

**MINUTES  
BREVARD CITY COUNCIL  
STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION  
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY LIBRARY ROGOW ROOM  
February 23, 2022 – 8:30 AM**

The Brevard City Council met for a Strategic Planning Session on Wednesday, February 23, 2022, at 8:30 a.m. at the Transylvania County Library Rogow Room, with Mayor Maureen Copelof presiding.

**Present** - Mayor Maureen Copelof, Mayor Pro Tem Gary Daniel, Council Members Mac Morrow, Maurice Jones, Aaron Baker and Geraldine Dinkins.

**Staff Present** - Interim City Manager Steve Harrell, City Clerk Jill Murray, Finance Director Dean Luebbe, City Attorney Mack McKeller, Executive Assistant to the City Manager Denise Hodsdon, Planning Director Paul Ray, Assistant Planning Director Aaron Bland, Fire Chief Bobby Cooper, Police Chief Tom Jordan, Human Resources Director Kelley Craig, Wastewater Treatment Plant ORC Emory Owen, Water Plant ORC Dennis Richardson and Public Works Director David Lutz.

**Press** - Jon Rich, Transylvania Times

**Facilitator** - John Stephens, Associate Professor at UNC School of Government.

**A. Welcome and Call to Order** - Mayor Copelof called the meeting to order and welcomed those present.

**B. Certification of Quorum** - The City Clerk certified a quorum present.

**E. Approval of Agenda** - Ms. Dinkins asked that we include a brief period for public comment for City business. Mr. Harrell asked to add a Resolution Approving the RAISE Grant Application and Attorney McKeller asked to add a Closed Session at the end of the day. Mr. Jones moved, seconded by Ms. Dinkins, the Agenda be approved as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

**Public Comment**

Doug Miller of 330 S. Caldwell Street spoke against the community garden as follows:

My name is Doug Miller, and I am here to speak to you in defense of public space. I am speaking specifically about a proposed use of public space that is located two tenths of a mile from my front door. I am speaking about the recently proposed community garden.

This proposed community garden is a terrible idea.

I know, I sound like a real jerk but hear me out. I like gardens. I support the act of gardening. But the proposed community garden off Silversteen Dr. is a terrible idea. Why? Primarily because building it will privatize a publicly owned piece of property thereby making it inaccessible to most of the citizens of Brevard. Is this the best use we can come up with? This proposed location is in a neighborhood made up of single-family homes. Do they lack space to garden? No, they do not. So I ask, who is this garden for? Will it provide a service that is lacking in this community? Will it offer anything of value to the folks who don't sign up to rent a plot?

This garden will provide plenty of feel-good vibes to the folks that are pushing for it but make no mistake, it will not be used by people who live in this neighborhood. I expect the renters of these proposed plots will need to drive in to tend to their private gardens, but the crude plans we have seen do not include any space allocated for parking. They also do not include the fencing that is inevitably going to be installed around this public space to keep people (and the large family of deer) who did not rent plots from entering.

Before proceeding with this terrible idea, at the very least try to figure out how much it will cost. The actual cost, not how much a small group from the other side of Broad Street has raised from private corporate interests. How much will the parking cost? How much will the fencing cost?

How much will the ongoing maintenance add to the city budget? How much will this cost the city to pay staff who will need to process payments and manage the assignment of garden plots? This project will have an impact on the city budget. It should be considered as a part of the yearly budgeting process which is subject to greater oversight and public scrutiny. Approving this project in a one-off vote is ill-advised and does not ensure transparency in government.

This underserved neighborhood, which I happen to live in isn't going to be served by this proposed garden. I was never asked if I support this use of public space and it seems to me my neighbors weren't asked either. There are certainly better ways to use this valuable public space that will better serve this neighborhood and the community at large. I urge you to try and identify those opportunities before making a rushed decision that will serve few while ensuring corporate donors reap the public relations benefits.

Jinx Bedrine of Brevard spoke in favor of the community garden. She said gardens bring generations together as a family, homeschool groups, intergenerational. It's an incredible space, a park with a purpose. The reason for the charge is for the definite dedication to the plot, that's skin in the game. The fence is to keep deer out, not the public. I'm willing to donate a greenhouse and I would like to have plant sharing and I would like the 4H Club to give seedling. It will bring diversity and generations together and hopefully extra produce to give to the food bank.

