

May 17, 2022

A Regular Work Session of the Danville City Council convened on May 17, 2022, at 8:57 p.m. in Council Chambers located on the Fourth Floor of the Municipal Building. Council Members present were: James B. Buckner, L.G. "Larry" Campbell Jr., Bryant Hood, Barry P. Mayo, Vice Mayor Gary P. Miller, J. Lee Vogler, Jr., and Madison J.R. Whittle (7). Sherman M. Saunders and Mayor Alonzo Jones were absent (2).

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

Vice Mayor Miller presided.

MINUTES

Upon **Motion** by Council Member Buckner and **second** by Council Member Mayo, Minutes of the Regular Work Session held on April 19, 2022, were approved as presented. Draft copies were distributed to Council Members prior to the Meeting.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

UPDATE ON THE CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROJECT

City Manager Ken Larking noted the City must do a Comprehensive Plan update per State law. The City was experiencing growth again, so it was important to handle the growth the best way possible; a Comprehensive Plan that was done extremely well, will help position the community for the better. The City has hired a well-qualified firm that will be looking at the community, they will do community engagement to make sure everyone that wants to have input in the future they have as a community and take advantage of the opportunities the community will have, has a chance to weigh in on that process. This Plan, when done, will result in some specific strategies that can be implemented as a City, that will enable them to address things like equity, neighborhoods, commercial areas, schools, parks and recreation, and opportunities for industrial recruitment.

Division Director of Planning Doug Plachcinski reviewed his PowerPoint presentation, *Danville's Comprehensive Plan – Update*, (a copy of which has been retained on Laserfiche in the City Clerk's folder, Presentations to Council.) Mr. Plachcinski noted they have been doing a lot of work on their Comprehensive Plan, and have applied to the State Community Flood Preparedness Grant request program for a significant amount of additional financial resources to augment what the City had in place. Staff has begun talking about some significant planning scope elements they felt were acute needs the City does not have resources for at this moment, to get them incorporated into the Comprehensive Planning Process.

Pre-Planning Investigation

Housing

Mr. Plachcinski explained their consultants came last year in November and December, had conversations with a lot of people and looked at several different areas. The first three they looked at were Housing, Economic Growth, and Connectivity and Mobility. Danville's housing stock was older, 62% was fifty years or older, and new house builds took a generation off. A lot of the single-family homes were valued under \$200,000 but 70% of the housing typology in Danville was single family homes; there were a lot that were aged and need reinvestment. There was a large renter

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population, about 48%. Housing was a very acute issue right now all across the county, especially in Danville, with the 4,000 jobs that were announced. There were no houses for sale, no apartments for rent; for these new jobs, there had to be places for workers to live. The Comprehensive Plan wants to make sure the City creates complete neighborhoods. They don't want the problems of past neighborhoods, of fragmentation, isolation, and lack of pedestrian activity. They want to make sure they have public spaces, connectivity, and that they feel like a neighborhood.

Economic Growth

The City definitely has some concentrated job sectors; food service, healthcare, and manufacturing make up the top three economic sectors, followed by government. The City has some large employers, but was not necessarily diverse; that will change with some of the new jobs that have been announced. The City has a highly diverse work force, and relatively stable retail activity. The household buying power in Danville has grown faster than the consumer price index. That means ultimately that incomes were going up which was one of the overall goals they were looking at.

Connectivity and Mobility

Mr. Plachcinski noted they recognize the on-demand bus services have decreased the demand for route services, and there were opportunities to increase transit infrastructure like bus stops, routes and wayfinding. There were lots of poor sidewalk connectivity, and for the lower economic households, low personal vehicle access; people that were already struggling to find housing were generally not able to provide reliable transportation.

The team also looked at Community Health, Sustainability and Resilience, and Neighborhood Parks and Land Use. Staff understands that Danville has lower than average life expectancy rates city wide, but was also concentrated in some parts of the community. There were some economic and access barriers to healthcare; a lot of the population only uses healthcare when symptoms force visiting a doctor or the ER. Sustainability and Resilience, staff was aware that there were increasing temperature fluctuations, with drought that adversely affects the infrastructure. Understanding climate change, what events were doing and how they affect the City was important.

Some of the findings under Neighborhood Parks and Land Use included the missing middle and starter housing; there was a gap at the lower end of housing and for the transition to move up a housing ladder; the middle rungs were missing. The commercial corridors don't always have the best access; the pre-planning team felt that the river often functions as a barrier that other than the Riverwalk was not very accessible. There was not a lot of engagement with the river, there were not specific developments facing it other than a few of the newer ones. Staff knows that was changing with developments like the White Mill and the Riverfront Park, but it was not there yet, and it was a real opportunity; also, increasing neighborhood walkability.

