

DECEMBER 13, 2007

The Clarksburg City Council met in Conference (Work) Session on Thursday, December 13, 2007 at 6:00 p.m. at the Clarksburg Municipal Building – Council Chambers, 222 West Main Street, Clarksburg, West Virginia.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Margaret Bailey
James Hunt
Sam Lopez
Martin Shaffer
Vice Mayor B.K. Vanhorn
Mayor Dan Thompson (*late arrival*)

ALSO PRESENT:

Martin Howe, City Manager
Greg Morgan, City Attorney
Annette Wright, City Clerk

COUNCIL MEMBER(S) ABSENT:

Patsy Trecost II

Vice Mayor Vanhorn opened the meeting calling for a prayer by Councilman Shaffer and the Pledge of Allegiance by Councilman Hunt.

Following roll call, Council proceeded with the following:

2007 Report to Council – Greater Clarksburg Convention & Visitors Bureau – Kathie Titus, Executive Director - Ms. Titus provided each Council member with documentation regarding various topics of her report and gave the following overview:

- Discussed the full-page ad which will appear in the West Virginia Travel Guide;
- Announced that Hilton Gardens Inn would conduct their grand opening on January 10th;
- Informed of the grants for the various fairs and festivals;
- Discussed the West Virginia Civil War Trails project

In reference to the new Parking Facility, Councilman Hunt commented that Ms. Titus would be in the best position to attract activities for the Parking Facility noting the many individuals that make contact with her office. In response to Councilman Shaffer's inquiry concerning the tracking of visitors to the Bureau, Ms. Titus informed that the number of visitors into her office is minimal; however, the tracking of visitors is comprised of e-mails, physical visits and telephone calls, collectively. Ms. Titus advised that the office is open 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. noting that on occasion the office may be closed due to her attendance at a meeting, etc. and also noting that her office help is only part-time. Councilman Shaffer shared information that he gathered from the NLC Conference regarding promoting the community wherein the focus is upon foods and historic churches. Council commended Ms. Titus on her work.

Amphitheater Project – Park Board – Mr. Cooper provided Council with a copy of the architect's rendition of the amphitheater facility and discussed various design phases of the project. Mr. Cooper apprised that the plan is to bid the project in the next two to three months with several alternatives. Mr. Cooper informed of the seating, lighting, sound system and anticipated programs for the facility. Discussion was held concerning the security of the facility. Councilman Hunt noted the importance of a master plan and encouraged the Park Board to work on such a plan.

Councilwoman Bailey inquired as to the plans/status of the water park project with Mr. Cooper informing that the Board is actively pursuing the project; however, funding is a major factor in the project. Mr. Cooper noted the limited funding sources via grants, etc. Council concurred that the amphitheater project would be a great addition to the park system.

IT Presentation – Kimberly Samuelson – Mr. Howe introduced Ms. Samuelson to Council noting that up to this time, no one has been solely involved in the maintenance of the computer system, etc. Mr. Howe discussed the priorities he assigned to Ms. Samuelson such as an inventory of

computers, printers, software programs, security, etc., server issues, Encode software access by all departments, alternative power sources and back ups. Mr. Howe noted the need for addressing the website; however, such was not a top priority given the other matters in need of attention. Mr. Howe stated that there would be changes to the website to make it more user-friendly and informative. Mr. Howe advised that information concerning economic development and the codified ordinances would also be on the web page.

With regard to televising/videotaping the Council meetings, Mr. Howe stated that in the past he met with Mr. Bode at RCB who informed that they would be willing to assist with taping; however, we would need to obtain the necessary equipment. Mr. Howe advised that at some point, Ms. Samuelson would be speaking with appropriate parties on this matter.

Recognizing the many demands and matters to be addressed by the IT person, some Council members concurred that the website was a vital tool to the City and requested that gradual recognizable improvements be made thereto.

With regard to the cameras for the Police Department, Chief Goff advised that the technician would be here next week and that Ms. Samuelson would be part of the meeting. With regard to the GIS mapping system, Mr. Howe informed that he anticipates that Thrasher Engineering could demonstrate the system for Council in January. Councilman Shaffer commented that a system/program wherein citizens could call in their complaints as well as monitor the status of the same would be helpful.

Overview of Code Enforcement recommendations, etc. – Mr. Howe informed that the five biggest complaints are abandoned vehicles, garbage, weeds, parking in yards and upkeep of houses and property. Mr. Howe stated that the Code Enforcement Department needs the tools to enforce the existing codes commenting that many times no solution has resulted after all avenues have been exhausted.

Mr. Howe, along with Code Enforcement Supervisor Adam Barberio, discussed ordinance and policy changes to assist the Code Enforcement. Mr. Barberio suggested that one towing company/service be utilized to tow abandoned vehicles rather than the 911 rotation system. Also Mr. Barberio recommended (1) changes be made to the notification process regarding garbage and grass, (2) the clean up of contradictory language in the ordinances, (3) change to the high grass ordinance, (4) that minor home occupations be handled in-house rather than through BZA, (5) adoption of a rental ordinance with no cost to the landlord for the registration or inspection of rental property. Discussion was held regarding concerns with the operation of the BOCA Board wherein the appellant could request and be granted a continuance on the absence of a full complement of the Board. Mr. Morgan explained the provision in the ICC that sets forth said rule and also noted the requirements of each Board member. Brief discussion was held concerning the delay such continuances caused as well as the bi-monthly meeting schedule of the BOCA Board. Noting conflicting language/information with the W. Va. Code and the ICC that may need to be addressed by the legislature, Councilman Hunt requested that Mr. Morgan write the concern in the form of a question to be given to the WVML.

With regard to staffing in the Code Enforcement Department, Mr. Howe expressed the need to review and grasp concerns prior to increasing the staff; however, the adoption of a rental ordinance would necessitate the hiring of an additional person. Brief discussion was held concerning who Mr. Barberio reported to and the effectiveness of such reporting to a supervisor that is located at another facility.

Vice Mayor Vanhorn referenced the report submitted by the Neighborhood Revitalization Committee informing of the nine programs discussed therein. Council was in agreement to have the City Manager work with the Code Enforcement Department and City Attorney to get some of the recommended changes and matters discussed this evening on the agenda.

With regard to the demolition program, Mr. Howe commented that at some point a decision is going to have to be made as to how much is not collectible. Councilman Lopez noted the cost involved in cutting the grass on vacant lots once the structures are demolished.

Councilman Shaffer commented on the effectiveness of using door hangers to assist with concerns, etc. as well as working with the Water Board to obtain information as to when someone signs up for water. Such information would make known whether the property is a rental unit or owner occupied.

Mr. Howe and Mr. Barberio informed of various programs such as addressing illegal dumping, tire recycling program, weed and seed program and removing blight program.

Councilman Hunt remarked on the vast amount of discussion and information this evening adding that the programs suggested by Mr. Howe and Mr. Barberio were very aggressive but noted the attention needed for such things as website improvement, technology concerns, etc. Councilman Hunt pointed out the importance of a working plan remarking that even small steps are important. Vice Mayor Vanhorn stated that he wanted better neighborhoods and programs that would work toward this goal. Councilwoman Bailey suggested a fairly simple, cost-efficient city-wide clean-up project.

Meeting concluded.

Mayor Dan Thompson

January 3, 2008

Approved

Annette M. Wright, City Clerk