development Committee prior to the full Council.**

#### Partnerships and key external relationships

- a) Work to strengthen for better service coordination
- b) Align daytime working population with financial support for city services

- c) Improve relationships and be more current with other local governments and the state legislature, including a more direct role in Raleigh
- d) **Seek resolution of the agreement with Henderson County for the Bent Creek property**
- e) **Develop response on how to deal with the NC Dept. of Agriculture wanting the City to deed over the WNC Ag Center.**
- f) **Develop consensus on how to approach the Airport Authority legislation**
- g) **Develop consensus on the Metropolitan Sewer District Board make-up regarding Henderson County**
- h) **Take a position as City Council regarding potential litigation affecting our water system**
- i) **Need for a full-time liaison to the General Assembly; Councilwoman Manheimer and Councilman Davis to investigate cost, role, etc. and bring forward a recommendation to Council at March 27 meeting**
- j) **Recommendation for annual meeting of City Council and the Buncombe County Commissioners**
- k) **Partnership with Land-of-Sky to apply for regional dollars**
- l) **Work with the Pack Square Conservancy in developing a plan to repay the City**
- m) **Raise parking rates again and give City residents a discount on deck parking**

#### SOP 2011-12 language on Safety

- a) Clarity in the goal for this area – Major heading reads “Asheville will be one of the safest ...” and Goal I reads “Make Asheville the safest City in America ...”
- b) Concerns about
  - 1) Level of resources it would take to be “THE best” compared to a “very good level of safety”
  - 2) Potential imbalance of investment in Safety compared to other needs and goals

#### **Section 2: Areas with distinct interests or goals**

- a) What is realistic for staff work? They do excellent work, but I do not want to overload them
- b) Civic Center renovations – well along on this, but need to see this to completion. As part of this endeavor, seek partners to work on the next phases. **Possibility of working with Moogfest on a museum in the Civic Center.**
- c) Funding for Business Improvement District: self-funded via Tax-Increment Financing
- d) Public celebrations are important: work to assure them through private, public or mixed funding (i.e., 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks and New Year’s Eve celebration)
- e) Energy efficiency – extend current efforts via a low-interest loan pilot program in FY12-13 to help individual homeowners (home weatherization, etc.)
- f) Expand our Memorandum of Understandings with UNC-Asheville and Warren Wilson to A-B Tech, Phoenix University, **and Lenoir-Rhyne**: help our staff (e.g., classes) and community (e.g. best practices, student internships)
- g) Public Safety - new police chief will mean some new directions: Council to listen, learn, advise
- h) Council rules of procedure
  - Very concerned about breaking the confidentiality of closed sessions. All council members need to maintain confidentiality.

- Seek new rule: every resolution should be a single item/subject. Purpose: avoid having many things in a proposal that makes it complex or confusing. Desired result: clearer and more transparent local government. Mayor will work with Rules Committee on single-issue resolutions and other possible rule amendments proposed by City Attorney Oast.

i) Other areas of Affordability

Housing

- Restore Affordable Housing Trust Fund– to as high as \$600,000 for upcoming fiscal year
- Consider a new formula: “Housing + Transportation” – for prioritizing location of affordable housing
- Commitment to mixed income neighborhoods: “lifecycle housing” – keep/create greater variety within each neighborhood. Goal: diversity within each neighborhood; end concentration of low income families in certain neighborhoods, and distribute infill development,

Transit

- Get more “choice riders” and greater convenience and reliability; thus re-commit to fully funding the transit system. Need a marketing budget to reach success for choice riders.
- Better service to the airport
- Any further steps toward Master Plan for Transit need additional funding

Food - Food Policy Council in development

- Food access – Housing and Community Development Department is seeking USDA loans for “food deserts” – be sure we are keeping an eye on opportunities to increase access. Keep looking
- Identify arable land parcels owned by city. Explore RFP process to lease to area farmers and gardeners
- Embrace Cooperative Extension 10% goal: **encourage** government and other institutions to spend 10% of food budgets on local food sources.

Living Wage policy - expand threshold to cover larger contracts (above the current cap of “up to \$90,000 contracts”); **extend our living wage policy to where the City only patronizes restaurant that are living wage employers; update on living wage policy coming back to Council in March, 2012**

Green and Sustainable

- City’s Sustainability Department is trying to come up with community-wide CO2 reduction target. Would like some “rudimentary metric/s” for council to consider late in 2012 or early 2013 “whatever you can come up with.”
- Management of resources: protect watershed – maintain our abundance of water – protect the public interest via maintaining public ownership.

Council previewed the 2<sup>nd</sup> trailer of the movie “The Hunger Games” which was filmed entirely in North Carolina and a good portion of City-owned property at the North Fork Reservoir.

Discussion surrounded Finance and Management Services Director Lauren Bradley report on economic and financial trends/projections. Responses Ms. Bradley did not have readily available would be provided to Council at a later date. Council agreed to (1) March 27 worksession on General Fund briefing; (2) April 10 worksession on Enterprise Funds and the Capital Improvement Plan; (3) April 24 Fiscal Year 2012-13 budget presentation; (4) May 22 budget public hearing; and (5) June 12 budget adoption.

At the suggestion of Councilman Hunt, it was the consensus of Council to have Council and possibly other government leaders and community partners attend the Budgetopolis exercise at the School of Government session in the fall.

It was the consensus of Council to have staff begin the process of narrowing down the objectives and at the March 27 worksession Council will then determine which objectives receive majority vote for next year's Strategic Operating Plan. In addition at the March 27 worksession, Council will also hold a worksession for General Fund Fiscal Year 2012-13 budget planning purposes.

**Wrap Up**

Each Council member voiced one thing they liked with the retreat and one thing they wished would have been different. However, all were pleased with Dr. Stephens as the facilitator.

**Adjournment**

The retreat adjourned at 3:41 p.m.

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City Clerk

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Mayor