

April 7, 2011
City Council Retreat & Work Session

**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL RETREAT and
WORK SESSION HELD APRIL 7, 2011**

A City Council Retreat and Work Session of the City Council of the City of Hopewell, Virginia, was held Thursday, April 7, 2011 at 5:30 p.m., in Council Chambers Conference Room, Municipal Building, 300 North Main Street, Hopewell, Virginia.

PRESENT: Christina J. Luman-Bailey, Mayor
 K. Wayne Walton, Vice Mayor
 Michael C. Bujakowski, Councilor
 Gerald S. Stokes, Councilor
 Brenda S. Pelham, Councilor
 Jackie M. Shornak, Councilor

 Edwin C. Daley, City Manager
 Thomas E. Lacheney, City Attorney
 Debra Pershing, Acting City Clerk

ABSENT: Curtis W. Harris, Councilor (illness)
 Ann Romano, City Clerk (illness)

OPENING REMARKS

Mayor Luman-Bailey stated that the Retreat was to be an informal meeting for each Councilor to provide one priority in their Ward, one top thing that constituents are talking about, and one priority relevant to the whole City. Councilor Stokes indicated that Council has a list of priorities already issued, and he further reported that Hopewell needs money. It was his impression that the Retreat was about setting goals to prove to citizens that City Council is active. The priorities that the City Manager put together for Council should receive its support. Vice Mayor Walton gathered information to sum it up, which is economic development and quality of life. He distributed handouts of his PowerPoint presentation. Councilor Shornak reminded Council that its priorities were established months ago. She concurs with Councilor Stokes about the need to determine and narrow the list, and tackle it financially.

GOALS

Downtown and Parking

Councilor Stokes indicated his goal was Downtown Hopewell and parking. He wanted to limit parking, such as a two-hour limit, to keep traffic moving. The Downtown businesses had a meeting and opposed the two-hour limit; they want to keep it as is. The goal for two-hour parking was eliminated. Mayor Luman-Bailey felt that maybe the City could work with the merchants on two-hour parking limits. Vice Mayor Walton referred to the handout he prepared. Council and staff must develop parking somewhere, and that will cost more money. According to the Mayor, it is not the responsibility of the Downtown Partnership, but the Department of Development. The Partnership can, however, help promote the program.

Beacon Theatre

Another goal of Councilor Stokes' was the Beacon Theatre, to bring entertainment to the people of Hopewell. Councilor Bujakowski and Councilor Stokes and another citizen involved, were able to visit

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the theatre. They reported back to Council indicating the need for “X” amount of dollars to bring entertainment to Hopewell. Councilor Stokes would like to hear comments from Council regarding his goal. Vice Mayor Walton stated that it all depends on money. There is money designated for downtown and it should be possible to shift monies toward the Beacon Theatre. Councilor Stokes wants a good dollar figure, and if all of Council agrees, then it will ask the City Manager to find the money. Some property owners have taken advantage of the façade program. Vice Mayor Walton agrees with Councilor Stokes to get a figure to see what it will cost.

Vice Mayor Walton asked about the 501(c)(3) status of the Beacon Theatre to accept donations. (IT WAS ACTUALLY HOPEWELL PRESERVATION, INC. [HPI]). Councilor Bujakowski asked the City Attorney if the City could take control. The City Attorney strongly advised Council to set up its own 501(c)(3). The City Manager disclosed that there are some other mechanisms, but Council and staff need to confer with the City Attorney. Councilor Bujakowski had been approached by citizens about an entity with the name “Beacon” in it. Vice Mayor Walton remarked that citizens will be watching any path taken with the Beacon Theatre. Councilor Stokes stated that if Hopewell can restore the Beacon, with adequate seating, that would help to entice an agency to bring entertainment to Hopewell. When the Community Center was built, people thought it would get torn up. It has proved to be a good investment. Vice Mayor Walton indicated that, when looking at Council’s priorities, the Beacon may jump to the top of the list. Councilor Stokes indicated that many priorities will cost big money. Council needs to explore what it can realistically accomplish. As far as Downtown is concerned, the Beacon certainly fits into Council’s plans. Councilor Shornak indicated that Council had not anticipated having the Beacon on its priority list. When revenues in Downtown are reviewed, Dollar General and Hardees make up a majority of the tax revenue. Investments over the years amount to quite a lot of money.

