**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING**

**OF THE REIDSVILLE CITY COUNCIL**

**HELD WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2015 AT 9 A.M.**

**THE PENN HOUSE**

**CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor John M. “Jay” Donecker

 Mayor Pro Tem Harry L. Brown

 Councilman Tom Balsley

 Councilman Donald L. Gorham

 Councilman William Hairston

 Councilman Clark Turner

 Councilwoman Sherri G. Walker

**COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:** NONE

**CITY STAFF PRESENT:** David L. Bracken, Interim City Manager

Angela G. Stadler, CMC, City Clerk

 Chris Phillips, Assistant City Manager of Administration/Finance Director

 Tom Wiggins, Assistant City Manager of Community Services

Mayor Donecker called the meeting to order in the American Room of The Penn House, 324 Maple Avenue, Reidsville. He then turned the meeting over to Interim City Manager David Bracken.

Interim Manager Bracken said Assistant City Manager Tom Wiggins would be going first since he has an afternoon meeting. Bracken also noted that we would need to take a break at 10 a.m. to sign some closing documents for the Senior Center.

**DISCUSSING MATTERS RELATED TO THE SENIOR CENTER, INCLUDING FUNDRAISING AND A NAMING POLICY.**

Assistant City Manager Wiggins distributed a talking points handout. (A COPY OF THE HANDOUT IS HEREIN INCORPORATED AND MADE A PART OF THESE MINUTES.) He said he touched base with Michelle Schneider of Capital Development Services yesterday. She recommended that for the future, the City have a policy in regards to naming rights for the Senior Center and a broader general policy for all City facilities.

Concentrating on the Senior Center, Wiggins said we should consider the facility as two distinct buildings with separate functions only linked by a dining area. The industry standard to have a building named after someone or something is to cover 30% of the construction costs; therefore, for the Reidsville Senior Center, it would be a donation of $1.6 million to name the entire facility and $1.1 million to name the Senior Center alone. With construction costs of $1.5 million for the adult day care facility, the naming rights would be about $500,000, he said.

Wiggins added that there is usually some waiting period to assign a name to a facility in case something comes out after the fact, such as some negativity associated with the name. There would be conditions put in the agreement to end the naming rights if there is some negativity, such as a scandal in the corporation, etc. He noted that we can also do the naming of individual rooms.

Wiggins asked if there was any direction from Council on how to handle the naming rights? Mayor Donecker asked what about alive versus deceased? The Assistant City Manager said that would be another dynamic to consider.

Wiggins then distributed a second handout, which listed possibilities within the facilities for naming rights. (A COPY OF THE HANDOUT IS HEREIN INCORPORATED AND MADE A PART OF THESE MINUTES.) He noted that some groups want to give names to items, not to construction costs.

Wiggins talked about the formation of a Fundraising Committee with representation from the Senior Center and the Adult Day Care. An early donor could be put on the committee because it is always good to say they’ve given, he explained. Membership should be persons of influence or those who know the history of the center project, he said. The Assistant City Manager also noted that the Reidsville Area Foundation has pledged a $150,000 grant if it can be leveraged dollar for dollar with nonpublic monies. Securing this $300,000 should be a priority of the committee, he said.

Michelle Schneider of Capital Development Services is willing to assist us with a policy formation, Wiggins said. In addition to giving us a policy to look at, she could facilitate a fundraising committee on the front end and provide fundraising assistance if that is what we want, but he stressed that all of that comes at a cost. He said he could come back at a later date with more information.

Mayor Donecker asked Council members if they’d like to look at other policies out there, adding that there should be no payment involved to get those. There was a question about whether there were still some funds available from the first contract with Capital Development.

Councilman Gorham said he was wondering why we haven’t done a little bit more at this point. He added that he’d rather do more under the old contract rather than a new one.

The Mayor said he was glad it had gone slowly in terms of our contract with Capital Development due to the delays with the Senior Center schedule.

**The Mayor again asked if Council was comfortable with pursuing a naming policy? It appeared to be the consensus of Council to pursue such a policy.**

Wiggins asked if this was for a general policy or just the Senior Center? Councilman Gorham said it should be general so staff doesn’t have to come back to Council. The Mayor noted that street naming is a separate issue.

