



**PLANNING COMMISSION
WORK SESSION
MINUTES**

**February 10, 2016
6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers**

MEMBERS

Roy McAfee – Chair
Richard Dynes – Vice Chair
Jim Pates, Secretary- (Remote Participation)
Jim Beavers - Absent
Roy Gratz
Richard Friesner
Tom O'Toole

CITY STAFF

Mark Whitley, Asst. City Manager
Chuck Johnston, Director of CP&B Dept.

TOPIC: Capital Improvements Plan

The February 10, 2016, Planning Commission Work Session was called to order by Chairman McAfee. He said that Mr. Pates had intended to participate remotely but had not yet called in to the session. He thanked Mr. Whitley for being present to answer questions.

Mr. Whitley was present to discuss the CIP with Commissioners at their request. He said he did not have a presentation at this time but that he would be happy to receive comments and thoughts on the 2017-2021 CIP. Mr. Whitley had previously provided a draft copy of the proposed CIP to Commissioners at their December 2015 meeting. He said the City Manager is currently developing the CIP and the Capital Budget for 2017.

He said it is the intent of the City Manager to present these items to the City Council at their meeting on March 9, 2016. He said that once they have presented the City Council with the draft, they would be coming back to the Planning Commission with the updated CIP recommendations. He said the review would be during March and April and will be looking to adopt the Capital Budget and CIP in May, unless City Council sees a reason to delay the adoption, which in that case the deadline for adoption is June 30. He noted that the School Budget needs to be adopted by May 15th. He also noted that a big change that is coming is that the School Board will be asking the City to place funds for a new elementary school into the active CIP. He said staff is currently working on cost estimates with the School Board on this issue.

Mr. McAfee apologized to Mr. Whitley that Mr. Pates had asked for this work session but had not yet called in. He said that Commissioners appreciate the opportunity to give comments this early in the process. He asked Commissioners if they had any comments or suggestions for Mr. Whitley.

There were no comments from Commissioners.

Mr. McAfee said he had read through the draft CIP and that he is okay with what has been written. He said there are things that he would like to see move forward such as transportation items but that they are not CIP concerns.

Mr. O'Toole said he is new at participating in this process. He said the City has estimated certain expenditures through the years and asked how this realistically breaks out. He asked if this requires a tax increase.

Mr. Whitley said it could potentially require a tax increase. He said that there are several sources of revenue that will fund the City's capital plans. He explained the process for Mr. O'Toole.

Mr. Pates called in to participate remotely from Kansas City, Missouri (6:10 p.m.).

Dr. Gratz asked about the Original Walker-Grant renovations. He said he had read in the newspaper about the desire for a performing arts center in the community but that he had also heard the auditorium was not included in the renovations.

Mr. Johnston said he recalled that the auditorium space is included in the renovations but is targeted to be used for meeting spaces, such as a community room, etc. He said they had looked at the potential for a performing arts center but the costs were significantly increased to do this.

Dr. Friesner asked about the proposed new elementary school. He said that when the Planning Commission had worked on the Comprehensive Plan, it had concentrated on five years out for projection of students. He asked if there were longer-term projections in terms of number of pupils.

Mr. Whitley said he did not have at this point enrollment projections that may have changed the School Board's thinking, but he did know that they were looking at about 95,000 square feet for about 750 pupils. He said in talking to the Superintendent, it sounded like that at least some of those would be under second grade. He said the school site that is being looked at is a property at the end of Gateway Boulevard, which the City owns. Preliminary costs are approximately 25-30 million dollars.

Mr. Pates asked if the City Manager's Office had examined the "Action Plan" [accompanying the recently-adopted Comprehensive Plan] to see if any items listed for immediate action could be funded this year through the CIP.

Mark responded, yes, the City Manager's Office (CMO) has gone through and looked at some.

Mr. Pates said he had three items he would like to have considered:

1. That the City undertake a study of all City-owned real estate, both inside and outside the City limits, to assess those properties' current uses, condition and potential for future use. He said there had been a Facilities Study done years ago and it was determined at that time that there are some properties that were being underutilized. He said he did not believe another study had been done since then. He said the City should take a more comprehensive look at the best use of these City-owned properties.

Mr. Whitley said that his office had not realized that the intent of that "action item" had been aimed at a study of all City-owned properties and that the City was currently reviewing certain sites, such as the Renwick Building complex [on Princess Anne Street]. Mr. Pates said that he thought a comprehensive study would be useful because, in the past, the City had often allowed unused property to sit vacant for years and deteriorate, when those properties could be put to better public use or even sold.

Mr. Whitley said the CMO would take another look at this issue.

2. That the City take action to upgrade the City's train station. Although this was not listed as an "action item" in the Action Plan, it was discussed at length in the Comprehensive Plan. The whole station area needs to be upgraded to make it more of a tourist hub/transportation center. Current conditions at the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) drop-off area [on the east side of the station] need immediate work to improve safety and the flow of traffic. Specifically, he said there is a very small parcel of privately-owned land [on the north side of Princess Anne Street adjoining the train station property and part of the Janney-Marshall warehouse property] that the City may want to acquire in order to provide more space for cars entering the VRE drive-through, to make it safer, and to improve the train station generally. This land, he said, is not currently developed. He also said he would like to see the brick sidewalks program reinstated into the CIP.
3. That the City take action to implement a recommendation in the Comp Plan to improve and increase the number of "pocket parks" in the City for residential neighborhoods (include in the CIP or at least conduct a study).

Mr. Dynes noted the parking demand for VRE commuters has decreased in the City since the Spotsylvania lot opened. He suggested that perhaps some of the money that had been set aside for this could be re-allocated from those funds to EDA projects instead.

Meeting adjourned.



Roy McAfee, Chair