Plan It Danville Community Engagement Plan

Mr. Plachcinski noted during the pre-planning study, they discussed what could they build out that would be an engagement plan, not for just this plan, but to help organize their neighborhoods, citizens, get good comments to the City about how they can help the citizens, not just for the planning process, but also going forward; to help empower and build capacity for the next generations of leaders. The team suggested a five-prong process:

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1. Define It – understanding the context of the community, who and what they were, how they got to be.
2. Dream It – using creativity with the involvement to come up with new solutions; thinking outside the box.
3. Design It – think about very specific things, have hands on opportunities for people to describe how they see Danville looking in the future.
4. Detail It – decide who would be responsible for the different objectives; the City will need to make sure they focus on the parts they can lead, but there were a lot of teammates in the community they need to partner with and continue those partnerships going forward.
5. Do It – implement all the ideas into an action plan so that the City was strategic going forward.

The next part of the Engagement Plan was to get the functioning people together to implement it. Ground Control will be the people from the community that hear the feedback and comments that were collected. There will be Community Boosters who will be paid organizers from the neighborhood, that will develop capacity. The last group of people will be the Technicians, the city staff, other key stakeholders and institutional partners to provide feedback and resources so they can get a successful implementation. The Engagement Plan will have at least 120 meetings led by community boosters, and 20 events tabled at other local activities such as Festival in the Park, Brewfest, the Community Market, and National Night Out. They were proposing an engagement vehicle to help move the equipment around. There will be five community wide events that will wrap up each of those steps with the last being a celebration of the process.

Mr. Plachcinski noted in addition to the funds that the City has earmarked for the process, there was an opportunity through the Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund to develop sustainability and resiliency plans, and develop capacity at the local level. Staff submitted a grant application for a total of \$1.4M; \$433,000 was the enhanced outreach program. It also requests from the state, funding for one mid-senior level technical position to work on components of the project and will include more technical analysis from the consulting team for climate change, resiliency hubs in community centers, weatherization opportunities, energy efficiency, stormwater management and stormwater discharges. Staff will know if the state will fund that, the first week in June. Staff worked with the state to prepare the grant application, they went to them specifically to ask what they could put in the grant to make the state want to fund it. They were told the state needed to fund communities that were west of I95, because flooding happens more there than it does in coastal areas, and told them to put items in their request.

Dr. Miller noted the grant was for flood community preparedness, but some of the things that Mr. Plachcinski mentioned did not have to do with flooding, can this money be used for those other items and Mr. Plachcinski noted it would be bundled in with the other resources. Mr. Larking explained it would be an opportunity to take advantage of a grant that would help the City enhance their effort for community engagement in the already planned comprehensive planning process.

Mr. Plachcinski explained some specific elements staff wanted to make sure were included in the Comprehensive Plan was an Almagro area plan for the neighborhood; there has been a lot of concern and they want to engage that neighborhood specifically. There was low home ownership, infrastructure issues, and lack of community connection with those outside the community. The Westover Hills has a lot of area with access to utilities; it was not slated for denser development,

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and staff wants to take a look at what was going on in the west side of town. If the Megasite at Berry Hills goes, the properties on the west side of Danville were going to be looked at for potential development. Economic Development communicated during the scoping process to really take a good look at the City, and trying to identify the next opportunities for industrial parks and development inside the City. They were running out of space for some of those things, there were only certain points where there was utility access and capacity for certain kinds of industrial users, so they want to get a good understanding of where those were, and plan and zone for them in the future.

Mr. Plachcinski stated the Next Steps, where they were at, depends on whether the City gets the grant award, which he was very optimistic about; they will incorporate the grant required components into the final scope of the project, work out a consulting agreement and move forward with the consulting team. If the City does not get the grant or gets part of the grant, they will look at all their scoping items and figure out where they can reduce their efforts, match their budget, and potentially look for other funding resources.

Dr. Miller questioned if staff could do a traffic study on the river, he crosses that river several times a day and hardly ever sees a boat on the river between the dam and Union dam. He would like a study to see how much it was used, and Mr. Plachcinski noted he would talk to staff. Dr. Miller stated and maybe from the YMCA to past Dan Daniel. Dr. Miller noted there were some neighborhoods near the airport, when they were annexed, they did not receive curbs and sidewalks either and that needed to be looked at. Council Members noted they were glad to see the Plan happening, and was something the City needed.

Mr. Larking explained in the plan for Next Steps, staff believes the public engagement will start in August.

APPOINTMENTS

Vice Mayor Miller noted the Committee on Appointments met earlier this evening and made the following recommendations:

Airport Commission:	Reappoint:	Fred Shanks Michael Duncan Eugene Jackson
Dan River Business Development Center	Reappoint:	Bryant Hood
Danville Community College Board:	Appoint:	Ernestine Payne
Danville Community Policy & Management Team:	Reappoint: Appoint:	Tammy Warren Jerome Holman
Danville Development Center	Reappoint:	Bryant Hood
Danville Pittsylvania Community Services Board:	Reappoint: Appoint:	Mike Mondul Lori Eanes-Brooks and Adrian Watlington
Danville Utility Commission:	Reappoint: Appoint:	Shelia Williamson-Branch Mary Williamson

