

Memorandum

Date: February 7, 2013

To: Mayor and City Council

Subject: Recap – City Council Retreat



Following is a general recap and synopsis of the various issues reviewed by the Mayor and City Council, City Manager, Director of Finance, City Attorney, and Clerk of Council at the *2013 Annual City Council Retreat* on January 18-19 in Williamsburg.

FY12-13/FY13-14 Budget Review – The staff provided a general overall review of primary issues known at this time that could or will impact next year’s annual operating budget.

The staff reported that current projections indicate stable overall tax revenues for the coming year – if not a slight increase over the current year. This would obviously translate into a slight local revenue increase for CH Public Schools next year as well. There will be no tax increase recommended in the proposed budget for next year.

Following are additional topics/issues that were also reviewed by staff and discussed by Council relating to the FY13-14 Budget:

- ***New City Telephone System*** - The staff reviewed final plans for acquisition and installation of a new telephone system for all current city facilities including the City Hall, Safety Buildings, Library, and the new Courthouse. The project has been in development for a number of years and now ready to proceed with a significant upgrade to the entire operations telephone system. Based on the negotiated service-provider agreement, it is currently anticipated that there will be little or no capital costs associated with this project.
- ***2013-14 Five-Year Capital Program*** – Continuing with the financial-planning model established last year, the staff will be presenting an updated Five-Year Capital Program as part of the budget development process this year.
- ***Shepherd Stadium*** – The staff reviewed the revised Capital Improvements Master Plan to this historical city-owned facility that calls for an investment of at least \$250,000 over the next five years, at even increments of \$50,000 per year. The FY13-14 Budget will provide for the initial phase/funding of this project, which will include the construction of a new scoreboard and upgrades to the public address/audio system.
- ***Violet Bank (VB) Museum*** – As part of the 2012 Council Retreat, the staff proposed a Restoration/Improvement Plan for the VB Museum designed to include various capital improvements to this historic city-owned structure. The recommended plan was also specifically designed to serve as a commemoration of the upcoming Sesquicentennial of the Army of Northern Virginia’s establishing its headquarters at Violet Bank (which will be in June, 2014). The staff has recommended that this project – or a similar one – once again be considered.

As with last year, the Council engaged in a broadly-based discussion of the VB Museum and to consider the staff’s recommendation. While the Council ultimately indicated general support for the concept of a significant capital investment into the VB Museum, general concerns remain as to its long-term management structure and administration.

- ***VB Museum (continued)*** – In particular, there is interest in obtaining “official designation or certification” for the VB Museum that would avail itself to sharing in travelling exhibitions and other attributes associated with such museums. It is the view of the majority of Council that once these broader, policy-direction questions are answered about the future of the VB Museum, and appropriate restoration and/or capital improvement plan can be agreed-upon.
- ***Water & Sewer Rates/Rate Study*** – As part of the Annual Audit Report presented to the City Council this past December, the City’s independent auditor (*Brown Edwards & Company*) expressed concerns about the City’s ability to continue to meet the financial demands of its utility funds with the current rate structure. The staff further reported at the Retreat on the City’s history with utility rate analysis and adjustment; and stated its concurrence with the auditor’s opinion that consideration should be given to adjusting both water and sewer rates. After general deliberation, the Council agreed with the staff recommendation to hire an outside consulting firm to complete an analysis of the city’s water and sewer rates; and for said study to include recommendation(s) on appropriate rates and/or rate structures.
- ***New City Courthouse*** – The staff presented a preliminary report and reviewed same with Council regarding anticipated increased costs associated with day-to-day operations of the new Courthouse scheduled for opening/occupancy this fall. The initial projections suggest increased costs total \$30,000 in FY13-14 for routine maintenance (cleaning, pest control, HVAC/elevator services, etc.); and over \$40,000 per year annually. It is hoped that the actual impact will be less, but true costs will not be known until the new building is completed and occupied.
- ***Proposed Lakeview Trail*** – Council engaged in further discussion of this project that was initially discussed late last year. It was ultimately determined that while the construction of a conventional walking trail was neither warranted nor cost-effective, there remains a desire to make that particular area “*more-walkable*” for residents currently using it as such. Accordingly, the staff will make an effort to mow and/or trim the area on a more frequent basis than it has been in the past.
- ***Petersburg Area Transit (PAT)*** – Over the past year or so, there has been on-going discussion about the future of PAT and its overall financial viability. As part of this discussion, PAT is seeking out various new ways to recover costs and has asked the City to begin annual contributions to offset costs for PAT services within the City of Colonial Heights. Council reviewed this request and the overall situation regarding PAT; and the majority ultimately concluded that, at this time, there has not been sufficient data submitted to the City that would justify the contribution requested. Council remains open to the concept for financially supporting services utilized by CH residents, but hard data will need to show a direct correlation between costs and PAT-users within the City.
- ***Ambulance Rates*** – The staff presented a preliminary report and reviewed same with Council that included a recommendation to increase EMS transport rates that have not been adjusted since 2005. Council indicated general agreement with the recommendation; and the staff will be initiating the appropriate legislative action for Council to consider same formally at an upcoming Council Meeting.
- ***Electronic Billing/Receipts*** – The staff provided a briefing to Council as to current practices (and related issues) regarding electronic billing, receipts, and such general service options for customers. The planned general reorganization of financial management operations will provide greater opportunities for new electronic customer services in the near future.

