

July 5, 2022

A Regular Work Session of the Danville City Council convened on July 5, 2022, at 8:30 p.m. in Conference Room located on the Fourth Floor of the Municipal Building. Council Members present were: James B. Buckner, L.G. "Larry" Campbell Jr., Bryant Hood, Mayor Alonzo Jones, Barry P. Mayo, Vice Mayor Gary P. Miller, Sherman M. Saunders, J. Lee Vogler, Jr., and Madison J.R. Whittle (9). Reverend Campbell left the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Staff Members present were: City Manager Ken Larking, Deputy City Manager Earl B. Reynolds, Jr., and City Attorney W. Clarke Whitfield Jr., City Clerk Susan M. DeMasi, was absent.

Mayor Jones presided.

MINUTES

Upon **Motion** by Council Member Buckner and **second** by Council Member Mayo, Minutes of the Regular Work Session held on June 6, 2022 were approved as presented. Draft copies were distributed to Council Members prior to the Meeting.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

CONSIDERATION OF VDOT SMART SCALE PROJECT APPLICATIONS

Council had no questions or comments and agreed to put this item on an upcoming business meeting agenda.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Director of Parks and Recreation, Bill Sgrinia, introduced Dr. Stephanie Lovely, Parks & Recreation Facilities & Services Planner. Dr. Lovely explained parks were a vital part of the City and staff has been very thoughtful about how they were proceeding, what steps they were taking, and how they were involving people. They were looking at all the parks together in context of the City, and involving as many stakeholders as possible. They were making sure they were hearing as many voices and as many perspectives as possible.

There were twenty-one neighborhood parks surrounded by residential communities; these parks cross over many areas of the community, and can cross over to many more depending on how they were designed. Staff was holding events and building trust, and were making sure through the process of evaluating and planning the parks, people were aware of what was going on, that it was accessible for them to be a part of it, and that the City was accountable to them. Their plan was resident led, however, the framework for it was very strategic, based on best practices, knowledge from the community and other communities. The parks together were a system. Staff knows that they cannot offer everything at every park, but want to make sure resources were available to populations and people across the City, within a network, in a reasonable travel distance, and people can go and have a variety of experiences.

They were putting the residents at the forefront of the process. Their evaluation was based on resident feedback and knowledge, and it was a very engaging process. Residents were coming to meetings, staff was going out to meet residents, and their number one goal for this was creating park spaces that were useful and relevant to the communities around them. Residents that come to the meetings learn what it takes to make a park, and how they can do things on their own that the City will support. Dr. Lovely noted she was grateful for the support of City Council, having them attend events, and it really enhances that trust in the process. All this information was

July 5, 2022

available on the City's website, citizens can offer comments, suggestions and sign up to attend meetings as well, and see the progress of the planning. There were many ways for citizens to be involved. Mr. Sgrinia noted they were focused on the physical space, what people want, but they really were about building community.

Mr. Sgrinia updated Council on various projects beginning with the Ballou Park playground replacement; this was being removed today and staff was trying to find out if the new one was shipping next week or the week after. This playground was designed by people from the community to be inclusive and reach all different aspects of the ADA requirements.

Westmoreland Park was a resident led designed park, and they were also doing all the fundraising themselves for it. It had three different phases and staff was trying to combine Phase 1 and 2 which would be the construction of the picnic shelter, the playground, and hopefully address the basketball court if the money was available. Staff hopes to have the designs to City Planning by late July or early August to start the review process and get it out to bid.

The Third Avenue splash pad came in considerably over budget; the agreement was to pursue it as designed and that was what they were doing. They did go back to the architect, engineers and contractors to go through what they could save by eliminating things, and did find good ideas and will be able to save some money. It did come in at \$700,000 over budget. The Doyle Thomas splash pad was a step behind Third Avenue; it was getting ready the end of this month, early August to come to the City to have the designs reviewed for comments and then they will be able to put that out to bid as well. The Ballou Park splash pad was still in the conceptual phase; they have not started designing all the different elements. This design was a larger scale, and the idea was to catch all three splash pads up so that they will be completed around the same time.

