

GASTONIA CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
MARCH 16, 2010 – 6:00 P.M.  
GASTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE PUBLIC FORUM ROOM – GASTONIA, NC

Mayor Stultz called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 16, 2010, in the Gaston County Courthouse Public Forum Room, Gastonia, North Carolina. She noted that Ms. Arlene Roman, Environmental Management System Coordinator, was a key participant in the City achieving the NC Environmental Steward Award, which is being presented tonight. She said Ms. Roman is not present for the award tonight as she continues ongoing treatment for a serious medical condition. They want to send her thoughts and best wishes and commend her for her contribution to this successful program. Councilman Howren then opened the meeting with prayer and led the audience in the pledge of allegiance to the flag. Ms. Virginia L. Creighton, City Clerk, recorded the minutes.

PRESENT: Mayor Jennifer T. Stultz  
 Mayor Pro Tem Walker E. Reid, III  
 Council Members: \*Keith Tidwell  
                           David R. Kirlin  
                           R. Dale Burkett  
                           John B. Howren, Jr.  
                           Brenda B. Craig  
 City Manager James M. Palenick  
 City Attorney L. Ashley Smith

ABSENT: NONE

\* Councilman Tidwell arrived at 6:10 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Mayor Stultz noted that there is an addendum to this agenda, which includes Item E(2), **RECOGNITION OF FORESTVIEW HIGH SCHOOL WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM – 3A WOMEN'S BASKETBALL STATE CHAMPIONS**. She also asked that Item F4, **REQUEST FOR IN-KIND SERVICES – MEMORY WALK**, and Item F5, **REQUEST FOR IN-KIND SERVICES – DOWNTOWN ALIVE CONCERT SERIES**, be postponed to the April 6, 2010, City Council meeting.

Councilman Howren made a motion to adopt the agenda, with the addendum, as amended. Mayor Pro Tem Reid seconded the motion and Council approved it unanimously.

GREETINGS TO PLEASANT RIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mayor Stultz said she visited Pleasant Ridge Elementary School for their Career Day. The students get extra credit if they watch the Council meeting tonight, so she wanted to say hello to those students watching.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

(1) Regular Council Meeting – December 15, 2009

Mayor Pro Tem Reid made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 15, 2009, Regular Council meeting, as printed. Councilman Burkett seconded the motion and Council approved it unanimously.

AWARDS, CEREMONIES, AND PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE

(1) Proclamation – “Arbor Day” – March 19, 2010

Mayor Stultz recognized Councilman Howren, Member of the Awards, Ceremonies, and Promotions Committee, for the purpose of making the presentation.

Councilman Howren read the “Arbor Day” Proclamation and presented it to Mr. Verne Deason and Mr. Mike Holder, Keep Gastonia Beautiful Board Members.

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Councilman Howren made a motion to adopt the “Arbor Day” Proclamation. Mayor Pro Tem Reid seconded the motion and Council approved it unanimously.

Mr. Deason thanked Council for this Proclamation. He highlighted the events that would take place during the Arbor Day celebration on March 19, 2010. He noted that at this celebration, Council would be awarded the Tree City award for the ninth year in a row.

(Proclamation as contained in Exhibit Book 6 to Minute Book 99 at Page 28.)

(2) Recognition of Forestview High School Women’s Basketball Team – 3A Women’s Basketball State Champions

Mayor Stultz introduced the Forestview High School women’s basketball team players, coach, assistant coaches, manager, trainers, and videographer. She also introduced the athletic director and Principal of Forestview High School. Council congratulated them and presented each with a certificate of congratulations for being the 3A Women’s Basketball State Champions.

(Reference as contained in Exhibit Book 6 to Minute Book 99 at Page 29.)

**PRESENTATIONS**

(1) Mr. Dee Freeman, Secretary of North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Re: Presentation of North Carolina Environmental Steward Award to Crowders Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant and Water Treatment Plant

Mr. Freeman introduced the following members of his staff: Gary Hunt, Julie Woolsey, Chris Frazier, Angela Barger, Claudia Powell, and Keyes McGee.