- **Court Fine Collections**– The staff discussed with the Council an issue previously brought forward by Councilman Frenier regarding uncollected General District Court Fines. It appears that there may be a significant amount of such court fines going uncollected each year. Unfortunately (as was shared by staff and the City Attorney as part of this discussion), the General District Court is under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth and the City has no control over its operations. The staff, however, will at least make an inquiry in this regard.

Performance and Assignment of the Director of Finance – The staff made a detailed presentation to Council regarding its current recommendation for a significant expansion of the duties of the Director of Finance; and general reorganization of the City’s financial management operations. This proposal was reviewed and discussed by Council at the Retreat.

The staff will be proceeding with preparations to implement the expansion of the Director of Finance’s duties in the near future. Any action required of the City Council in this regard will be submitted for their formal consideration at the appropriate time.

Economic Development – A variety of wide-ranging topics related to the future of economic development activities by the City were discussed by Council and staff as part of this agenda item. Included in this discussion was sharing of individual Councilmember views as to appropriate economic development goals, objectives, staffing, incentives and/or projects.

In anticipation of this discussion, the City Manager had requested the Council’s participation in an internal/“working document” survey exercise to begin the process for defining economic development priorities. The survey results were reviewed with Council and helped identify a number of policy areas that the majority are clearly in agreement on – while also identifying areas where further discussion will be necessary.

The culmination of this overall discussion resulted in general agreement on two basic topics moving forward:

- (a) The Council and CM are in agreement that the City is in need of a full-time *Director of Economic Development* to properly lead and manage the City’s efforts in this regard; and,
- (b) One of first priorities for this new Director will be to lead the City through the development of an *Economic Development Strategic Plan* which will provide clear understanding to the Council, staff, and the general public as to the City’s economic development goals and objectives for the future.

City Manager Presentation/Miscellaneous Topics – Under this agenda item, the City Manager had requested an opportunity to engage in very brief discussion with the Council on the following list of wide-ranging topics, simply to gauge Council’s interest as to whether further consideration of such items was warranted or desired. The City Manager (CM) had initial recommendations on each subject, but as each item is essentially a policy decision, it is important to understand the majority of Council’s position on each item before deciding how best to proceed:

- **Alcohol at City Parks** - CM recommended consideration be given to easing current city restrictions on alcohol at city parks for certain public service organizations.
The majority of Council indicated no support for considering such change
- **Extending alcohol sales hours** - CM recommended consideration be given to extending permitted hours for alcohol sales within the city as recently proposed local business interests.
A majority of Council indicated support for extending on premises alcohol sales from 12:00 midnight to 2:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings.