Councilor Shornak has been hearing from the public that Council needs to put money in other areas of the City. She has heard from businesses about prostitution, vagrants roaming, drunkards, etc. Before bringing in more businesses, Downtown must be cleaned up. She rode through Downtown last night and was actually scared. It is Council’s responsibility to get more police presence into Downtown, and other things must be done. Route #36 is where revenue is coming in—Council should look at investments. There is no type of economic development—just businesses coming in. With the expansion at Fort Lee, it is important to get on the bandwagon, or risk losing that opportunity. Councilor Shornak indicated that this should be one of Council’s priorities. Councilor Stokes felt that Downtown has taken its hit but when looking at crime overall, the activity is out there. This is something for police to address all over town. The reason to keep Downtown viable is that the “mom and pop” businesses cannot pay rent; big business has more money available to pay rent. Councilor Shornak supported a revenue stream that would bring money into the City and then focus on Downtown. Council must consider having the money before starting a project. With the budget crunch and ethanol plant not starting up on time, City Council needs to be on the same page in order to complete a project; a revenue generating project.

Councilor Stokes reminded Council and staff that the City owns no property on Rt. 36. Real estate investment would be expensive and the City does not have the money. The City Manager has some ideas such have an economic development agency to assist. They are coordinating a cardinal group of economic developers who are retired, but who have been in business for years. In turn, they would give the City a synopsis and recommendations at no charge to the City, with the stipulation that the City pay their travel expenses. The City Manager submitted information to VEDA. Councilor Shornak favored hearing from outside sources to encompass the entire City for recommendation, since it is free of charge. It will not cost taxpayers anything. They will talk with citizens and businesses. If they decide to do this, Hopewell will become their guinea pig. Dr. Daley spoke with a firm that might submit a proposal for a contract to specifically recruit for economic development, at a cost for what they may produce. Colonial Corner generates \$90,000 per year in taxes. If they are successful in bringing another entity into that area

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that generates at least another \$90,000, then they would keep what is above that amount. Councilor Bujakowski favored the idea of talking with VEDA, to have an entity come into Hopewell and with a fresh pair of eyes that has not grown up here, had a business, or had problems, etc. Such entity could look at the entire City to see potential and see problems to determine how to increase potential and deal with problems. Then City Council could decide what makes sense for us and what does not, what we can focus on, and what we do not have money to do. He does not want a plan with pretty pictures and something that is not realistic for Hopewell. Councilor Bujakowski supports pay for performance. If such an entity does not want to do this, he doesn't believe they would be any good anyway. Hopewell does not need another grandiose consultant firm only to give us something we simply cannot do. Councilor Shornak suggested that Council take the plan from January 14, 2003 and dust it off. It is important to learn from VEDA and to be on same page.

Mayor Luman-Bailey did not intend to create a controversy about Ward goals, but rather open discussion about neighborhoods.

Councilor Pelham's goals are **lighting** and **finishing** the project not completed beyond Winston Churchill Drive. The infrastructure with CDBG is so limited, in each Ward; streets must be listed to be retrofitted for the City. That is her priority. The **intersection of Winston Churchill Drive and Rt. 156**, is very dangerous for pedestrians. There have been a couple of deaths in the past 20 years. Each street needs a sign to intersect with other streets in the Five Forks area. Another thing about the Beacon is that we cannot separate it from Downtown. A decision must be made about what to do with the Beacon Theatre. One cannot exist without the other and must be inclusive. One of the biggest things with Downtown is the ordinance prohibiting skateboarding. There are "room for rent" signs above Pearl River and across the street. By enforcing that ordinance, it will get rid of a lot of illegal activity.

Councilor Bujakowski reviewed the priority list, and one of the things that struck him is that we need to be focused. Council has not given itself enough credit for what it *has* accomplished. Council has done several things in the financial plan for the City already, such as:

- Putting together a pamphlet to fill out when coming to the City to ask for dollars. Although it is cumbersome, Colonial Heights does this. It helps making decisions going forward to see how it impacts the City.
- A Council Finance Committee was established, on which Councilor Bujakowski serves with Councilor Stokes and Councilor Shornak.
- City/Schools Consolidation Plan – Council can ask schools to consolidate services to save money. While campaigning for his seat on City Council, he heard a figure that \$45,000 could be saved. If the School Board Office does not want to consolidate, however, Council cannot make them or force them to negotiate with us.
- HRWTF is underway.
- Marina is pretty close.
- We are already talking about things with Rt. 36 and Colonial Corner all the way to Cavalier Square.
- With a Transit System, the Mayor has done the work on that which will help us with getting Fort Lee to come into Downtown. The Downtown Plan got a big change with acquiring the Beacon.
- The Social Services Building will be ready in three weeks.
- Oversized vehicles in yards and street – done.
- Community policing is in there.
- A program is in place for outside agency funding. They also have to show us what they did with the money last year.

