

August 20, 2024

A Regular Work Session of the Danville City Council convened on August 20, 2024, at 8:12 p.m. in the City 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.

MINUTES

Upon **Motion** by Council Member Buckner and **second** by Council Member Whittle, Minutes of the Regular Work Session held on July 16, 2024, were approved as presented. Draft copies were distributed to Council Members prior to the Meeting.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

PRESENTATION OF THE DANVILLE ARTS AND CULTURE PLAN

Director of Parks and Recreation, Bill Sgrinia, explained staff began working on the Danville Arts and Culture Plan in late 2022. Josh Leasure and Amanda Golden from Designing Local have put together the Plan; in addition, over thirty-five stakeholders were part of the steering committee. The steering committee was made up of people from Parks and Recreation, local businesses, Danville Community College, City of Danville Community Development, Danville Museum of Fine Arts, Danville Concert Association, the River District Association, Averett University, Smokestack Theatre, Danville Public School and City of Danville Human Resources Department.

Mr. Leasure noted this was an opportunity for Council to review the work they have done over the last few years. This plan had a lot of components around tourism and economic development, but first and foremost was responsive to the needs of the community and the residents, and ultimately that was who guided the plan, through both the steering committee but also through survey work, and conversations with individuals. It was really a community driven plan; they wanted to build a foundation for the future of arts in Danville. This plan was full of policies that will help support the implementation of it, and ultimately, they see this all coming together to achieve the vision they were setting out as part of the planning process. Mr. Leasure stated the community feedback was very clear, that people really appreciate the cultural landscape that exists here but were looking for more. There was a lot more to do than there was a few years ago and they want the future to look like there was more opportunities and events, and more sustainable permanent opportunities for arts and culture. Also, the arts in the community showcase local creativity and was focused on celebrating the community in Danville.

The plan recommendations they will be speaking to were rooted in best practices, both regionally and nationally; they looked at peer cities to Danville including Greenville, SC, Columbus, GA, Roanoke, VA, and Hickory, NC, using some of the work they have done as examples of what could be done in Danville. Danville was well located, affordable for artists to come here, and space opportunities available for regional artists to locate their studios here and sell their art here. Looking at the tourism component of this, they tried to think about creating a multi-faceted experience; if someone was thinking about coming to the casino, maybe they think about staying a second night and having an arts and culture experience or do something during the day and the

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casino at night. The casino was an opportunity for people to come visit a potential cultural district; some of those amenities already exist but there were opportunities to build on that, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Danville was a regional hub for arts and culture because of its investments in public art, cultural facilities, community arts and they support local cultural organizations as well. That was the vision they were setting out as part of this plan of what they feel arts and culture should do in the community. There were a few values they had set in place as well, that Danville should have a creative identity, it should be a place with strong facilities for both arts creation and celebration, the built environment, the public art, the streets, and the parks; those should reflect the culture of Danville and that it should be a regional destination for arts and culture. Mr. Leasure noted there were actions outlined in the Plan that Council could take that feed back into strategies such as formalizing a public arts program and adopt a public art policy, investing in iconic public art experiences, and offer cultural facilities for people to create and consume culture. There was definitely an opportunity for the City to invest in that and look for opportunities to develop city-owned spaces. Creating meaningful cultural experiences for people might be smaller scale things that were not the larger iconic opportunities, but things that people encounter while they were walking around the city.

Ultimately, the priorities were around delivering high quality arts, developing Danville as a cultural tourism destination, increasing representation in the civic landscape, in public art and other things, supporting community driven arts such as local arts organizations, investing in those iconic experiences, and ensuring long-term sustainability and program success. Through these, they see big opportunities for arts and culture in Danville; it has a bright future. Danville has the opportunity to be a regional crossroads; it was already thriving, and they were looking to build upon making a more vibrant hub for arts and culture.

Mr. Larking thanked Mr. Leasure for his presentation and noted he appreciated Council giving staff the opportunity to work on this project. It was a year or so ago he asked Council if staff could pursue developing an Arts and Culture Master Plan and he thought this was a great document, they did great work and had great input from the community. People choose to live in communities where there was great quality of life; part of a great quality of life was having arts and culture that was meaningful to the people who live here. One of the things the steering committee did when they were developing this plan was to make sure they weren't going to just take someone else's ideas and make them Danville's. They were going to see what makes Danville's art cool, and make it happen somehow; they have some resources to make that happen and thinks this plan gives them a good roadmap for going forward. The input they received from the community was valuable, and he looks forward to implementing the plan. Next month they will be asking the Council to approve a resolution or ordinance to establish a Public Arts Commission so they can have citizens on the commission to help drive and steer what they do as a community when it comes to the arts and help build a great quality of life.

Vice Mayor Miller noted as the City makes its comeback, the first thing they had to do was create jobs for people, find housing and as they evolve, the next step was culture and the arts. Danville needs to find its niche, something unique; they definitely need a performing arts center and thought this was a natural progression of Danville.

