

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE NEWTON CITY COUNCIL**

January 5, 2016 – 7 p.m.

The regular meeting of the Newton City Council was held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, January 5, 2016 at Newton City Hall.

PRESENT: Mayor Anne P. Stedman, Mayor Pro Tem John Stiver and Council Members Tom Rowe, Wes Weaver, Robert C. Abernethy, Jr., Jody Dixon, and Jerry Hodge

STAFF: Assistant City Manager Sean Hovis, City Clerk Amy S. Falowski, City Attorney John Cilley, City Department Heads and members of the management team

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Anne P. Stedman welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

Mayor Stedman introduced District Court Judge Robert A. Mullinax, Jr. who then administered the oath of office to Council Member H. Tom Rowe.

ITEM 2: OPENING Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Council Member Tom Rowe asked everyone to keep City Manager Todd Clark in their prayers and he proceeded with the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

ITEM 3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion duly made by Council Member Jerry Hodge, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem John Stiver, it was unanimously RESOLVED:

That the Regular Minutes of the December 8, 2015 City Council meeting be –
APPROVED

ITEM 4: CONSIDERATION OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Upon motion duly made by Council Member Tom Rowe, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem John Stiver, it was unanimously RESOLVED:

That the Consent Agenda be – APPROVED

- A. Tax Releases
- B. Sewer Adjustments
- C. Consideration of Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Mayor Stedman thanked the members that have volunteered to serve on various boards and commissions. She stated that she would like to see quarterly reports made by Board Members from the committees that they serve on.

- D. Consideration of Changes to NCMPA1 Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) Standard
- E. Consideration of Bid Award – Voltage Regulators

(Ordinances, Resolutions and Proclamations are hereby referenced and on file in the Office of the City Clerk)

ITEM 5: **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: PEOPLE WHO WISH TO COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS ARE ASKED TO SIGN IN WITH THE CITY CLERK PRIOR TO THE MEETING.**

Mayor Anne P. Stedman asked if anyone present would like to make comment concerning non-agenda items. No one appeared.

ITEM 6: **Presentations**

A. Folk Art Festival

Lisa Swinson gave a presentation concerning the Folk Art Festival proposal. Ms. Swinson stated that the goal is to work out a partnership with the Hickory Museum of Art, the Newton DNDA and the City of Newton to have the Folk Art Festival relocated to downtown Newton in October. She explained that that is when the artists are most available. Council Member Wes Weaver asked her which weekend in October, she stated the first weekend, or perhaps the second. Mayor Pro Tem John Stiver stated that the two boards would need to approve, and Ms. Swinson stated that is correct. Mayor Pro Tem Stiver stated that when the details are worked out he would like to see the proposal come back to the city. Mayor Stedman stated that she would like to see the proposal on the next city council agenda.

B. Catawba Valley Furniture Academy – Bill McBrayer

Bill McBrayer from Catawba Valley Furniture Academy gave a presentation about the furniture academy and how beneficial it is to the community.

Mayor Stedman thanked Mr. McBrayer for all his hard work and for the very informative presentation.

C. Informational Overview from Newton- Conover System – Jamie Frye

Dr. Stegall, Superintendent of Newton-Conover Schools introduced Jamie Frye, Information Officer from the school system, who gave an informational overview of the school system.

Mayor Stedman thanked Mr. Frye for coming.

ITEM 7: **Old Business**

A. Consideration of Newton Streetscape Master Plan

Planning Director Randy Williams stated that in 2015 Allison Platt & Associates were hired to create a vision for downtown Newton with a comprehensive streetscape plan. Mr. Williams stated that over the course of the year, several public meetings and presentations were held to gain insight from the citizens. This cumulated in the Newton Streetscape Master Plan & North Newton Master Plan final draft being presented to the public in August. Since that time, staff has reviewed the document and its feasibility to implement.