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Hopewell is doing a lot of things. The problem is that it takes so long to reach completion of any project. Councilor Bujakowski is unaccustomed to government's timeframe, but progress is being made in many of these areas. People must understand that this Council has made progress, put things in place and accomplished things. In Ward #3, the biggest concern is the Marina; big for City, the gateway on Route 10, and his Ward (#3). The other thing is the efforts on the trailer park. The trailer park has saved the City a lot of money with clean up. The owner wants to make it a conservation area for the children and the one trailer be designated as an education center, although the City Attorney has deemed that using the trailer is not legal. Vice Mayor Walton indicated that there were 60 years of trash at the trailer park, and the owner has secured a contractor to clean it up themselves.

Vice Mayor Walton reported that Ward #5 is good. The Cedar Level Road project is a priority. The River Road project jumped ahead of Cedar Level. He was told that Council is chasing a money stream it will never catch. The curve itself will cost \$6-7 million. It does not look favorable to get it done. The curve has caused a couple of deaths. Currently, there is no left turn from Cedar Level Road onto Westhill Street. There was some discussion on making it a one-way street. Sonny Pearson, from the Transportation Safety Board, was reviewing it. The City Manager reported that City Council can make a motion to designate it one-way. That is less expensive than straightening the curve. There is one house that it would be affected. It requires adoption of an ordinance to create a one-way street, however that is a short-term fix. The Mayor has had conversations with VDOT. The City Manager suggested asking delegates to lobby VDOT to divide it into two projects.

The railroad company is trying to make a quiet zone along River Road. There are certain requirements. There was a meeting and CSX is conducting a study on the volume and number of whistles. One citizen did a four-week study and tracked volume and length of whistles during day and night. It was considerably louder and longer. On Mesa Drive, a project has started replacing the treated timbers to repair that section of the crossing that is in terrible shape, which is located in Ward #5. Vice Mayor Walton suggested that City Engineer, Johnny Butler attend the next Council meeting.

There are good things going on that people do not necessarily know about. Mayor Luman-Bailey believes that the press could help out more. For example, the Community Garden Day was a wonderful event. Woodlawn Learning Center received an award for their program. There was no press release about the award nor did the press attend. It is a community-building thing. Making the most of who we are makes a positive statement about our community. Council is proud of who we are—proud of our history and who we are as a community. The Mayor's Ward (#1) has two historic districts. She wants to see more attention given to tourism and how much economic development comes out of tourism. Tourism dollars are free dollars for the community. That is good for the tax base. Tourism does not get enough attention. There was discussion of the possibility of locating a satellite Tourism Office at the Beacon Theater. When the Mayor first came to Hopewell, she went to the Visitors' Center. It wasn't easy to get from the Visitor Center to City Point. If she hadn't followed Mary Calos, she would never have found it. Perhaps it would be nice to have the Main Visitor Center in the heart of Downtown. The kickoff for the Sesquicentennial is April 2011. It would be nice to see kit home study plans as links on the website. Someone in Kippax asked about bus service. Having a service from Fort Lee to Downtown Hopewell would help. The Virginia Gateway Region asked if Councilor Shornak had connections with VEDP. There is no representative from this area on the VEDP. Councilor Shornak will follow-up. They want someone on Gateway to be on VEDP. (The City Manager reported that they are gubernatorial appointments.)

Joe Morrissey recognized the dance team which performed at Hooray for Hopewell. April is environmental month. This is good recognition. The Mayor requested a Closed Session.