Councilman Gorham asked if the policy formation could not be done internally? Wiggins said staff could draft it as a recommended policy.

Interim Manager Bracken asked Wiggins to talk about the groundbreaking on April 14th. The Assistant City Manager said a committee comprised of himself, Cindy Baynes, Nick Aceves, Judy Yarbrough and Angela Stadler, has been meeting in recent weeks to plan the groundbreaking. He said he will be going out tomorrow to the site. Contracts are signed, the Notice to Proceed has been awarded, and we are ready to begin construction, he continued. The contractor is doing some surveying, erecting silk fences and looking into erosion control. Wiggins said he is pleased with how it is progressing. When he meets tomorrow with the construction manager, he will ask him to leave some of the pavement unbroken so that they will have a place for the senior dance groups to perform. Parking was a concern, but Pastor Jerry Carter of Reidsville Baptist Church & School is allowing us to use their parking lot at the rear of their property. It is believed about 100 cars can park there. ADTS is also providing a skat bus and RCATS van to shuttle people from the Penn House and Lowes ballfield parking lot. Invitations will be sent out next week. Mayor Pro Tem Brown said the event should be well attended.

**DISCUSSING MATTERS RELATED TO THE 2015-2016 FISCAL BUDGET.**

Interim City Manager Bracken said we want to give Council a brief update on where we are. It was the direction of Council to “hold the line” and maintain a flat budget, he noted, along with identifying challenges that we might face.

Assistant City Manager/Finance Director Chris Phillips stressed that we tried to keep budget requests as flat as we could and wanted to alert Council of any “land mines” that they might need to know about. (A COPY OF THE 2015-2016 BUDGET WORK SESSION, MARCH 25, 2015 OUTLINE IS HEREIN INCORPORATED AND MADE A PART OF THESE MINUTES.) Last year we did a retreat, and Council got a lot of information then but didn’t want to go through a similar exercise today, Phillips reminded them. He said staff wanted to let Council know of things they’ll see in the budget, along with some items on which staff will need some direction.

Phillips also stated that department heads were respectful of the Council’s guidance, adding that Interim Manager Bracken had already told us the same thing, even before City Council. He said he thinks we can work with the numbers they have given us, but Bracken will have some tough decisions to make.

The Finance Director then reviewed highlights from the 2014-15 Manager’s Memo of Understanding. As part of the 911 consolidation, our telecommunications were supposed to move on July 1, but we were skeptical that they would be able to move in time so we put in three months of salary for our present telecommunicators, Phillips explained. We were actually short by another five months with our guys going out to the County last week, he said. He stressed that this was a very technical project and one of the biggest the County has done. Everything seems to be going well in terms of connectivity, he added. Phillips said we did have employees longer than we thought we would have them. One of our telecommunicators found a job elsewhere so we didn’t have four the entire time and then two telecommunicators transitioned to the County last week. We think we can cover that cost, the Finance Director said. Eden Mayor Wayne Tuggle worked behind the scenes and helped get the County to pay all the 911 costs; however, the Police Department budget will be tighter this year than usual because of that, along with fewer lapsed salaries as in other years. He said we have had retirements as well as opportunities for some of our younger officers, including losing three to Leland, NC, near Wilmington.

Interim Manager Bracken said he had reached out to the County asking them to recognize longevity, etc. for the telecommunicators. Phillips said the County did allow them to take their sick time, but the County’s Human Resources Department is looking into the other.

Mayor Donecker noted that Eden Mayor Tuggle represented all of the Mayors on this because the Mayors felt some of the County Commissioners had changed what they had been saying. We felt it was not fair for City residents to pay twice, he said. All of the County’s municipal mayors said it wasn’t right and tied it into the Citizens for Economic Development situation so the cities got something better for the PSAP agreement, the Mayor continued. Phillips said we did extend the health coverage for our two telecommunicators until they got past the County’s waiting period.

Phillips noted that the Police Department has asked for two other positions, one of which handles window traffic. Ms. McKinney is now in the area where the telecommunicators were, and the lobby has been made into a “safe spot” in the last couple of weeks. In the lobby area, a button locks the door behind you, there is a phone in the space and a camera shows the situation to the County’s 911. He added that you can’t just get on the elevator anymore or roam the building because CJIS policy requires visitors to sign into the building since there is protected information there. Visitors will need to get an escort, he said in response to a question from Councilman Gorham. Phillips noted that we also have the fire stations, which can serve as a safe spot for citizens, but we need to get this word out to the citizens through the media, our Community Watch groups and the churches.

