

March 2, 2021

A Regular Work Session of the Danville City Council convened on March 2, 2021 at 8:30 p.m. in the 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, Mayor Alonzo Jones, Barry P. Mayo, Vice Mayor Gary P. Miller, Sherman M. Saunders, J. Lee Vogler, Jr. and Madison J.R. Whittle (9).

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.

Mayor Alonzo L. Jones presided.

MINUTES

Upon **Motion** by Council Member Buckner and second by Council Member Saunders, Minutes of the Regular Work Session held on February 2, 2021 were approved as presented. Draft copies were distributed to Council Members prior to the Meeting.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

CONSIDERATION OF GRANTING TAX EXEMPT STATUS TO GOODWILL OF THE VALLEYS, INC.

Mayor Jones recognized Mary Ann Gilmer, Vice President of Mission Services with Goodwill Industries of the Valleys who stated she was there to address any questions Council may have pursuant to their request for tax exemption.

Council Member Saunders noted, looking at their list of board members, he saw one person from Danville and everyone else from Salem and Roanoke, why one person from Danville. Ms. Gilmer explained Goodwill of South Central Virginia in July 2019, declared bankruptcy. Goodwill Industries of the Valleys, headquartered in Roanoke, acquired the Westover facility and assumed operation of all the services to individuals in the community offered in that facility. They subsequently recruited one individual to join their board and were actively recruiting for others from Danville; unfortunately, they had a small disruption in 2020 due to COVID. They have a new CEO joining them in a couple of weeks, his name was Richmond Vincent and he was very interested in coming down, engaging the community and bringing more people onto the board of directors. Vice Mayor Miller noted he did not understand the connections, were Goodwill's like franchises. Two or three years ago, the one in Raleigh had a tremendous scandal with the board of directors, what they said was being done was not getting done; what was the guarantee that wouldn't happen here. Dr. Miller also questioned why they needed tax exempt status, it looked like they were making enough money to support themselves.

Ms. Gilmer noted they do have a 501(c)(3) certificate as a non-profit organization. They were a social enterprise; they operated their regional stores, and they also operated some contracted employment services. They hold some federal contracts for cleaning such as the individuals with significant disabilities that clean the Danville Courthouse. They offer a variety of services to individuals in need and the way they were able to do that was from the revenue they receive from their retail establishments. The retail operation serves the mission of the organization, which was to help people and families achieve a better life through work and independence. In terms of the affiliation of Goodwill Industries of the Valleys with any other groups, Ms. Gilmer stated they might think about it like a United Way, as an affiliate; there were 163 affiliate Goodwill's across the country, each with their own independent board of directors. They have been in existence for

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ninety years as Goodwill Industries of the Valleys, with a longstanding tradition of serving individuals in need, and served 60,000 Virginians in 2020. In Danville they served 1,336 individuals through their virtual services; when COVID hit, they pivoted all their services to on line and offered a lot of training to individuals in soft skills like employability, basic computer, Microsoft office, and Google products, on line. In person, they served 336 individuals in their career center. With the exception of two months, that career center was open to serve members of the community, and fifty-seven of those individuals were placed in employment. They also served seventeen individuals with significant disabilities by providing work opportunities for them in their Westover facility. They served eight individuals referred to them through the Southern Virginia Mental Health Institute as part of their re-integration into the community and learning how to work again. In the past year, they have partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters working with Pat Daniel to extend a federal grant from the Office for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to provide youth mentoring services to youth who were engaged in juvenile offenses. They have just started providing health care training services to six individuals who have limited income, through a federal grant they have.

Mr. Saunders questioned their last budget, and Ms. Gilmer noted they were probably looking at a \$60M budget this year. Mr. Saunders asked what they attributed the tripling of their income and Ms. Gilmer noted it was several things. From their Mission Services segment, Federal grants, some Foundation support, some United Way support, and from many other funders, that was part of it. They had exceptional growth in their retail and donated goods that has allowed their mission budget to grow. Mr. Saunders questioned if eligibility for the programs was based on income or disability and Ms. Gilmer noted it depended on the program being provided. For their career center; anybody can come in, there was no eligibility requirement.

Mayor Jones noted Ms. Gilmer mentioned mentoring and partnering with the Big Brothers Big Sisters, and questioned if Goodwill gave them jobs, the City was in the process of partnering with people to find ways to find them jobs. Ms. Gilmer explained they do not have an organized program just serving youth to help them get employment. They partnered with the City of Roanoke for the past four years for a Summer Youth Employment Program and that was something they were interested in expanding into this area. It basically partners with businesses in the community to connect youth with summer jobs, and Goodwill provides them with career readiness. Mayor Jones questioned if they could partner with the City and their partners to try and get this done and Ms. Gilmer stated they would love to have a conversation with any or all the partners about serving youth in the summertime and helping connect them to employment. The mentoring program was driven by a federal grant and had parameters around what they were doing, trying to connect with youth, 12, 13 and 14 year olds, with mentors in the community for a long term training engagement opportunity. Pat Daniels has helped by providing them with technical assistance in implementing their model for older kids.

Council Member Vogler questioned if the bookstore was back at Westover; Ms. Gilmer noted they have not put the bookstore back. They do have an e-commerce operation where they do book scanning so people can purchase books that way instead of putting books on the shelves. Mr. Vogler noted a lot of people went to Goodwill to buy books, they might want to rethink keeping it closed; the bookstore filled a niche in the community. Ms. Gilmer noted she would pass that along to the donated goods and retail people, and will definitely get in contact with the City regarding the opportunity for a summer youth program.

Council Agreed to put Goodwill's request on an upcoming business agenda.

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PRESENTATION OF THE DANVILLE BASEBALL CLUB, LLC.