Bart Renner, Extension Agent at the NC Cooperative Extension said we would assist in whatever way we can. I want to note that it falls within our mandate within the community and we would assist City Admin in any way that we can. I just wanted to note that we are here with our professional expertise.

Mark Burrows, Policy Lead for Blue Zones Project, said we are supportive of this effort and we have worked at the request of the City to identify what land could be used for this. We have worked with Gaia Herbs who would donate fund to this and help. We are trying to bring community together on this and it will still remain public land. Blue Zones is working with the City and will cover the cost for anyone that cannot afford to garden. Parking is always an issue and there is parking across the street at the skate park. We expect people to walk to it. Lastly, Blue Zones will help the community work on how it will be used in the future.

Mayor Copelof closed public comment.

### **Business Agenda**

**Resolution No. 2022-04 Directing the Clerk to Investigate the Sufficiency of a Petition for an Annexation - Pisgah Forest Outdoors.** Mr. Morrow moved, seconded by Mr. Daniel to approve the resolution as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 2022-04**

#### **A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE CITY CLERK TO INVESTIGATE THE SUFFICIENCY OF A PETITION FOR AN ANNEXATION PURSUANT TO NCGS 160A-31, AS AMENDED**

WHEREAS, a petition was received on December 12, 2021, requesting the annexation of a contiguous area described in said Petition as the Pisgah Forest Outdoors, LLC, 11 Mama's Place, Pisgah Forest, NC 28768, consisting of 7.13 acres, more or less, be annexed into the City of Brevard. (Tax Property Identification Number: 8597-46-3093-000);

#### **Metes and Bounds Property Description:**

Beginning at a rebar marking the northwest corner of the parcel shown as Tract D on the Plat recorded in Plat File 16, Slide 363 and the same corner shown as Tract C (Revised) on the Plat recorded in Plat File 16, Slide 396, and being the southwest corner of the Hughes Tract (Book 210, Page 133), and then running with the Hughes line, North 82 degrees 15'03" East 222.20 feet to a rebar in a branch, the northwest corner of the Walmart parcel (Book 560, Page 344); then South 23 degrees 10'52" East 123.60 feet to a rebar; then South 34 degrees 48'26" East 161.11 feet to a rebar in a stump; then South 27 degrees 51'32" East 280.49 feet to a concrete monument; then South 06 degrees 51'31" East 8.35 feet to a concrete monument; then South 20 degrees 37'21" West 231.82 feet to a rebar; then continuing South 20 degrees 37'21" West to an iron rod set at the northeastern corner of Tract D (Revised) shown on the Plat recorded in Plat File 16, Slide 396; then North 69 degrees 23'38" West 129.95 feet to an iron pipe; then North 48 degrees 07'13" West 413.65 feet to a 1 3/4" iron pipe in the line of the U.S. Forest Service; then

with the Forest Service line, North 05 degrees 01'25" East 514.33 feet to the point of Beginning; containing 7.13 acres, and shown as Tract C (Revised) on the Plat recorded in Plat File 16, Slide 396.

WHEREAS, said Petition has been received by the City Council of the City of Brevard, North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, NCGS 160A-31, as amended, provides that the sufficiency of the Petition shall be investigated by the City Clerk before further annexation proceedings may take place; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Brevard deems it advisable to proceed in response to this request for annexation.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BREVARD, NORTH CAROLINA:

Section 1. The City Clerk is hereby directed to investigate the sufficiency of the above described Petition and to certify as soon as possible to the City Council the result of her investigation.

Section 2. This Resolution shall become effective upon its adoption and approval. Adopted and approved this the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of February, 2022.

**Authorization to Move Ahead with Community Garden on Silversteen Drive.** Mr. Harrell explained that City Council sent this back to the Parks, Trails and Recreation Committee for consideration and they voted unanimously to move forward with the garden. After a brief discussion, Mayor Copelof called for a vote. Mr. Morrow moved, seconded by Mr. Jones to move forward with the community garden. Motion carried 3-2 with Ms. Dinkins and Mr. Baker being nays.