He briefly explained the voluntary North Carolina Environmental Steward Program, noting that the program has three levels of membership, with the Environmental Steward being the highest. He said to become an Environmental Steward, a facility must go through a rigorous process and meet stringent environmental compliance and management requirements. He highlighted some of the accomplishments recognized at the Crowders Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant and at the Water Treatment Plant.

On behalf of Governor Perdue, the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the State of North Carolina, he congratulated the employees of the Crowders Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant and Water Treatment Plant and presented to them the North Carolina Environmental Steward Award.

(Reference as contained in Exhibit Book 6 to Minute Book 99 at Page 30.)

(2) Mr. Phil Welch, Gastonia Fire Chief

Re: Present Battalion Chief William Thompson with the Executive Fire Officer Certificate from the National Fire Academy

Chief Welch advised that Battalion Chief William Thompson had earned one of the highest credentials awarded in the US Fire Service by being identified as an Executive Fire Officer (EFO) by the National Fire Academy. He explained that the National Fire Academy’s EFO program was an intense four-year program requiring participants to attend a two-week residency course each year and complete an extensive research project after each course. He read and presented to Chief Thompson a certificate recognizing his successful completion of requisite courses of study and applied research projects, conferring to him the title of Executive Fire Officer.

Chief Thompson, who was accompanied by his wife and several members of his battalion, thanked all who have supported and encouraged him to complete this program.

(Reference as contained in Exhibit Book 6 to Minute Book 99 at Page 31.)

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(3) Mr. James M. Palenick, City Manager

Re: Presentation of Certificate for Employee Savings Suggestion Program Award

Mr. Palenick presented an Employee Savings Suggestion Program Award certificate to Mr. Michael Deal, Plant Operator, Wastewater Division. He said Mr. Deal came up with a suggestion on how to build an in-house brush cleaning system for the large secondary clarifiers. This was in lieu of purchasing a vendor system that would have cost the City well over \$10,000. Mr. Deal came up with something that worked every bit as good for a total cost of \$2,800. He noted that Mr. Deal would receive a tangible award of \$2,500.

(4) Ms. Becca Carpenter, Alzheimer's Association

Re: Request for In-Kind Services – Memory Walk – April 24, 2010

This item was postponed to the April 6, 2010, City Council meeting.

(5) Ms. Missy Turney, Director, Gastonia Downtown Development Corporation

Re: Request for In-Kind Services – Downtown Alive Concert Series – June 10, June 24, July 8, July 22

This item was postponed to the April 6, 2010, City Council meeting.

(6) Reverend Dickie Spargo and Mr. John Whitaker

Re: Request for City Co-Sponsorship – Hope for Gaston

Reverend Spargo noted that two Hope for Gaston events took place in 2009, and there are two events planned for 2010. He showed a video of some of the activities that took place during the 2009 events.

Mr. John Whitaker, Project Coordinator for Hope for Gaston, highlighted some of the projects that were completed in 2009. He introduced Pastor Rodney Freeman, Mount Zion Restoration Church.

Pastor Freeman expressed appreciation for what is being done through Hope for Gaston and said he was excited about what was going to take place in his community on May 1, 2010.

Reverend Spargo advised that the May 1, 2010, Hope for Gaston event would take place in the Jenkins Heights community. He said they were here today to request that the City cosponsor this event.

Councilman Tidwell made a motion to approve the co-sponsorship of the Hope for Gaston event on May 1, 2010. Councilwoman Craig seconded the motion and Council approved it unanimously.

(Reference as contained in Exhibit Book 6 to Minute Book 99 at Page 32.)

(7) Ms. Michelle Nance, Development Services Manager

Re: Garland Business Center Customer Service Audit

Ms. Nance advised that in late Spring, 2009, the Development Services Department contracted with a consultant to perform a customer service audit for the City's land development processes, including rezoning, subdivision, site plan, and building plan approvals. She said the audit mapped all major steps in the plan review and approval process and recommended changes to processes and procedures to improve efficiency and customer service. They also looked at other communities and compared Gastonia with them as far as review periods, the time it takes to get from application to permit. The third part of this study was actual customer service training. Approximately 40 employees participate in that training.