Mr. Williams explained the intention and key factor is “to revitalize our Downtown Core and the North Newton area in order to improve the local economy and attract businesses, visitors and residents.” This plan will assist the city to guide construction of improved sidewalks and street furniture; vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian traffic improvements; amenities; infrastructure needs; and also identify opportunities for the implementation.

Mr. Williams stated The Newton Streetscape Master Plan was created in tandem with the adopted community driven Strategic Growth Plan, which set in place the projects and needs for the city for the

next 10 to 20 years. The Streetscape Plan included a comprehensive look at the improvements required to invest in Newton's future to attract new businesses and visitors to downtown.

Mr. Williams stated that many needs were identified to primarily enliven the downtown square, connect the County Government Center, and add a safe network of designated bicycle lanes. He explained that additionally the North Newton area was included with recommendations focused around the Newton Depot and the surrounding businesses.

Mr. Williams stated that small towns can distinguish themselves by showcasing their community. The recommendations contained within the Newton Streetscape Master Plan will also be used enliven, restore, improve, strengthen and protect the unique asset of the downtown square. This plan also presents examples where other cities have implemented downtown improvements plans and highlighted the return on investment they receive through increased development and rehabilitation, thus resulting in a higher tax base, sales and visitors in downtown. Mr. Williams stated the implementation recommendations of this plan will also be used as we begin to update the development standards for the city.

Mr. Williams stated that Planning Staff requests the City Council to adopt the Newton Streetscape Master Plan & North Newton Master Plan as presented.

Mayor Stedman asked City Council if there were any questions.

Council Member Jerry Hodge asked what infrastructure is included. Mr. Williams stated that water, sewer, storm water, electrical and conduit for fiber optic is included.

Council Member Jody Dixon asked when the infrastructure was last opened and looked at. Dusty Wentz, Public Works and Utilities Director stated that it has been a while.

Council Member Wes Weaver stated that his only concern is parking spaces. He stated that the downtown is beautiful, just needs a facelift. Mr. Williams stated 13 spaces would be lost, but that a new parking lot has already been opened. Mr. Williams stated that while diagonal parking is easy to pull in to, it is difficult to pull out of. He says the new spaces will be large and easy to park in.

Council Member Robert Abernethy stated that he is concerned about losing 13 spaces and the parallel parking. He would like to see the parking stay the same on city streets. Mr. Abernethy stated he would like to read the document first before voting on it. Mayor Stedman stated that he, along with all the city council has had the document. Mr. Abernethy stated that he had it but wasn't told this would be the final draft. Council Member Jerry Hodge stated that people have issues with the parking but that this could help because the spaces would be longer. He stated that this plan has been discussed for months and that even before becoming a member of city council he read the plan. He stated that there has been enough information from staff and the study to be able to make a decision. Council Member Weaver stated that he understands the concerns about parking, but to move forward with the sidewalks the parking needs to change. Council Member Jody Dixon stated that he hopes there are parking issues, because that is a good problem to have. Council Member Abernethy stated that Mr. Hodge feels informed enough but this is the first time they have been given the final copy and he doesn't understand why this can't wait until the next council meeting. He stated he is not comfortable with it. Council Member Weaver stated that the plan is a good one and that he can vote now or wait. Council Member Hodge stated that the city needs to move forward and that there are planning workshops coming up, and changes can be brought back to council if needed. Council Member Robert Abernethy stated that Mr. Hodges faith in government is greater than his. He said that 6 years ago there was a grant for 10 firemen from the federal government that would pay the employees for two years. After two years it would be the city's responsibility and that council could decide then what to do. He said it never came back to council.

Council Member Robert C. Abernethy, Jr. made a motion to take parking changes out of the Streetscape Master Plan.

Motion failed due to lack of a second.

Upon motion duly made by Council Member Wes Weaver, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem John Stiver, with Council Members Jody Dixon, Wes Weaver, Tom Rowe, Jerry Hodge and Mayor Pro Tem John Stiver voting in favor of, and Council Member Robert C. Abernethy voting against, it was RESOLVED:

That Newton Streetscape Master Plan be – APPROVED.