**Resolution No. 2022-05 Authorizing the City Manager to Apply for a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant for the Construction of the Ecusta Trail and Estatoe Trails.** Mr. Ray explained that the U.S. Department of Transportation has published a Notice of Funding Opportunity for \$1.5 billion in grant funding through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) discretionary grant program. This program helps communities around the country carry out projects that have significant local or regional impacts. The \$1.5 billion in available funding for 2022 represents a 50 percent increase in available funds compared to last year. Staff is proposing that City Council authorize the City Manager to apply for the 2022 RAISE grant opportunity, and partner with Conserving Carolina to secure funding to cover the cost of grant writing. To achieve this, Conserving Carolina would apply for Leverage Funds from Dogwood Health Trust. The grant writing team this year would be a collaborative effort between Alta Planning + Design, and Julie Metz (Conserving Carolina's choice for its funded consulting services). Additional funds would be secured by Conserving Carolina to pay for a consultant, Robert Mariner, as introduced by Julie, to help the City prepare a strategy to bolster political support at the local, state, and federal levels. The City's project this year would be the design and construction of the Estatoe Trail and the Ecusta Trail, which is paired down from last year's project, which included streetscape improvements among other things. Staff and consultants believe that narrowing its focus to a multimodal project with regional ties to its neighboring county will essentially declutter our application. Staff recommends that City Council adopt the resolution as presented. Mr. Morrow moved, seconded by Ms. Dinkins, to approve the resolution as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

#### RESOLUTION NO. 2022-05

#### A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO APPLY FOR A REBUILDING AMERICAN INFRASTRUCTURE WITH SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUITY (RAISE) GRANT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ECUSTA AND ESTATOE TRAILS

WHEREAS, The City of Brevard has long valued quality multi-modal transportation infrastructure to meet the needs of our citizens, a value expressed through numerous public input efforts and planning processes over many years of various studies; and

WHEREAS, the City has invested in multiple transportation related plans and partnered with other regional entities to develop these plans, including the: Downtown Masterplan of 2002, 2012 and 2021, the FHWA supported Ecusta Rail Trail Planning Study and Economic Impact Analysis of 2012, the Comprehensive

Transportation Plan of 2007 and 2025, the Brevard Bicycle-Friendly Community Improvement Plan of 2018, the Transylvania County Bicycle Plan of 2019, the Blue Ridge Regional Bike Plan, and the Brevard Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan of 2006 and 2018, to name a few; and

**WHEREAS**, these plans and investments confirm the interest to provide efficient alternative modes of transportation such as bike, transit, pedestrian and multi-use spaces in existence and coordination with traditional vehicular use corridors; and

**WHEREAS**, Brevard understands that a safe, reliable, affordable and accessible transportation system for all users is essential to the quality of life of our residents and to the health of our economy; and

**WHEREAS**, as stated in Resolution 2021-21, approved June 21, 2021, the City of Brevard has committed to taking on a lead role in securing funding, overseeing construction, and managing the public use of the section of the Ecusta Trail within Transylvania County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Ecusta Trail is a 19-mile regional trail system connecting Transylvania County to Henderson County that will bring many recreational, public health, and economic benefits to local residents and businesses within and beyond the City of Brevard; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States Department of Transportation has issued another round of its Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) discretionary grant program, providing \$1.5 billion of funding for planning and capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure, to be awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant local or regional impact; and

**WHEREAS**, RAISE funding can support roads, bridges, transit, rail, ports or intermodal transportation that include, implement or enhance safety, economic competitiveness, quality of life, environmental sustainability, state of good repair, innovation, and partnerships; and

**WHEREAS**, City Staff is proposing that City Council authorize the City Manager to apply for the 2022 RAISE grant opportunity, and partner with Conserving Carolina to secure funding to cover the cost of grant writing. To achieve this, Conserving Carolina would apply for Leverage Funds from Dogwood Health Trust. The grant writing team this year would be a collaborative effort between Alta Planning + Design, and Julie Metz (Conserving Carolina's choice for its funded consulting services). Additional funds would be secured by Conserving Carolina to pay for a consultant, Robert Mariner, as introduced by Julie, to help the City prepare a strategy to bolster political support at the local, state, and federal levels.

**WHEREAS**, the 2022 RAISE applications are due by April 14, 2022, at 5:00 pm and notification of awards is expected on or before August 12, 2022; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BREVARD, NORTH CAROLINA THAT:**

**SECTION 1.** The City Manager is hereby authorized to apply for a RAISE grant and accept funding for the design, construction, and implementation of the City of Brevard's Estatoe Trail and the Transylvania County portion of the Ecusta Trail.