She said they did not find any major issues with our customer service processes, but recommendations were made. After receiving the completed study, staff picked out actions that could be implemented quickly and easily. They then prioritized the remaining recommendations and established a timeline for accomplishing those. She briefly reviewed some of those recommendations and noted that they were moving forward and working on them. A list of all the recommendations made is contained in the exhibit book.

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Ms. Nance said the single biggest thing that she thinks came out of this customer service audit was that they now have a core group that meets every month to look at issues that come up from time to time. They will be addressing those issues as they do come up.

(Reference as contained in Exhibit Book 6 to Minute Book 99 at Page 33.)

**PUBLIC EXPRESSION**

(1) Mr. Skip McPhail, 3634 Club Colony West – Re: Conference Center

Mr. McPhail advised that a Council Member had requested that he be on the regular agenda, so that Council can discuss the issue.

Mayor Stultz noted that there would have to be a vote of Council to do that.

Councilman Tidwell made a motion to add Mr. McPhail to the agenda. Councilman Burkett seconded the motion for discussion.

After considerable discussion, the vote on the motion was 1-5 (Councilman Kirlin, Councilman Burkett, Mayor Pro Tem Reid, Councilman Howren, and Councilwoman Craig cast the dissenting votes).

Mr. McPhail continued with his comments under Public Expression.

Mr. McPhail posed several questions regarding the proposed convention center.

(2) Mr. Ken Gantt, P.O. Box 507, Cherryville – Re: Various Issues

Mr. Gantt expressed concern regarding ABC Boards, travel expenses by elected officials and staff, unnecessary spending, and spending money on lawn care when employees are being laid off.

(3) Mr. Tripp Hord – Re: West Gastonia Advisory Board

Mr. Hord thanked Councilwoman Craig for asking him to chair the West Gastonia Advisory Board. He said their mission is to address and advise City staff of needs/concerns within West Gastonia regarding public safety, property management, business incentives, and utility infrastructure, and also to focus on what sets West Gastonia apart from the rest of the City in a positive nature to lure new residents and businesses. Their goals are to within one year be able to show significant, measurable improvements to neighborhood safety, property management, business incentive, and overall image with established benchmarks, and to inspire other areas of the City to make the same improvements. They are meeting monthly. He named the other members of this board. He said they look forward to bringing something to Council in the next 8 to 12 months.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

ITEM 1: RESOLUTION OF INTENT TO CLOSE AND SET PUBLIC HEARING DATE ON CLOSING A PORTION OF WEST TWENTIETH AVENUE, A PORTION OF SOUTH PERRY STREET, AND A TEN-FOOT ALLEYWAY OFF OF SOUTH PERRY STREET

(Reference and Resolution as contained in Exhibit Book 6 to Minute Book 99 at Page 34.)

ITEM 2: AWARD OF CONTRACT – RAS/WAS PUMPING IMPROVEMENTS AT CROWDERS CREEK WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT – HICKORY CONSTRUCTION - \$428,223

(Reference and Bids as contained in Exhibit Book 6 to Minute Book 99 at Page 35. Contract on file through City Clerk's office.)

ITEM 3: RESOLUTION APPROVING PURCHASE OF F-6A BOMB ROBOT FROM REMOTEE AS A SOLE SOURCE PURCHASE – \$169,856

(Reference and Resolution as contained in Exhibit Book 6 to Minute Book 99 at Page 36.)

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ITEM 4: AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR FLAME RETARDANT UNIFORM SERVICES – SUNSHINE CLEANERS – 5-YEAR RENTAL CONTRACT – \$122,164 (\$24,433/YEAR)  
(Reference and Bids as contained in Exhibit Book 6 to Minute Book 99 at Page 37. Contract on file through City Clerk's office.)