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Councilor Stokes said he was looking at a flipchart on which the City Manager wrote notes, based on their conversation. He is looking at parking, Beacon, Rt. 36, lighting, CDBG; five forks traffic safety, Marina (which is taking care of itself), Cedar Level at Westhill where it is dangerous (*Councilor Stokes requested that be put on an agenda to make it a one-way street*), and the railroad crossing (every crossing must be improved). City Council was able to discuss things at the Work Session that can be done to better this community. It has not taken anything away from our priorities. Economic Development, with folks coming in and looking at the City, is good. The key to doing all this is what Council sees when it looks at the projects. There was discussion but it takes action. The City must have an action plan with goals and deadlines to have an answer or get things accomplished. Council can do an action plan and move it along as the money comes in. Get money, resources and people together. Councilor Bujakowski is a firm believer in setting completion dates. It is not always visible when certain things are being done. The Mayor suggested that the time to come together is before departments start putting their budgets together in the fall. If the money is going to be found, then it must be clear as far as what Council wants done before the departments put their budgets together. The City Manager indicated that department budgets are a little less this year than 2009-2010 budget. There is very little flexibility---each is a little bit smaller. There are four or five vacant positions that will be taken out of the budget before it goes to Council. Focus must remain on capital in the budget; 80% of a department's budget is personnel and benefits.

The City Manager recommended authorizing a hiring firm to come in on an incentive contract to bring in more revenue. A meeting can be held next week to discuss CDBG. Councilor Shornak will speak with March Altman. Administration can provide the applications. Tevya Griffin took them home and ranked them. The City Manager advised that Mr. Altman is meeting with Mr. Stevenson next week and will have an agreement on the Marina at the May meeting. The best time to dredge is after boating season. Mr. Altman is working on an agreement and will have it back to Council with its associated cost. Residents on Colonial Drive were very happy that CSX sat down at the table with City administration for a meeting.

Part of the Downtown Plan needs to come off the City's website. Modifications were discussed last year. What remains on the website should reflect changes. The City Manager will check to see if Council adopted it. The Downtown Plan should be looked at, modified, or removed from the website. As far as tourism and the Sesquicentennial celebration, City Point should be included.

The City Attorney reported that Hopewell can institute a fine system for citizens who put trash out days in advance. Decisions must be made. For example, civil or criminal, and will there be a warning period. The City currently has a dumping ordinance. There are policy questions that Council would have to answer. Right now, it takes seven days before violators are cited. That is a question as far as enforcement—Code or Police? A court date must be scheduled or where the fine is paid. The other option is to add it to the VAWCO bill for sewer and refuse. That could cause trouble with VAWCO because they are already getting feedback from citizens about their water bill. The City Attorney mentioned that the hearing examiner indicated that their rate increase was not valid in August because there was not proper notice. They were recommending a 21% or 22% increase and refund with interest on the increase from August. The next rate increase should be examined because businesses are not paying as much as individual citizens/households. If the City can create a lien as unpaid notices go out, it would be good if both police and code worked together. The City Attorney reminded Council that the City must cite the owner—not knowing if the property is owner occupied or occupied by a tenant. Councilor Bujakowski suggested doing the same with people who park cars in yards. The City Manager suggested that may be possible. A hardship exception could be considered in areas such as Miles Avenue.

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CLOSED SESSION

Councilor Shornak objected to convening into closed session because of the manner in which it was announced. She cited Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711(A)(7). *“The Mayor or any member of Council may call special meetings at any time by giving at least 12 hours notice to each member or served personally or left at usual place of business or residence.”* She felt that Council was in violation of those codes. Councilor Shornak asked the City Attorney for his interpretation of the law. Mr. Lacheney said 12-hour notice has to be personal, and the State does not allow e-mail. In his opinion, notice was not adequate. The public has been informed of the meeting; however, the notice of the closed session is not on the agenda. It would take 2/3 vote of Council to amend and add it to the agenda. Mr. Lacheney suggested that Council may want to add *“to discuss personnel to give direction to the City Attorney for the Beacon.”* The City Manager requested Council include, *“use of City property.”*

Motion was made by Councilor Pelham and **seconded** by Councilor Stokes to change the original agenda to allow Council to convene into Closed Session to discuss the Beacon Theatre and give direction to the City Attorney on the use of City property, in accordance with Virginia Code Sec. 2.2-3711 (A)(3)(7), Upon Roll Call, the vote resulted:

Mayor Luman-Bailey	-	Yes
Vice Mayor Walton	-	NO
Councilor Bujakowski	-	Yes
Councilor Stokes	-	Yes
Councilor Pelham	-	Yes
Councilor Shornak	-	NO

Mayor Luman-Bailey asked for a five-minute recess before going into Closed Session at 7:30 p.m. The Acting City Clerk was dismissed. There were no further minutes.

ADJOURN

Christina J. Luman-Bailey, Mayor

Debra Pershing, Acting City Clerk