Council Member Robert C. Abernethy asked that it be noted that this is the first time he has seen this Newton Streetscape Master Plan.

ITEM 8: **New Business**

A. Consideration of Recreation Master Plan

Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission Kyle Smith stated the City's current Master Plan was prepared in May 1988, revised in 2001, and is over 27 years old and outdated. He explained that for State Funding Consideration, a Master Plan needs to be updated at least every 7-10 years. October 5, 2015 the City of Newton sent out a proposal request seeking an innovative, qualified consultant to prepare an updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan focusing on the seven dimensions of health: physical, environmental, social, intellectual, spiritual/cultural, occupational/economic, and emotional. Mr. Smith stated the major purposes of the plan will be to identify the current state of the Parks and Recreation Department's facilities and activities and to make recommendations for the future to enhance the overall wellbeing of the residents of Newton. Mr. Smith stated that payment for the plan was budgeted in Fiscal Year 2015-2016 at up to \$30,000.

Mr. Smith stated the plan will focus on recreation facilities and parks, but will also include to a lesser degree some evaluation of greenways. The Master Plan should systematically assess the City's current and future needs for Parks and Recreation facilities. He explained that the plan should also provide an illustrative and usable plan to guide the City of Newton's actions over the next ten years in regard to the development of its park facilities and programs, with prioritization of those actions based on having the greatest impact on wellness of Newton's citizens.

Mr. Smith stated that The Master Plan will be completed only after a thorough inventory of existing parks, facilities, public input, research on current parks and recreation trends and standards, input by the Parks and Recreation Commission, and finally input and concurrence from the City Council.

Mr. Smith stated that November 13, 2015 the City received replies from four consulting firms with only two sending back written proposals to be considered. The Recreation Commission met on Tuesday, December 15, 2015 at the Recreation Center to do a careful background study of their work and references. After much thought and consideration the Commission is recommending to the City Council approval of Sage Design, a North Carolina Landscape Architecture firm with extensive experience in Parks and Recreation Planning, Design and Implementation from Wilmington, NC. Mr. Smith said that they bring over 20 years of experience and unmatched passion for Parks and Recreation. They are uniquely qualified to serve the needs of the City of Newton.

Council Member Robert C. Abernethy, Jr. asked if the money has already been appropriated for this in the budget. Ms. Waters stated that it has.

Upon motion duly made by Council Member Robert C. Abernethy, Jr., seconded by Council Member Jerry Hodge, it was unanimously RESOLVED:

That Consulting Contract be AWARDED to Sage Design, a North Carolina Landscape Architecture firm

ITEM 9: City Manager's Report

- Orientation with new Council Members – Thursday, January 7th, 8:30 a.m.
- Essentials of Municipal Government – Friday and Saturday, January 8th and 9th
- Council/Staff Workshop – Wednesday and Thursday, January 13th and 14th
- Ribbon Cutting, Turner Finance – Friday, January 22nd at 3:00 p.m.
- Grand Opening-Ribbon Cutting, Walmart Neighborhood Market – Wednesday, January 27th at 7:30 a.m.

Projects

1. AMI – Approximately 5299 water meters have been installed. 71 Electric meters have been installed.
2. The last day of leaf pickup will be Jan. 15.
3. Resurfacing of W. 20th St. has started; estimated completion date is Jan 15.
4. Three electric poles have been hit and replaced in the last two weeks.
5. One fire hydrant has been hit and cut off; replacement will be scheduled this week.

ITEM 10: Questions and Comments from Mayor and Council

Mayor Anne P. Stedman asked if any Council Members would like to make any comments. There were none.

ITEM 11: Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Council Member Wes Weaver, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem John Stiver, it was unanimously RESOLVED:

That the Meeting be – ADJOURNED

Amy S. Falowski, City Clerk



Anne P. Stedman, Mayor