Councilwoman Walker suggested the Mayor discuss it on City Chat. The Mayor said sessions could be held on it. City Clerk Angela Stadler noted that the Police Department will also be holding a forum in early May. Interim Manager Bracken said it has been on Facebook. The Mayor suggested the process to use the safe area could be videoed and put on Facebook.

Phillips then discussed the Water Treatment Plant and Wastewater Treatment Plant, along with the 14 pump stations around town. With our current budget, some of that was a “shot in the dark”, he said, because we didn’t know the charges involved. Some of it was more of a guess than in other years, he noted, adding that it was good that we have some resources in those funds so we can cover and/or adjust those line items. No additional monies are being requested at this time in the current year, but those changes will feed into the budget we will be bringing to you, the Finance Director explained. Staff at the plants have some real concerns, he stressed, as we had a for-profit contractor over the plants for 20 years. We’d like to spend as little as possible as well, but we need to do some renovations there, he said, adding that the pump stations are the next thing to look at.

Bracken said things didn’t get bad in one year, and we can’t fix them in one year. We have to prioritize and take it in bits and pieces, which is going to take time, he said. Phillips said we can’t budget for all of that. If we have a major problem, we might need to be reimbursed from reserves, but we haven’t had a major problem in the past year, he said.

**Health Insurance**

Phillips explained that the City’s health insurance plan runs from May to April so that we can get renewal information in for the next year’s budget. The re-insurer likes to have 9-10 months of data to compare, he said. Last year we presented the changes to each employee, including our benefits and our peer group’s benefits. The employees appeared to receive the changes well, and everybody understands what our benefits are, he said.

As of right now, through February, our plan is at “break even,” he said, which is where we want to be. He said the plan has had some bad years, some of which we had to use fund balance for those deficits. We have been treading water to find out about healthcare and the possible effects if we have what is considered a “Cadillac tax plan,” he added. In response to a question from Mayor Donecker, Phillips explained that it has been the impression that, in some companies, the executives have different benefits from the workers so those companies have been penalized so that those with really good benefits will help fund benefits for everybody. So the Affordable Care Act raised the baseline or at least that was the purpose of it. The problem with our benefits is that they are good, but we don’t think they are out of line; however, there is probably going to have to be more adjustments to it. The penalty is a 40% tax, which we can’t afford to pay, he said. This would take effect in 2018, the Finance Director stated, and we feel like it will change but if it does not, we will have to cut our plan and get under that line as they try to get everyone to a similar level. If our benefits are considered too rich, we will have to get them under that level but our peers will have to do the same, he noted. He said these are global problems, and we will be in touch with others in our peer group, the League, etc. for guidance. Right now, we’re not going to change our plan, but we’ve had some serious stuff going on and with 300 lives, we’re still at break even, he said. Hopefully, we will have a few more months of good claims. If that holds true, we don’t anticipate any insurance plan changes next year.

(A BRIEF BREAK WAS TAKEN TO SIGN CLOSING DOCUMENTS.)

The meeting resumed at 10:17 a.m.

Mayor Donecker distributed the Resolution of Support for Medicaid Expansion, which William Osborne had discussed at a recent Reidsville City Council meeting. This resolution was approved by the City of Eden.

**Councilman Turner made the motion, seconded by Councilman Hairston and unanimously approved by Council in a 7-0 vote, to approve the Resolution. (A COPY OF THE RESOLUTION IS HEREIN INCORPORATED AND MADE A PART OF THESE MINUTES.)**

The Mayor said this issue is going to impact the care we give our retirees, City employees, etc. He said this is the direction we have to go in because this is affecting our hospitals, and we need to have good hospitals in order to have a good quality of life here in Reidsville. Phillips pointed out that our retirees get off our plan at age 65 or earlier if they get on Medicare earlier.