Council Member Vogler noted there was a lot of great information in this and one of the recommendations was the Cultural Arts Commission to be established and include a non-voting member from Council, he would like to volunteer for that and also, would that be treated like the

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Council's other commissions in which people apply and Council will appoint them; Mr. Larking noted they would.

Council Member Campbell questioned if this would be under Parks and Recreation and Mr. Larking stated the current thinking was that it would. Reverend Campbell asked about budgeting funds for this and Mr. Larking explained the current budget includes a \$200,000 appropriation to help implement some aspect of this plan once a public arts commission was established. There were recommendations on how funding can be used; in this year, it would probably go to support existing arts programs or nonprofits that provide arts in the community. Reverend Campbell noted he thought it was a great concept and asked if there was a way they can evaluate the impact this had for the community as they move forward and Mr. Larking stated he thought that was an important part of anything they do as city government. One of the things the budget director was implementing working with department heads, was any program they have in place, the City has to evaluate the impact, how well they were doing, comparing it against best practices and make improvements where necessary. This will be in line with all the other things the City was doing.

Mr. Larking explained the action of Council would be if they wanted to move forward with establishing a public arts commission; this can be brought to Council next month. By straw poll, Council agreed to put this on an upcoming business meeting.

APPOINTMENTS

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

Commission on Architectural Review -	Reappoint	Paul Liepe
	Appoint:	Luke Ramsey
Community Improvement Council -	Reappoint	Tyrell Payne

Council had no comments or objections; the appointment resolutions will be put on an upcoming business agenda.

PROGRAM UPDATES

City Manager Ken Larking noted he sent an email to Council a few days ago regarding a recommendation to have Council adopt a resolution or ordinance to take to the General Assembly to adopt some changes to the City Charter. There were a couple of options: there was a comprehensive change to the Charter; there was a lot of language that was outdated, replaced by state law and no longer relevant. Staff can make a comprehensive change and address all those items. There was also an essential group of items he would like Council to consider changing, including some language related to when elections were held; in the Charter it says May, that needed to be cleaned up. There was language that should the General Assembly say elections can be in May, Council could move them back to May if they wanted; that was one item staff wanted to make sure was consistent with state law. They also wanted to make sure language was consistent with state law related to filling of vacancies, how the inaugural meeting occurs, updates on council conduct; some very minor updates. It removes the requirement for an ordinance adopted by City Council to abolish a department; that was not necessary by state law. There were also some changes to the school board, mostly related to when the election was held and how that occurred. Mr. Larking noted the ones he felt were important pertained to appropriation ordinances; he was requesting, and believed it would be wise for the City Council

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to consider, instead of having a super majority to adopt an appropriation ordinance, that a simple majority occur; most cities have a simple majority for those. The other important change was to change the way that the City allowed borrowing to occur; there was a limit in the charter of \$6M in the general fund and \$10M in the utility. The City would be able to accomplish more if the rules were consistent with other cities in Virginia where they were not restricting themselves anymore than any other city; the Charter currently limits Council's decision making when it comes to the issuance of debt. There were a lot of needs in the community and many cannot be considered because they could not be bonded due to the City's debt limitation of \$6M a year. There was no requirement that the Charter have that limitation and would strongly suggest that it needed to be removed; Council can have their own limit set by policy and changed as needed.

Vice Mayor Miller noted Charters become outdated quickly and it was time that Council looked at this. Mr. Vogler noted he would be more comfortable supporting the ability to borrow more if concurrently Council votes to change the policy on the rainy fund to make sure the City was putting more than they currently do in the rainy-day fund. He would be more comfortable knowing they were setting aside that savings as well to balance that out; he would like to vote on those two things at the same time. Mr. Larking noted he believed it was wise for Mr. Vogler to request changes to the city's financial policies at the same time the Council asks the General Assembly to make changes to the Charter.

Mr. Larking questioned Council if they wanted to have the comprehensive change to the Charter that addresses all the clean up items, make things consistent with state law plus the handful of items that would be helpful to the Council, or does Council just want to focus on the things he recommended they do to make things easier to accomplish their goals.

Council agreed to submit the comprehensive changes to the Charter all at once.

COMMUNICATIONS

Council Member Vogler asked staff to look into a free shuttle, sponsored by different businesses, that ran in a loop, from the Schoolfield area, down through the Old West End, to the River District, on a constant loop.

CLOSED MEETING

At 9:04 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: 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; 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 within the region in cooperation with the City's regional partners; and consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation which such briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the

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negotiating or litigating posture of the public body as permitted by Subsection (A)(7) of Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended.

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 (0)
ABSENT: Jones (1)

Upon unanimous vote at 10:24 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, Campbell, Hood, Mayo, Miller,
Saunders, Vogler and Whittle (8)
NAY: None (0)
ABSENT: Jones (1)

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 10:26 P.M.

APPROVED:

s/Alonzo L. Jones
MAYOR

ATTEST:

s/Susan M. DeMasi, CMC
CITY CLERK