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Metropolitan Planning Organization	Appoint:	Gary Miller
Social Services Advisory Board	Reappoint:	Qonell Totten and Vennee Mayo
	Appoint:	Andrea Burney
Transportation Advisory Board	Reappoint:	Anna Kautzman
	Appoint:	Christopher Franks
WPPDC-Technical Advisory Rural Transportation	Reappoint:	Ken Gillie and Chris Franks
West Piedmont Planning District Commission:	Appoint:	Gary Miller

PROGRAM UPDATES

Vice Mayor Miller questioned having the hospital administrator, Mr. Larson, come before Council, and Mr. Larking noted he will check the last time Mr. Larson appeared and get back to Council.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Director of Economic Development Corrie Bobe noted Mr. Larking had sent out an email related to the programs and resources their office has provided to Small Women and Minority Owned Businesses, and items that have been implemented over the past year. Ms. Bobe handed out a document to Council outlining these items, and stated she was there to answer any questions.

Mr. Larking noted in his email, he reiterated the process the City went through with Caesars to create the Development Agreement, what was agreed to and what steps the City has taken to position themselves to invest the resources they stand to receive from the Development Agreement, what they have already received and will receive. It outlines that very specifically and lays the groundwork for where they stand with them; there were expectations for them to do certain things, to enhance the effort of making sure there was a strong minority participation not only in employment but in contracts and other aspects of the construction and the operation of the casino. The report did describe equity issues that need to be addressed; they were very concerned they address the needs of the entire community, that the City listen to their needs and make sure they were putting into action things that will enhance their quality of life and their economic opportunities.

Mr. Whittle noted Council Member Saunders had commented on this, that it was extremely important that citizens needed all their permitting, insurance, bonds, etc.; he himself cannot let anyone on his job sites that was not a Class A contractor. If there was a disconnect there, that's what they will need to look at. Ms. Bobe noted that was one of the programs outlined in the document; they were working in partnership with Danville Community College, Danville Public Schools, the Virginia Technical Institute, Averett and the Institute, to ensure that they have a pipeline of credentialed, licensed contractors moving forward with HVAC, Electrical and Plumbing. Also, having that business component so not only do they receive the technical, hands-on training and the certifications, but they also get background knowledge that when they open their own business, they know how to run the business appropriately. Ms. Bobe noted outside technical and workforce training, what was outlined in her handout was that financial literacy was a key component to a lot of programs. When they partnered with the Black Business Collaborative, they sponsored a six-week boot camp in partnership with them and provided a book to all the

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participants that graduated called *The Money Cycle, a Personal Journey to Financial Freedom*. In addition, they partnered with Danville Community College with the Small Business Development Center to provide, at the request of a local business, a multi-week financial literacy program offered free of charge to those employees within that facility. A key component to the mission of their office was not only creating jobs with higher wages but it was also providing access and opportunity in education to ensure that people understand the financial implications of the decisions they were making.

Ms. Bobe noted they were hosting a number of procurement fairs in conjunction with their regional partners, and that will include Black Business Collaborative as well as the Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber, the County, the City, and their private sector partners. These were not just opportunities for construction but for landscaping, food vendors, supplying and providing support. It outlines some of the financial programs including one Council passed at the end of last year, which was changing the Enterprise Zone program, where they reduced the wage thresholds for SWaM certified businesses so they can access job creation grants more easily annually, and technical support. One of their hopes when they move their office was to add an incubator specific to SWaM businesses so they can offer inhouse technical support in connection with their regional partners. The last item was streamlining processes. To apply for a business license in the City, an individual has to go through multiple steps in multiple locations. They were working in partnership with Community Development, IT and the Commissioner of Revenue's office to find some way to streamline it so there may be just one step, one location for that person to go to in order to get their business license.

Ms. Bobe stated they received a notification from the EPA this past week and will work with Arnold Hendrix to get a formal press release out, that the City was awarded another Brownfields Assessment Grant of \$500,000 from the EPA. These were resources that went into the blighted properties in the Brownfields throughout the community.

COMMUNICATIONS

Vice Mayor Miller noted they have received a lot of criticism about things the City should be doing with the youth, but the City was already doing those things; the City was not getting the word out to the public. Was there some way to get the word out better and Mr. Larking noted the City uses River City TV, and Arnold Hendrix through the website puts out press releases. Mr. Hendrix noted they need to find out where the citizens were getting their information from, they were not using any of the channels the City uses.

CLOSED MEETING

At 9:50 p.m., Council Member Vogler **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, 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 to the City, and an Economic Development discussion and update concerning 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

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prospective commercial, mixed use, 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: 7-0-2
AYE: Buckner, Campbell, Hood, Mayo, Miller,
Vogler and Whittle (7)
NAY: None
ABSENT: Jones, Saunders (2)

Upon unanimous vote at 10:03 p.m., Council reconvened in open session and Council Member Vogler **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: 7-0-2
AYE: Buckner, Campbell, Hood, Mayo, Miller,
Vogler and Whittle (7)
NAY: None
ABSENT: Jones, Saunders (2)

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 10:04 P.M.

APPROVED:

s/Alonzo L. Jones
MAYOR

ATTEST:

s/Susan M. DeMasi, CMC
CITY CLERK