**Wellness**

Assistant City Manager Phillips reported that 108 participants came through during our recent employee health screenings and will be going over their results with Dr. Hall and his staff next week. Our health coach Gwen Dunlap has left us, and we are sad to see her go, but he noted that both of our health coaches and an interim coach came to us through HealthGram. We are considering options, including sharing another health coach, which would give that person a full-time job, the Assistant City Manager said. Interim City Manager Bracken has offered to work out with anyone who wants to at the Fitness Center beginning at 7 a.m. weekdays.

Councilman Turner asked if this doesn’t help us on our health insurance? Phillips explained that it gives the City a break on our re-insurance. Councilman Turner asked if it covers paying the health coach? Phillips said no, but it is a long-term benefit to us and cited cases where two employees discovered they were diabetic through the wellness program. Many wellness procedures are covered 100% by our plan, but he noted that while wellness costs more money on the front end, it is supposed to pay off down the line.

Staff shared personal stories where the health coach and wellness program has helped them with high blood pressure or high cholesterol. Interim Manager Bracken said after several years, we hope to see some global numbers and increases in participation. Councilman Hairston said more people are coming to the Fitness Center, and said he is glad more people are taking advantage of the facility.

Councilwoman Walker asked if we had someone in mind to replace Gwen? Phillips said there is a meeting Monday where staff will talk to employees of a nearby community about using their part-time person. He said he hopes to have someone soon. We just couldn’t compete with a full-time position at Baptist Hospital which is where Gwen went, he noted, adding the Manager will let Council know when we get someone.

**Revenues**

Assistant City Manager Phillips said the City’s revenue sources are limited. The General Assembly took away privilege licenses from municipalities except for beer and wine. This will cause the City to lose $55,000, but he stressed that we weren’t in it to get money, but we also wanted to accumulate information for public safety and other purposes.

We could go to a business registration fee for public safety purposes so that we will know who owns what and their contact information, Phillips said. It would be a $10 flat fee business fee that would raise $13,000. In responses to a question from the Mayor, the $13,000 is the gross, not net, the Finance Director stated.

There was a brief discussion about the cost of sending out the notices for such fees. Councilman Hairston noted the importance of having contact information updated in case police or firefighters have to get into a building. Phillips also noted that we still have the peddler’s licenses and explained that process. We don’t want to have people going door to door without going through some sort of process and having an ID, he stressed.

Phillips said another new source of revenue could be a Vehicle Registration Fee. If adopted, we would just have to inform the NC Department of Motor Vehicles that we are doing it. It would be a $5 fee on top of the tax and tag program. Eden and Madison have already included it in their budgets, he said. Phillips said Eden adopted both of these fees this month while Madison is looking at doing it. Both of these fee suggestions came straight out of the UNC School of Government, he said. Phillips said staff wanted to talk to Council and get their feelings on it. These fees would replace the $55,000 we have lost, he noted. In response to a question from Councilman Turner, Phillips said these revenues would go into the General Fund and not into something specific like street improvements. Few of our revenues are related to direct expenses, he noted. Staff reminded Council we lost a position in Code Enforcement when the State made cities stop doing triennial inspections.

Councilman Balsley asked why the State took away privilege licenses from the cities? Phillips said he thought part of it was because of the sweepstakes situation. Some cities, especially those down east, charged huge fees. These sweepstakes operators hired attorneys/lobbyists to help them, but it landed up taking away all privilege licenses, he said. Here in Reidsville, a general privilege license is $15, but the fees are different for different services, etc.

Phillips said we can bring these fees to you as part of the budget, but it would need to be known before July. Councilman Gorham said the vehicle fee would be seen as a hidden tax. Mayor Donecker asked about the collection rate since the tax and tag program was implemented. The collection rate has increased due to the tax and tag program. The Mayor said if we’re getting a 10% better collection rate on our taxes, we may not need the $5 per registered vehicle fee.

After more discussion on the vehicle registration fee, Phillips noted that we can adjust the budget to absorb the $55,000 loss. He said if Council doesn’t want to do these fees, it won’t kill our budget. Interim Manager Bracken said they wanted to give Council potential revenue sources that are out there.

Mayor Donecker asked Council members if they wanted to put the question on their April agenda? Councilman Gorham said the Council had said we were not going to do a tax increase. He said we should leave off the $5 vehicle fee because it will be seen as a hidden tax. In response to a question from the Mayor, Phillips said we can set the business registration fee where we want it. Since the privilege licenses had been at $15, we could keep it at $15. Councilman Hairston said he was also against any “tax increase” such as the vehicle fee.