The Riverfront Park plans have been reviewed by Planning and Zoning; there were a few comments that needed to be addressed, and they were waiting on permits for building in the flood plain; staff expects those back soon. They were still on schedule to put it out to bid, and can do that before the permits were obtained. The original construction estimate was \$10.1M, the City was fully funded for this project but it has not been bid. The way bids were coming in now, they fully expect it will be more than what it was when they first designed it. They anticipated it taking twelve to eighteen months to complete.

The Whitewater Channel funding for the design and engineering was voted on tonight. They had designers in and a well-known engineer who builds these all over the country; that engineer loves the idea of this project, the history of the area and the way it can fit in to bring more people into the downtown.

For the Public Art Trail, it was always the plan to acquire art pieces as they can, when they have the budget to do so, and they have been doing that over the year. In addition to that, they have been going through the program of loaning, where they have pieces on loan for eighteen months and then they rotate out; they always have new art coming in. This fall, staff will be moving art around downtown. Last week was the first time they have ever had a piece of art vandalized.

For the Bike Share Program, as of last week, the City got all new bikes, but the branding on the bikes was sloppy; they have asked the company to redo that branding. Ridership was very high, they get a lot of use, and take a lot of wear and tear.

The City has put a lot of emphasis into the Old West End, the Five Forks area, and to Doyle Thomas where they were putting a splashpad, as well the River District. It was never too early to

July 5, 2022

get out in front of the planning and how they were going to move pedestrians, by walking, biking, scooters, and rental bikes, through those spaces. They have done a conceptual plan that basically uses the road, but improves the road for pedestrians to travel through those spaces.

They have put out an RFP for a public arts masterplan. That will look strategically and holistically at the arts in the city, not just visual but performing arts, and how the City addresses those, and how they develop an arts commission that helps the City recognize the arts and support them through the process. They had their final interview with a candidate last week, a company called Designing Local out of Columbus, OH; they have done public arts master plans in cities around the country and focus on placemaking through art, and using art to support what was being done in the community.

The White Mill bridge was another project they were looking at and would say it was going to be one of the most noticeable features to downtown in time; it can be seen from four different directions, it connects the northside with the southside, and it will connect through the trail. They have the opportunity to do something very unique with this, and Mr. Sgrinia noted they have some money in the CSP to get started on that. Ms. Bobe has given him old structural plans and some conceptual work. Council Member Saunders asked about the safety of the bridge and how often it will be inspected, and Mr. Sgrinia stated this structure had been assessed twice that he has the reports for. They look at everything from the thickness of the metal to the depth of the girders under the water and it was structurally sound. After it was renovated, they will ask that the structural analysis be verified for what was done. Afterwards, it would probably be inspected every five years unless something happens that would warrant it being looked at.

The Walking Trail Bridge was one of the most photographed scenes in the City, and the City has money this year to do a structural assessment. This bridge was built one hundred years ago and they know the wood structure underneath it was deteriorating. They constantly have to repair it, so they will take a look at that; Council may see in the future a CSP request for repairs and renovation of that bridge. There were several boardwalks on the trails, and some were twenty years old; it was a harsh environment, they were down on the water, they get flooded, they were starting to rot, and they were having a hard time repairing them. There was a way to convert these into concrete and staff will be looking at doing that in the future.

The Angler's Park Expansion, a few years ago, they received a little over \$200,000 from the Virginia Outdoors Fund and that was to buy the fifty-four acres from the IDA at the end of Stinson Road; it was pretty much undevelopable, but it was perfect for Parks & Rec. They already have mountain bike trails, so they were using grant money to buy that. They were in the process of having a survey to separate the property the IDA has that was not developable. There will also be future river walk trails, and a trailhead at the end of Stinson Road and it will go down to right below Dan Daniels and join in there.

In last year's budget, there was also money for an addition at Coates Recreation Center. This expansion was an additional 1,000 sq ft or so that can be used for multiple purposes, such as community use, library services and could be used for recreational programming.