- **Trash carts** - CM recommended consideration be given to amending city code requirements to compel residents to place trash carts “behind the front line” of their residence during non-collection days (currently, carts can remain in front yards throughout the week).
The majority of Council indicated support for considering such change
- **Video streaming of Council Meetings**- CM recommended consideration be given to utilizing current city software/capabilities to begin video streaming of City Council and other public meetings.
The majority of Council indicated support for considering developing this new service.
- **Mowing/maintain common areas** - CM reported on inconsistencies relating to current city policy for mowing and/or maintaining certain common areas in residential neighborhoods throughout the city.
The majority of Council indicated that consistency in such policies should be attained; and that the staff should assume primary responsibility for maintaining all such areas.
- **Nonresidents at Roslyn Landing Park** – An issue had been raised as to the desire for possibly enhancing control of access to the Roslyn Landing Park area by nonresidents of the City. CM requested direction, if any, as to such a request.
The majority of Council indicated no support for a policy change in this regard.
- **Code Red use policy** - CM recommended expanding the use of the Code Red (“reverse 9-1-1”) for notifying city residents. Although the system has proven to be an effective communication tool, some concerns had been expressed that use of the system should be primarily reserved for emergency situations.
The majority of Council indicated support for expanding use of the Code Red system.
- **Public Comments at Council Meetings**- CM recommended consideration be given to amending their rules to indicate that it will be the City Council’s policy that its members will not respond to or engage citizens who appear before them under the “Public Comments” section of the Regular Meeting agendas. Such practice is typical of most localities and consistent with the policy of all Tri-Cities localities.
The majority of Council indicated support for establishing such a rule.
- **iPads for the Planning Commission** - CM recommended consideration be given to providing iPads and “iPad capabilities” to the Planning Commission, which will provide for consistencies in meeting informational packets and/or presentations with the City’s recent commitment to utilizing electronic documents and communication.
The majority of Council indicated support for such a concept, but indicated that the process should involve acquisition of “next-gen” iPads for the City Council, with their current iPads being transferred to the Planning Commission for the stated purpose.
- **Christmas Parade** – CM requested guidance as to the future of this important annual event, given the mounting frustration and complaints that have been expressed throughout the community with the management of the parade in recent years.
The majority of Council indicated support for considering facilitating changes in the management of future parades.

***It should be noted that no detailed discussions occurred nor decisions made by the Council relative to any of the items listed under this section. Even in those areas where it is indicated that Council is in support of the recommended change or new program, the Council will still review and consider such items again in the future before any final decisions are made.**

Code Enforcement – A topic that continues to be of general interest to the City Council is achieving and maintaining the desired and/or appropriate level of code enforcement throughout the City. Under this agenda item, the Council and staff engaged a broad discussion of existing code enforcement operations and staffing; as well as a discussion of the overall service level expectations for 2013

As a result of this broadly-based discussion, a general consensus was reached on the following items moving forward:

- (a) The staff is currently engaged in an internal “operations audit” of the Community Development Department (which includes code enforcement operations) to review current practices and assure optimum efficiencies. One goal of this review is to identify opportunities for reassigning current staff to place a greater focus on code enforcement. Any operational changes or recommendations arising from this effort will be presented to Council as part of the FY13-14 Annual Budget proposal.
- (b) It is clear that code enforcement operations would benefit organizationally from the Community Development Department obtaining additional administrative support. In 2010, a full-time Administrative Assistant position was eliminated from the department’s budget as a cost-cutting measure. Since that time, general departmental organization and customer service have been negatively impacted. Funding for this position should be returned to the department in the FY13-14 Annual Budget to assist in the desired service enhancement efforts.
- (c) It remains unclear as to whether existing city codes and regulations are sufficient to help achieve the Council’s desired level of compliance by residents and property owners. Further review and discussion of the code as it currently exists and the desired level of appearance/enforcement will be required.

➤ ***Current Problem Areas*** – One long-time area of concern within the City relating to code enforcement is Cal’s Inc. on the southern end of the Boulevard.