It was stated that a motion is not needed, but Phillips said we might bring the $15 business registration fee to your April meeting for a vote.

Phillips then discussed current fees. With our recreation fees we know we can’t charge people what it costs to run these programs, he said, but staff would like to increase some fees, including facility rental fees. Assistant City Manager Wiggins said his staff is receiving more requests to rent the gym, the larger rooms at the Rec Center and the ball fields, and we’d like to increase those fees and include a damage deposit, he said. Even if we doubled some of our rental fees, we would still be under those charged by our peer groups, Wiggins stated, adding nothing extravagant but fees closer to the market rate. Councilman Gorham said he’d like to compare our fees to those charged by the school system and keep them just below them. Mayor Pro Tem Brown said the City’s rental fees haven’t changed in years and are extremely out of step. Councilwoman Walker said our Rec Center is newly renovated and needs to be taken care of. Wiggins said the same can be said with inspection fees, that they haven’t gone up in a while. In Public Works, we are subsidizing some of the tap fees now, and we would like to be able to cover our costs. We would like to get these fees at market or actual cost, not to turn a profit, Phillips explained.

Mayor Donecker asked about small businesses that use less water than a family and whether they can receive a better rate. Phillips noted that with the rate increase in 2010, the base charge went from $30 to $60 for businesses. He stressed that there are a lot of those businesses so we would have to multiply by how many of them there are. It was noted that the business rate was lower than the residential rate. Businesses like Straders Shoe Store, for example, have a private bathroom so they use very little water. Staff stressed that the utility fund doesn’t need any reductions in revenues so we may have to look at other options.

Councilman Gorham said it might make those in the downtown area feel better if they could pay a higher business registration fee and lower water rates, but the Mayor pointed out that that involved different funds. The utility fund is supposed to be self-supporting, he noted.

Phillips said the only special rate we have is for a nonprofit which uses less than one unit a month. Some small churches have come in and asked for the rate, he noted. There are laws about differing rates, the Finance Director pointed out. Different options were discussed, and the Mayor said he appreciated Phillips’ flexibility in looking at different scenarios.

Phillips said the City has one really large user, representing a quarter of our water and sewer. If something happened to that user, we would be looking at some across the board increases, he said, adding that we do appreciate that one user. In contrast, our largest taxpayer is only at 6%, he added.

**Performance-Based Pay**

Assistant City Manager Phillips and Interim Manager Bracken both said employees have really appreciated their increases. Employees have had two COLAs since 2008 and a $750 loyalty bonus, in addition to receiving their annual longevity. There have also been some promotional opportunities and step programs in some departments. The current budget included performance-based pay for the first time since 2008, Phillips said.

Discussion centered briefly on pay compression, but Phillips said we haven’t had a lot of that because we haven’t had a lot of turnover. However, with new people coming in, we will have to look into that, he stated.

Every 1% pay level increase costs the City approximately $100,000, Phillips explained in response to a question from Councilman Turner. In recent years, evaluations had lost their importance because no money was attached, he noted. The Management Team met and worked on a plan, and Human Resources brought in every supervisor for training. We went through our forms and the correct way to use them, he said, adding it is important not to wait until the evaluation to zing somebody. Both the supervisor and employee should be keeping notes and goals should be stated and reasonable. Reviews should be done at various times before the annual checkup. Phillips said this year we compressed evaluations into six months, and Human Resources is doing quality control on the forms. Michelle Smith and Terri Rivers are getting the appraisals back to the departments as quickly as possible, he added.

Councilman Hairston asked if we are still competitive with our peer groups, the City of Eden and the County? Phillips said we are competitive and have stayed close to them.

Phillips reviewed the evaluation process in greater detail, including the ratings. “Standard” (1% increase) is doing the job you were hired to do, he said. “Standard-Plus” (2% increase) is doing a little more than expected while “Above Standard” at 3% is doing the job better than anyone else, he continued. He stressed that these evaluations were based on what employees had done in the past year, not what they had done since the last performance-based raise.

