

May 2, 2023

A Regular Work Session of the Danville City Council convened on May 2, 2023 at 8:24 p.m. in Council Chambers located on the Fourth Floor of the Municipal Building. The following Council Members were present: James B. Buckner, L.G. "Larry" Campbell Jr., Bryant Hood, Barry Mayo, Vice Mayor Gary P. Miller, Sherman M. Saunders, J. Lee Vogler, Jr., and Madison J.R. Whittle (8). Mayor Alonzo L. Jones was absent (1).

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

Vice Mayor Miller presided.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

PRESENTATION FROM EDDY ALEXANDER ON TOURISM UPDATE

Presentation by: Jennifer Eddy, Chief Strategist for Eddy Alexander

Director of Tourism, Lisa Meriweather welcomed Jennifer Eddy from Eddy Alexander, who gave a brief overview of the Tourism Master Plan, explaining it was the culmination of a year's worth of work presented in a short overview. They worked with over 2,000 citizens and stakeholders in the community to collect survey feedback, focus group feedback, one on one interviews, and to talk about what people in Danville want for the future. There was a lot of excitement and enthusiasm in these discussions.

Ms. Alexander noted they were able to focus on the City's goals, what do they hope to achieve, and what can tourism do for the community. With that, they were able to align some standard industry processes around how destination management organizations typically work. They have laid out a road map for the next couple of years to help the City map out their continued growth and maturation of that new function within city government.

Tourism was big business; it was one of the biggest industries globally, and has been for generations. Ms. Eddy reviewed tourism and tourism statistics over the past five years, including employment and how much money tourism brings in. Ms. Eddy noted the purpose and intent of the Tourism Master Plan was to provide a strategic direction for the new tourism function. It was designed to capture the current state of the industry and to recommend projects, activities, and investments that will help the City take advantage of the moment. It ties back to established best practices from a variety of industry trade associations, and sets future key performance indicators that capture baseline measurements. It also highlights some additional resources that hopefully empower staff, and set them up for continued success. It will outline the team's project priorities to help them focus on where they want to grow in support of goals in the years to come.

Ms. Eddy noted there were six core functions of any destination marketing and management organizations. The functions the organization will take on in the years to come include regional promotion, industry connections, destination development, destination stewardship, sales, and operational excellence. In Danville's case, when they were meeting with stakeholders and focus groups, they heard concerns about the reputation of the region and the hard economic times of the past. They were hoping to move past that to redefine what it means to be from this region. Tourism was the most positive of all advertising and communication types; it was an opportunity to build civic pride and get citizens excited about where they were from and build ambassadorship within the community. It was also an opportunity to strengthen the community which leads to a higher quality of life and better outcomes for citizens.

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Ms. Eddy explained they had a data informed, citizen led process; all of the plan came with multiple data points of validation and driven from the community. The tourism master plan has a variety of different sections that lay out a framework for the different responsibilities and priority projects. Some of those include marketing, advertising, and public relations efforts, as well as wayfinding and experience design. There will be a new brand coming out very soon, and when that brand comes out, it was making sure advertisements were out in places where they want to reach people who were not here yet, but that it was also in the community. It was events, festivals, group conferences, and event support, visitor center management, stakeholder engagement, operational governance, and industry resources. It was also supplemental funding sources for things like grants and co-op programs, and an activity action plan; a prioritized list of activities that the City's team can begin working on right away and can continue to work on for years to come.

Tourism was an investment, but if they invest wisely they can expect to see returns in economic development where they build businesses in the community. Tourism businesses can be set up quickly, they can grow quickly, and they can provide returns very quickly. Likewise, an influx of visitors can have an economic impact in just a month's time. When the City thinks about budgeting for the years to come and how they were going to set up their organization, there were several different factors they can look at. Ms. Eddy reviewed tourism areas within three-to-four-hour drive market radius, how competitive that market was and how resources and monies need to be allocated. How many hotel rooms do they expect to have, how much market share do they want within the state, what does the City want that to be today, and in the future. Recommendations were made in the master plan on how that will play out and where the City should start spending.

Council Member Vogler commented on how the City needs more lodging options, there was a huge difference between Danville and the other communities. Vice Mayor Miller asked if Lynchburg's hotel room numbers were significantly larger due to the college there. Ms. Eddy replied that Lynchburg has many more hotels due to Liberty University and Lynchburg College, as well as sports events they have in that region.

Ms. Eddy reviewed the key performance indicators for a tourism program which include increasing civic pride, building successful hotels and keeping them filled, attracting visitors with disposable income, getting visitors to stay longer, spend more and come back frequently, build and support beloved local businesses and to steward public funds responsibly and reinvesting wisely for citizen satisfaction. With each of these, there were very specific things that can be measured, and the first is the Net Promoter Score: How Likely Are You to Recommend. It was basically a 1-11 scale to ask people how likely were they to recommend that a friend or family member come visit Danville or Pittsylvania County. With that they measured how many people said something positive and how many said something negative; if they were not saying 9, 10 or 11 on that scale, they really were not a promoter, they were neutral. If they were a 5 or 6, they weren't saying anything negative, but they were not out there championing their community. If they were 1-5, they were probably saying something negative. From that they were able to calculate what was the general consensus about how people feel about their quality of life here, and from there, they could measure year over year, how that improves with time. Tourism was the number one driver of building civic pride and community engagement. The net promoter score for Danville showed 55% Detractors, 24% passive and 21% promoter with a net promoter score of -34.19.

Council Member Campbell asked when referring to a detractor was she actually also talking about those who talk negatively and Ms. Eddy noted that typically a net promotor score, someone who scores between a 1 and a 5, was more likely to say something negative than positive about their

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community. Council Member Vogler commented on how numbers change with positive promotions; it also seems like people who are newer to the area were more engaged in positive promotion of the City. Ms. Eddy noted they did ask those questions but have not done an analysis of that yet; that pattern repeats itself in other communities and she would not be surprised if that was the case in Danville.

Vice Mayor Miller asked if Council was okay with allowing Wayne Alan to make a comment. Mr. Alan noted that when he decided to purchase the North Theater he discussed it with his brother, who was from Richmond. His brother said that nothing good came out of Danville, and asked why he wanted to purchase something here. From someone who came from the outside, they were able to see positive things happening in Danville and it was so much better; he thought the chances of that number going down was huge.

Council thanked Ms. Eddy for her presentation.

COMMUNICATIONS

Vice Mayor Miller noted he had a question from the regular meeting about curbs and gutters; he was a proponent of them and feels Almagro got left out. There were many parts of the City that were annexed that have not received curbs and gutters. He questioned the vote that happened earlier to do away with curbs and gutters. City Manager Ken Larking stated that environmentally it was better not to have curbs and gutters, it was better to have ditches. Curbs and gutters have run off and includes all the debris that piles up and does not filter out where the pipe ends. When there was a ditch, it spreads out the issue, and it gets filtered, usually in grass. There were a lot of areas in the City that did not have curb and gutters; a report will be sent back out to Council explaining the effectiveness of not having curbs and gutters.

CLOSED MEETING

At 9:00 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 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 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, Campbell, Hood, Mayo, Miller, Saunders, Vogler and Whittle (8)
NAY:	None
ABSENT:	Jones (1)

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Upon unanimous vote at 9:34 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 Campbell and carried by the following vote:

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

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:35 P.M.

APPROVED:

s/Alonzo L. Jones
MAYOR

ATTEST:

s/Susan M. DeMasi, CMC
CITY CLERK