Director of Parks and Recreation, Bill Sgrinia noted last fall the City received a letter from the Braves who had been a long term tenant in Danville, that they were no longer having a team in the Appalachian league, but Danville still had a team in that league. The City acted quickly, and had several options: the City could run it themselves, or they could find someone with more experience running a professional baseball organization and opening it up to more events as well. The City issued an RFP, reviewed the applications and selected Danville Baseball; Ryan Keur was the managing president.

Mr. Keur noted he and his wife, at the end of 2019, decided they were going to transition out of being the president of the Daytona Tortugas, and look into the opportunity of potentially buying a team. In March of 2020, they purchased a team from Burlington, NC, the Burlington Royals. When he entered Burlington he told them they were going to keep baseball there; then COVID happened. They learned that Danville, VA and Kingsport, TN were probably going to lose their teams as well, and from the time they heard that Danville was an opportunity to enter this market, they got excited. Mr. Keur noted he had worked with Austin for the past six or seven years and knew that in order to be successful here, they had to entrench themselves in the community from day one. When they talk about activating in the stadium, it was not just twenty seven baseball games, it was three hundred sixty five days in the community, in the schools, involved and engaged. That has always been their vision, how do they provide opportunities for so many different people to come out and enjoy an experience, and to utilize that facility for much more than just baseball games.

Mr. Keur introduced Austin Scher, General Manager of the Danville Baseball Club, who stated they were here in Danville to not just do things because they have been done in the past, to not be okay with a crowd of fifty five people on Tuesday night, but imagining that fifty five turning into twenty five hundred every single night. He had spoken to Mayor Jones, Council Member Vogler and several community leaders in December, before any of this was made public and the one thing they heard was, they just need to bring fun back. He was also present at After Hours Rotary when Council Member Hood presented, and the message he spoke about, of providing safe, affordable and family friendly entertainment that was not just for one person or one group of people, but for everybody, was exactly what they would like to do at the ballpark. People have told him that there were issues in getting people to Dan Daniel, it was not on a bus line, there were restrictions within the park; those were things they can work on together to make sure everyone had access to the park, and to make sure every child can experience at least one baseball game a year. They have an opportunity to unite people under their identity; they can provide a brand that every person in the community can unite behind.

Mr. Scher noted in terms of their game day staff, they were looking to hire upwards of one hundred staff that will hopefully span from students in high school and college, to teachers who were looking for supplemental income over the course of the summer, to retirees who have knowledge of the ball park and would like to spend time around the game. Ryan mentioned having year round events, that means hopefully having visitors come to the ball park on an annual basis, having game day staff members who traditionally would only work the summer schedule, be brought in for additional hours and paychecks in the off season for company outings.

Mayor Jones noted he would like to see the City and School staff come together in some sort of capacity and hopefully it was something they could do at the park, let them and their families enjoy themselves. Mr. Scher noted one of the big announcements that will come after the new team brand and identity announcement scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 16th, will be a

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season long program, not just to honor those members of the populations mentioned, but healthcare workers, city officials, education employees, and essential workers. After this past year, all they want is to be able to provide opportunities for those people, in an affordable and family friendly manner and get back out of the house.

Mayor Jones thanked Mr. Keur and Mr. Scher for being here tonight.

PROGRAM UPDATES

City Manager Ken Larking noted at the next City Council meeting he will be presenting the budget, and there will be no tax or rate increases. The budget will be built upon the work at the retreat several weeks ago, and will address some of the needs heard in previous discussions; he will schedule work sessions after that. He will present the overview of things that were different in this budget versus past budgets, but it was a balanced budget with no use of General Fund balance.

Mr. Larking stated there have been a lot of discussions with Council, and staff, centered on the worry that there was not enough community engagement and knowing what the community wants in and around their neighborhoods. He had discussed this with staff, and every ten years the City was required to do a Comprehensive Plan. Most communities do the very basic plan required by law and it ends up not being utilized for its full potential; Mr. Larking suggested the City put out a Request for Qualification from firms that do Comprehensive Plans. He hopes they find a firm that has done award winning plans for communities like Danville, a firm that really worked on engaging the community and understanding what the community wants to see in the future. Council had no objections for the City Manager to obtain an RFQ for the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Larking noted Deputy City Manager Earl Reynolds has been working on a Summer Youth Program with community partners and they feel in the next few weeks they will have a proposal. There was some cost associated with implementing this and it will be brought to Council.

CLOSED MEETING

At 9:20 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 affect 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, more specifically to consider discussion regarding the sale of specific parcel or parcels of real property for use by prospective industrial and mixed use projects seeking to locate in the City; and to consider 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 prospective business, mixed use and industrial projects considering locating in the City and the region; and discussion or consideration of the investment of public funds where competition or bargaining is involved; where if made public initially, the financial interest of the governmental unit would be adversely affecting as permitted by Subsection (A)(6) of Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia, 1986 as amended. The Motion was **seconded** by Council Member Mayo and carried by the following vote:

VOTE: 9-0
AYE: Buckner, Campbell, Hood, Jones, Mayo,

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NAY: Miller, Saunders, Vogler and Whittle (9)
None

Upon unanimous vote at 9:53 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: 9-0
AYE: Buckner, Campbell, Hood, Jones, Mayo,
Miller, Saunders, Vogler and Whittle (9)
NAY: None

Director of Economic Development Corrie Bobe discussed a possible rebranding of the City at large; a part of that was the design of a logo and tag line, and possibly updating the City Seal. Mayor Jones requested samples and Ms. Bobe noted they could. Council had no objections.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:59 P.M.

APPROVED:

s/Alonzo L. Jones
MAYOR

ATTEST:

s/Susan M. DeMasi, CMC
CITY CLERK