In the 2015-2016 budget year, we will have to pick up all of those raises, which is about $200,000 in salaries and benefits, Phillips explained. We picked up $100,000 in increases last year and have to pick up another $100,000 this year. If we do this again, every 1% increase is about $100,000. Councilman Turner noted that some years, these numbers were reduced.

Councilman Turner asked if we can afford the $200,000 again this year? Phillips said his concern is we can’t do it again. Councilman Balsley asked if we can’t do the raises, can we still do the evaluations? The Finance Director said we still want to do them, adding that Public Works did a good job of keeping up with them even without the raises. He said that younger workers like feedback, even if it is positive or negative. Councilman Hairston said he appreciated Phillips looking at options because he thinks performance-based pay is very important.

Interim Manager Bracken said we will balance the operating budget first and then see how much we have. The Mayor said we are seeing a trend here of an improving economy, and those employees with experience like to feel they are being appreciated. He noted the need to stay on top of what is happening in the economy and what our competitors are doing. There has to be a “carrot,” he said, that’s life. Councilman Gorham said it also gives us an opportunity to evaluate the services we give our public. The Mayor said our employees are our greatest asset. Mayor Pro Tem Brown said we should give honest feedback to our employees. He said we owe that to them, even if not much money is attached to it.

Councilwoman Walker asked do we have any disgruntlement among employees? Phillips said we hear more of that with COLAs, especially with the second COLA as employees question why they should work harder than others but still only get paid the same amount. The importance of documentation was cited. Councilman Gorham also stressed that the Council gave COLAs because we couldn’t afford performance-based pay and that needs to be explained to employees.

**Pay Plan Study**

Phillips explained that the City didn’t do a pay plan study when we weren’t doing performance-based pay. We brought it back three years ago and considered doing the entire City. Last year we studied the Police Department and incorporated it into the current budget, he continued. Public Works is being studied now and will be incorporated into the coming year’s budget. After that, we do “All Other” (City Hall, Parks & Rec and Fire), and the cycle will be completed. The pay plan study picks up changes to the job responsibilities, especially increased responsibilities, instead of looking at job performance. We look at the market, including within Rockingham County, and places like Greensboro, etc. due to proximity. Matt Reese of the Piedmont Triad Regional Council still does our pay plan study, Phillips stated.

Councilman Turner noted that job security needs to come into this, which you have more with government than you do with industry. Phillips agreed, but added that you can lose a government job. Mayor Donecker talked about the social contract with employees, adding that while they may not be paid as well as the private sector, the benefit is stability and the ability to retire in 30 years. Bracken said we often undersell the tremendous benefits we have as employees for the City of Reidsville.

Phillips noted that we often get grouped in with Federal and State employees, but the numbers are not exactly the same. For our lower paid employees, we can lose them to somewhere else for a quarter an hour because you can’t go to the grocery store with health insurance. The Mayor said that employees with experience are the ambassadors for our City, and we need to be engaging more with them. You can come into this environment and work for 30 years, still retiring as a young man, he noted.

**Capital/Debt/Fund Balance**

Phillips explained that the current budget included $237,500 for capital needs. If operating is held flat, that amount would be available for the coming budget, but the needs would have to be prioritized. He also pointed out that $97,600 in debt service payments roll off this year, meaning we could get close to $500,000 in purchasing over a five-year amortization.

In regards to our Fund Balance, also known as our Reserves, the Total Fund Balance did increase but the Available Fund Balance did not so we didn’t have surplus for capital, the Finance Director said. This was due to internal service fund deficits in self-insurance and in the garage. On paper, the garage is losing money, he noted. The responsible thing to do was set aside some monies to cover those deficits, Phillips said. We haven’t used any fund balance this year, he noted, except one authorization, which was the consultant fee for the City Manager search.

The Finance Director said he is not sure of anything on the horizon. The Police Department budget is tighter than he’s ever seen it. We do have the fuel reserves fund in the City Manager’s department, which hasn’t been touched for the year.

Bracken said he’d like to come back to Council and make recommendations if we have any surplus. If there are any savings, we may look at doing some things to take pressure off of the new budget, he stated.