On the recreation side, there were a lot of programs and events going on; in the last year the use of City facilities was very high; rentals were being constantly used. It was not unusual to have twenty or thirty picnic shelter rentals in a weekend. The Farmer's Market was open on Wednesday's and throughout the summer. Music events have been going really well and the Children's Festival was a great event. Their struggle now was with staff; they have four programmer positions vacant; these programmers were the ones that put on all these services;

July 5, 2022

that's not to mention the part time people that support these programs as well. The Library continues to do great programming; they were starting their first Arts and Humanities Festival this year, using the Union Street Park to do a re-enactment of the *Trials of Edgar Allen Poe*.

Council Member Buckner asked if the Old West End had purchased the land between Pine and Jefferson or if the City owned that; was that being developed by the neighborhood or was someone else developing it. Mr. Sgrinia stated that it was City owned property and that the neighborhood was working with Community Development and Public Works to develop it. Eventually, Parks and Rec will be involved with the design of the park. Right now, they were making sure that it was open and accessible to the public; they cannot build private parks. There need to be trails that connect to different neighborhoods; this one should connect to Doyle Thomas, which will connect to downtown and they were working through the process with them.

Council Member Saunders asked in regard to staffing, how long can they anticipate having a staffing issue in the City and Mayor Jones asked City Manager Ken Larking to bring this issue up after he returned from Harvard.

Council Member Vogler thanked Mr. Sgrinia for his presentation, and asked about the playground coming to Ballou Park, was this going to be an inclusive playground and Mr. Sgrinia stated that all playgrounds were looked at for their inclusiveness, meaning a range of physical and cognitive impairments or disabilities to be able to use them. There were ADA requirements or accessibility elements that they have to have, but also the inclusivity that will allow people of all different abilities to interact with the piece of equipment. Mr. Vogler noted on the splash pads, there were delays on significant projects, and asked if Mr. Sgrinia thought it was safe to say that by Memorial Day next year all three will be operational and Mr. Sgrinia stated that was his hope to have them all up and running by Memorial Day. He felt confident that Third Avenue and Doyle Thomas would be, the one at Ballou Park may be questionable but hopefully it will be completed.

CLOSED MEETING

At 9:07 p.m., Vice Mayor Miller **moved** that this meeting of the City Council of the City of Danville, Virginia be recessed and that Council immediately reconvene in a Closed Meeting for the following purposes: discussion or consideration of the acquisition and/or disposition of real property for a public purpose where discussion in an open meeting would adversely impact the bargaining position of the City as permitted by Subsection A(3) of Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia, 1950 as amended, and more specifically to consider a discussion regarding the sale and/or potential purchase of a specific parcel of property for use by prospective industrial, commercial, and mixed use projects looking to locate in the City; and an Economic Development discussion and update concerning a prospective business or industry where no previous announcement has been made and/or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made as permitted by Subsection (A)(5) of Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended and more specifically to consider: an update on multiple prospective commercial, mixed use, hospitality, and industrial projects considering locating within the City and/or locating within the region in cooperation with the City's regional partners.

The Motion was **seconded** by Council Member Buckner and carried by the following vote:

VOTE: 8-0-1
AYE: Buckner, Hood, Jones, Mayo,
Miller, Saunders, Vogler and Whittle (8)

July 5, 2022

NAY: None
ABSENT: Campbell (1)

Upon unanimous vote at 9:29 p.m., Council reconvened in open session and Vice Mayor Miller **moved** for adoption of the following Resolution:

CERTIFICATE OF CLOSED MEETING

WHEREAS, the Council convened in Closed Meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.1-344.1 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, requires a Certification by the Council that such Closed Meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia Law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council hereby certifies that, to the best of each Member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements of Virginia Law under Section 2.2-3711 were heard, discussed or considered, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the Motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered by the Committee.

The Motion was **seconded** by Council Member Mayo and carried by the following vote:

VOTE: 8-0-1
AYE: Buckner, Hood, Jones, Mayo,
Miller, Saunders, Vogler and Whittle (8)
NAY: None
ABSENT: Campbell (1)

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:31 P.M.

APPROVED:

s/Alonzo L. Jones
MAYOR

ATTEST:

s/Susan M. DeMasi, CMC
CITY CLERK