In the weeks leading up to the Retreat, the CM had a series of meetings with the business/property owner, James Meadows, who expressed a desire to develop a positive working relationship with the City and to address any reasonable concerns relating to the Cal’s property. As a result of these discussions, the CM and Mr. Meadows developed a mutually-acceptable Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in an attempt to address all such issues to the satisfaction of the parties thereto. The CM reviewed the details of the MOU with the Council; and the Council ultimately indicated their unanimous support for same.

Councilmember Items – Prior to the Retreat, a list of the general agenda topics were shared with Councilmembers and they were provided the opportunity to request additional items for discussion if they so desired. Those additional items were as follows:

➤ ***Temple Avenue Interstate Interchange Improvements (Freeland)*** – Mayor Davis provided Council with a general update on the status of this project as requested; including the following information provided directly by VDOT officials:

The purpose for and need of this project is to improve traffic flow through the I-95/Temple Avenue Interchange, to eliminate prolonged periods of delay, and to decrease the accident rate within the project limits. The project will realign the off ramp and on ramp of the I-95/ Temple interchange; and the signalized intersection will be removed and replaced with a roundabout.

The interchange will be relocated to the west of the current location. The Temple Avenue Bridges will be removed to allow for the roundabout, which will include two lanes of circulation and a continuous bypass lane on each of the three approaches.

This proposed layout has been approved via City Council Resolution No. 11-45 provided by Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and adopted by the Colonial Heights City Council on December 13, 2011.

The new roundabout will force the access road to (Ridge Road) to be closed, but the signalized intersection at Temple and Hamilton will be modified to include access to (Ridge Road). Sound and retaining walls are anticipated to be used to minimize impacts.

Archaeological studies have been performed and the archaeological fieldwork for this project has been completed. The environmental document is scheduled to be completed by 9/9/13. An Interchange Modification Request is scheduled to be approved by FHWA in February 2013

Additional current project schedule milestones are as follows: Public Hearing-Fall, 2013; Design/Build Submittal-Late 2013; Advertisement-Early 2014; and Construction Completion-Early 2017

- ***Update on City Hall Reception Area (Yates)*** – CM provided a general update on this item as requested, acknowledging certain weaknesses that currently exist and areas that are designated for improvement in the near future.
- ***House numbers (Yates)*** – Based on casual observations, it appears there may be a city-wide problem with a possibly significant number of residential properties not having house numbers properly affixed to said structures as required by city code. The lack of such numbers could obviously create problems for safety response and identification. The staff will generally assess the situation and report back to the Council as to how this problem will be addressed in the near future.
- ***Review/recap of all Committees, Boards, and Commissions (Yates)*** – Information regarding this agenda item was provided in a manner that satisfied the request.
- ***Consider developing a 5-10% budget reduction plan (Kochuba)*** – This item provided an opportunity for a general policy discussion of financial emergency planning philosophies and scenarios.
- ***Strategic Planning - where do we see the city going in 5-10 years and what are our the potential: (Kochuba)*** – This agenda item provided an opportunity for a general policy discussion as to the need for more long-term strategic planning for the City. It was agreed that the *Economic Development Strategic Plan* discussed above will provide the foundation for a broader discussion in the future on an overall Strategic Plan for the City.

2013 City Council Goals – Due to time constraints, the Council ultimately did not have the opportunity to discuss Annual Goals for next year in detail at the Retreat as originally planned. Attached to this memorandum is a preliminary list of possible *2013 City Council Goals* as currently proposed by the CM. These proposed goals will be reviewed by the Council and considered for adoption at the February Regular Meeting.

For the record, it should be noted that no specific action was taken by the City Council at the Retreat; nor were any of the items as listed above were formally voted upon. This report is provided as a sharing of my personal notes on the primary discussion items at the Retreat; and, were applicable, consensus that was reached by Council as to generally moving forward at this time.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments; or if you feel there were any pertinent items discussed at the Retreat that I have not appropriately included in this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'T. Mattis', written over a light blue vertical line.

Thomas L. Mattis
City Manager

cc: Department Heads
Hugh (Chip) Fisher, City Attorney
Pamela B. Wallace, City Clerk