**Chamber of Commerce.**

Mayor Donecker noted that the Governing Board budget is only at 30% spent, due to the spending behavior of those around the table. The Chamber is moving into a new building, which needs to be upfitted, and he said an allocation to get them squared away now rather than waiting until July would be good. He said the Chamber will submit a business plan for the next year. This allocation would help with things like signage for the Chamber with people gravitating there as a business center. The Mayor said this would be a one-time upfit, with about $5,000 for things like signage, furniture, etc., and $6,000 for marketing and promotion of the City. Staff indicated there may be monies in the Special Projects line item for the expenditure. Mayor Donecker said this would be for marketing the City, beginning next month and would be a one shot deal. Again, he noted that the Chamber would provide more of a succinct plan for next year. Councilwoman Walker said she’d like to see the number go down to $10,000, but it was left at $11,000. The Mayor said this was more of negotiation process with the one-time allocation showing a little faith in the conversation with the Chamber. If the Chamber’s business plan includes hiring someone, that would be an ongoing expense, the Mayor noted. Councilman Gorham, citing the possible loss of Commonwealth, said we can let the Chamber help market the City better.

**Councilman Hairston then made the motion, seconded by Councilman Gorham, to approve an $11,000 one-time allocation for the Reidsville Chamber of Commerce to develop a visitors center, including one-time upfit (signage, furniture) and promotional and marketing activities.**

Mayor Donecker stressed that the City needs to know the expected outcomes and what they will do with the monies. This will go towards removing the Reidsville Visitors Center burden from City Hall, he said, and having City staff managing that system. He noted the Chamber is always taking pictures, etc., to promote the City.

**The motion passed in a 7-0 vote.**

Finance Director Phillips said the next time they met with them, they’d like to have a draft of the budget for the Council. They would have it balanced and show Council what is in there and what is not. The budget could be adopted at either the Council’s May or June meeting, he said.

It was decided another budget work session would be helpful prior to the May meeting, perhaps the last week in April. Council members were asked to bring their calendars to the April meeting. Mayor Donecker thanked Phillips for making the budget easier to understand over these past two years.

**Council broke briefly for lunch.**

**Videotaping Proposal.**

Mayor Donecker then offered to Council a proposal by Roy Sawyers/rceno.com to videotape the Council’s regular monthly meetings. (A COPY OF THE PROPOSAL IS HEREIN INCORPORATED AND MADE A PART OF THESE MINUTES.) The video could be put on the County’s public access channel, he said and would be another way to engage our citizens. A lot of people still don’t know about Reidsville Connect, City Chat, etc., so this would be one more way for people in our community to know what we do and be more engaged so they really understand, the Mayor stressed.

Councilman Balsley said that with the Council meeting at different times of day, holding Mayor/Council Hours, City Chat, etc., we are being more transparent than we have ever been. The Mayor said this is another way to improve our transparency.

It was noted that Council doesn’t have to consider the proposal right now. The Mayor said the cost would be $3,000 for 12 monthly Council meetings. Councilwoman Walker said she was on board for this.

**It appeared to be the consensus of Council to include this line item in next year’s budget.**

**UPDATE ON THE DOWNTOWN SCULPTURE.**

Interim Manager Bracken led the discussion on the downtown art sculpture. He noted that Council had given retired City Manager Michael Pearce the authority to proceed with securing some type of art downtown and that he, along with a selection panel, interviewed several artists. Greensboro artist Jim Gallucci was selected, and a public forum was held. Based on comments made at the forum, Gallucci revised the project amid complaints that the sculpture didn’t seem to fit Reidsville and was too modern. He re-worked his ideas and the committee met last Friday to look at the revisions. The artist has changed the top of the sculpture and proposed historical items be added to it; thereby, shifting the focus to the history of Reidsville and those who have contributed to our history.

Several historical figures were suggested, including Governor David Settle Reid and Ms. Susie Sharp, the first woman to sit on the North Carolina State Supreme Court. Councilman Turner, who is related to Sharp, did express some concern that she might be considered a controversial choice. Other names have been suggested from the African-American community, including Rev. Cecil Marcellus, the first African-American on the Reidsville Council; prominent downtown Reidsville businessman late Clarence Tucker, who also served as a Rockingham County Commissioner; and H.G. Griggs, who was a civil rights leader in the City. Also mentioned was the Indian head from American Tobacco, Charles Penn, the Norfolk & Southern Railroad, etc. City Clerk Angela Stadler also noted that the committee had considered that someone like local historian Bob Carter be asked for suggestions.

