

Salisbury, North Carolina
March 5, 2012

SPECIAL MEETING

PRESENT: Mayor Paul B. Woodson, Jr. Presiding; Mayor Pro Tem Susan W. Kluttz, Councilmembers Maggie A. Blackwell, William (Pete) Kennedy, and Brian Miller; Interim City Manager Doug Paris, City Clerk Myra B. Heard.

ABSENT: City Attorney F. Rivers Lawther.

The meeting was called to order at 11:30 a.m. at Sweet Meadow Café, 118 West Innes Street.

Mayor Woodson and members of City Council participated in a joint luncheon meeting with the Rowan County Board of Commissioners. Members of the Rowan County Board of Commissioners in attendance were: Chairman Chad Mitchell, Vice-Chairman Carl Ford, Commissioner Raymond Coltrain, Commissioner Jon Barber, and Commissioner Jim Sides. Interim City Manager Doug Paris, County Manager Gary Page, City Clerk Myra Heard, and Clerk to the Board Carolyn Athey were also present.

Members discussed the City's efforts to develop a one-stop shop for development in order to be business friendly to attract new business and industry to the community.

Interim City Manager Doug Paris noted the City is working to develop the first floor of the City Office Building as a one-stop development shop. He noted the space should be ready by July 2012. He stated the City plans to move planning, business license, bonding and other services required for development to the first floor. He added there will also be space available for Rowan County and the North Carolina Department of Transportation at no cost.

The current development process for both the City and County was discussed, and a suggestion was made to bring the County and City staffs together to review the current process and develop a recommendation for improvement.

Councilmember Miller commented Council learned from the City of Raleigh that if all of the development staff and stakeholders are in the room, adjustments can be made during one meeting, and no time is lost. He added he hopes both the County and City can make changes to prevent delays in the development process, adding it is more important to get it right as a community, and not who receives the credit.

Vice-Chairman Carl Ford indicated the Town of China Grove currently pays Rowan County for planning services, and he added he does not know if the County has the staff to conduct business in another place.

Members discussed delays in the Marriott Hotel project and noted this is a project that could have benefited from having County and City development staff in one room.

County Manager Gary Page stated he has met with his staff in efforts to make improvements to the process. He suggested County staff attend the City's consolidated permitting meeting.

Chairman Mitchell stated the process works for most of the projects, and he noted big projects may require a different process.

Commissioner Sides stated he thinks one of the biggest problems is not with new construction, but for modified uses of buildings.

Commissioner Coltrain suggested creating a list for new projects that indicates all that is needed to move through the development process. Members also discussed a project advocate or someone to guide a project through the process from beginning to end.

Mayor Woodson noted Council's challenge to Mr. Paris is to bring the City's process into order.

Mr. Paris stated staff could have a trial period for a large project, and with consensus by both boards, a joint meeting for City and County staff could be scheduled to work on the project. Mayor Woodson, Chairman Mitchell and Mr. Page agreed.

Mayor Pro Tem Klutz noted she and Mr. Paris met with Speaker of the North Carolina House Tom Tillis and explained Salisbury's greatest need is jobs. She stated Speaker Tillis hopes to initiate a program that would give cities who are the most business friendly State incentives, and she noted she would like the City to develop a model in order to receive State resources.

Commissioners Sides discussed a rumor that the City of Salisbury intends to remove its funding from the Salisbury-Rowan Economic Development Commission (EDC). Council responded that it has discussed a business and retail recruiter for Salisbury, but it is trying to work with the EDC, Rowan Chamber and Downtown Salisbury, Inc. (DSI) for the position. It was noted the City has had no discussion of pulling funding from the EDC, but is looking for something in addition to what is provided by the EDC.

Commissioner Sides commented DSI Executive Director Randy Hemann had a good idea for the downtown Central School Office, but he never brought the idea to the Board of Commissioners. He stated there needs to be cooperation up-front for projects to be successful.

Commissioner Barber discussed Rowan County's ranking for its physical environment and addressing the overall health of the County. He noted Salisbury received a Gold Fit Communities Award, and he suggested staff from each agency work together to address the health of the community.

Mr. Miller commented the Central School Office could be a project on which the City and County could work well together. Members discussed continuing with quarterly meetings and the benefit that could be gained from working together.

Vice-Chairman Ford suggested coming together at the Rowan Municipal Association meetings. He noted communication with Salisbury is important, as is communication with the other nine municipalities.


Mr. Page offered an apology to City Council regarding the 911 telecommunication issue. He commented there is a great deal of stress to make the project successful, and he wanted to apologize for some of his statements. He noted he will continue to work with City staff and find ways to work together.

Mr. Paris also offered an apology to the County Commissioners, and stated he hopes staff can move in a better direction by working together.

Ms. Klutz commented this type of communication is a reason the two Boards should meet, since each has the most need to work together.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:05 p.m. No action was taken by Council.


Paul B. Woodson, Jr., Mayor


Myra B. Heard, City Clerk