Councilman Howren made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Councilman Burkett seconded the motion and Council approved it unanimously.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF SUBMITTING REQUEST FOR INFORMATION TO PARTICIPATE IN GOOGLE FIBER OPTIC TRIAL

Mayor Stultz recognized Ms. Kristy R. Crisp, Key Accounts Manager, for the purpose of making the presentation.

Ms. Crisp explained that this resolution was to show support for participation in the Google fiber optic trial. She stated that Google had issued a request for information seeking applications from municipalities and other organizations interested in partnering with them in a pilot program that would bring high speed broadband to every home. She said Google is looking for a city between 50,000 and 500,000 population, and would fully fund the program.

She then answered various questions of Council.

(Reference as contained in Exhibit Book 6 to Minute Book 99 at Page 38.)

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Mr. L. Ashley Smith, City Attorney, encouraged everyone to vote on May 4, 2010.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. James M. Palenick, City Manager, gave a brief update on efforts to select an architectural team for the conference center/parking deck project. He said each of the five finalist teams were interviewed last week by a five-member staff committee. In balancing all of the overall project criteria, the committee came to a unanimous consensus to recommend that Overcash Demmitt Architects be approved for a contract. That contract will come to Council at its April 6, 2010, meeting. They have already began the process of doing a geotechnical survey, a survey to determine the precise boundaries of the site, and a Phase I environmental study. They would also like to hold a design charette, in which all Council members can participate, as early in the process as necessary. Tentatively they are looking at the morning of April 9, 2010.

He said he thinks traditionally, on a project like this, they would do a design/bid/build process, where they select an architect, do a complete design, put the design out to bid, and select the low bidder as the general contractor. Another process allowed in North Carolina is a construction manager at risk. In that case, they select a general contractor by qualification, but also based on the cost of their fees and general conditions. When the architect has completed the schematic designs, that general contractor can then give a guaranteed maximum price. The general contractor will then prequalify a lot of different subcontractors. In doing that, they can make certain that local vendors get a real shot at it, and that they do not end up with a fly-by-night subcontractor who submits the low bid and then is not able to complete the project. Another benefit of bidding each of those subcontractor packages is, each time one comes in below budget, they get the advantage of that underage. He explained that this process also allows them to keep an aggressive schedule. He said he personally has worked through this process in the past and it works very well on fast-schedule projects. He asked if Council had any objections to doing that. No objection was voiced by Council.

Mr. Palenick then gave a brief update on efforts to select an architectural team for the Schiele Museum Environmental Study Center. He said three of the four finalists have been interviewed. They will complete the last interview tomorrow. By the end of this week, they should have a recommendation on an architectural team for this project. They will bring that recommendation to Council on April 6, 2010.

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Mr. Palenick noted that 29 employees took advantage of the early retirement incentive program. He said the total annual salaries represented by those 29 employees is \$1,460,394, and the severance payout when they retire in exchange for the incentive is \$427,500. Because of that program, he thinks they will be very strongly aided in mitigating against any possible layoffs that they were concerned about early on.

He advised that as a follow up to the joint meeting with the County Commission, the County held its first meeting today on utility consolidation. He said they invited staff members from every Gaston County municipality, along with representatives of Black and Veatch, which did some of the consolidation surveys early on. They have agreed to try to meet every 30 days. After there is more of a road map in place, they will then start bringing in elected officials.

**CITY COUNCIL REPORTS**

Mayor Pro Tem Reid – He encouraged everyone to fill out and return their census forms.

Councilman Howren – He advised that he has been asked to speak to the Judicial Review Committee in Raleigh on March 22, 2010, relative to the merits of the ABC system.

Mayor Stultz – She noted that she had a conflict with the April 12, 2010, Budget Work Session. After considerable discussion, Council agreed to move that meeting to April 21, 2010, at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Stultz stated that the All America City application had been completed and received by the National Civic League. She noted the stories told on that application. She said they should hear if Gastonia is a finalist by April.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**

Mayor Stultz adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

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Mayor Jennifer T. Stultz

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L. Ashley Smith, City Attorney

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Virginia L. Creighton, City Clerk

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