Bracken explained that the sculpture shifts from the historical elements showing the contributions many made that help move us forward to the future and what we can ultimately become. He stressed that we are not going to get 100% consensus from everyone and that is true of every city with public art. Such art raises questions but this has taken the abstract and found a way to relate it to Reidsville’s history, he noted.

Councilman Gorham said from the questions he has been asked, people want to know if they will have the opportunity to have some more input. The Mayor indicated there will still be opportunity for review by the Committee and the Council. He noted that there are those who will still have a problem with it and will photoshop it and make it too large for the intersection, etc. Naysayers will always have something to say about it, he said.

Councilman Balsley said he believed Council should let the committee continue to keep on with it. The Council can endorse the concept, and we can let the community know the ideas for the silhouettes but not micromanage it, the Councilman said.

Councilman Hairston said what if the committee continues to go in this direction but have more public input to say what they think about it? Councilman Gorham said he couldn’t endorse it until he got more citizens’ feedback. The Mayor said he likes the direction it’s going and that while we need to get public buy-in, we can’t have public input on every step of the process.

The Mayor asked if we could get consensus that we like this process and will hold another public forum in the future. Councilwoman Walker, noting this is still a top topic of consideration around town, said she felt the public needs to be involved. It could be put on the City website and other places to let people see it. It was noted that the Council didn’t want a statue because they tend to be “ho hum” but instead, wanted something that stirs emotions, embraces the arts and differing opinions. It will get people to come downtown. The Mayor said the artist listened to the public comments and is moving in the right direction, and a public viewing can be held after the panels are decided. Councilman Turner noted that some people who are opposed to this art project still want a statue or obelisk. Councilman Balsley said he wants us to move on so we can see it put up.

Interim Manager Bracken said the committee needs to have your support and know that you are behind them. Councilman Turner said we should go forward since we have a contract.

Bracken said a list of ideas for the historical panels will be developed.

**Bracken asked if everyone was on track to incorporate the historical elements and move forward with the process. Council members seemed to agree.**

**TRAFFIC ON SHERWOOD DRIVE**

Interim Manager Bracken said he had given Police Chief Hassell the directive to begin traffic enforcement on Sherwood Drive. (A COPY OF THE MEMO FROM CHIEF HASSELL IS HEREIN INCORPORATED AND MADE A PART OF THESE MINUTES.) After adding the enforcement there, they felt that speeding activity has decreased before and after school, the Manager said. At the present time, Chief Hassell does not recommend speed humps unless significant violations occur in the next four weeks.

Bracken said there are other areas of the City that we’ve talked about stepping up enforcement, which is certainly the cheapest way to curb speeding, etc. If drivers know police officers are out there, it curbs behaviors. We can put cameras out there, but that is not enforceable, he said.

If things escalate, staff has been working on alternative options to stay ahead of the curve, Bracken said. He added that he will talk with Mr. Garner because he wants to make him feel we are on top of it. Councilman Gorham said he had seen some improvement there.

**Trash on South Park Drive.**

Councilwoman Walker asked if we have cameras available to put in other places, such as South Park Drive, along with signage. People are putting whole bags of trash out there, she noted. It was questioned whether they could get someone to adopt it, and the high school ROTC group was mentioned as a possibility. Bracken said he felt some of this was people passing through who don’t value Reidsville. Councilman Turner said people put trash out on Main Street every day as well.

**Update on Freeway Drive.**

Bracken said we are still 300 days out from the Freeway Drive project being completed. It has been extended almost a year from its original projections due to weather and utility relocation. We just want to let citizens know what is taking place, he stated, adding that it is going to be an inconvenience, but we will keep people informed as best we can. November of 2016 is the latest date given for completion of the project. Bracken said it will do wonders for moving traffic through that corridor of Reidsville.

It was noted that as of March 30, all of the NCDOT offices will be at the same location on Scales Street. Councilman Gorham told Bracken he appreciated the job he was doing.

**Councilman Turner then made the motion, seconded by Councilman Balsley and unanimously approved by Council in a 7-0 vote, to adjourn.**

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 John M. “Jay” Donecker, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Angela G. Stadler, CMC/NCCMC, City Clerk