**SECTION 2.** This Resolution shall become effective upon its adoption and approval.

Adopted and approved this the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of February, 2022.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

John Stephens introduced himself and went over the rules and layout of how the day is going to go.

Mayor Copelof gave a PowerPoint review of strategies (Accomplishments and Lessons) from 2018-2021. (On File).

- Mr. Harrell recommended that Brevard consider a GIS System. You can use it to identify the line within 6 feet of where the cap would be.
- Mr. Jones asked if that would be in line with what the County does and Mr. Harrell said yes. Mr. Jones suggested that City Council consider updating the utility mapping system that Mayor Copelof mentioned under "infrastructure".

Mr. Stephens asked Council what are your observations or any lessons of how the Town Council and staff have planned and tried to execute priorities since 2018.

- Mr. Jones said he noticed that things change and priorities change with the times because when I look back at this list, the priorities are pretty good but today sitting here looking back at those, there's a lot that I think could be reversed so that's the importance of these retreats to decide what direction we need to go in.
- Ms. Dinkins said my immediate reaction is that we're talking about a four year time span. Our Mayor did a good job at highlighting all of the things that have been done. My observation is that a lot of this has been done very recently and that there was a timespan where very little got done. I'd like to point out that

the Tannery Park Skate Park, kind of shifted the landscape because it was a project that was heavily supported by the community to raise \$73,000 in private funds. Then we tried to work with the City to build this project because the City did not have a good process and things went a little hinky. But, after that project was completed and the City accepted it, suddenly things started happening in short order. So, I want us to look forward and talk about pacing because in my mind, in four years, we have not done enough for the bike trail.

- Mr. Morrow said he appreciates the Mayor's report because it does show a lot of movement particularly during COVID. So when you think about a small town that can accomplish anything during COVID, it's a compliment to the people in this room. One of the reasons we didn't do a whole lot before was because we were up to our necks in utility upgrades and that was all prior to this but we didn't have a choice in those cases so I think we've come a long way. It's always good to look back and we can be proud of where the City has been in the last decade. Not many towns our size have been able to accomplish what we have, so I'm not worried about the process.
- Mr. Daniel said he thinks it's good to look back and it's good to see the things that have been accomplished. It's also interesting to see how priorities have changed. I see workforce housing got one dot last time and I think that would be very different today. The other thing is some of the stuff that has become more and more important such as street paving, sidewalk repairs, things of that nature, so it's a good reminder.
- Mr. Baker said he thinks it's interesting how the priorities haven't changed but also how they have changed. Specifically, the workforce and affordable housing. It's great that they're on here but knowing what we know today, it's a little shocking that they're at the bottom of each section, but we'll talk about where they rank today. It's certainly at the top of my list. I think Council Member Dinkins makes a good point, the bike path is a process, it takes a lot of time working out rights-of-way, getting funding and all that. The word I would say is "focus" and I look forward to moving forward.
- Mayor Copelof said what jumps out at her is "balance". We didn't put all of our efforts into one thing. We balanced our efforts across a number of different areas and when you look at each area, you can see we put resources and time and money across there to get a number of different priorities complete and to me that's one of the most important things that we need to look at. How do we achieve real balance so that we really are providing support across the demographics for our community with limited fiscal resources and that we are supporting from toddlers to the elderly in all of the different sections of town, all of the different diversity that makes up our City and that we balance that support so that enhancements aren't just happening in one place, they're happening everywhere, in the entire community. If you look at our priorities from three years ago and you ask me if I think we were successful, I would say yes. In the majority of these areas, we were successful in supporting and balancing and working towards those priorities.

~~ 10:12 AM took 15 Minute Break ~~

### **Trends and Factors Affecting Brevard**

#### **Factors:**

Mr. Baker – Housing needs to be a top topic, it's a value. Small town charm, balance and density.

Ms. Dinkins – Rent. We want high schoolers to graduate and be able to start a trade here. I don't want Brevard to become a "resort town".

Mayor Copelof – A lot of our traditional communities are being displaced. How do we grow and maintain the equity for traditional families that have been here for years. The entire infrastructure, roads, sidewalks, extension of sewer etc. How do we, as a City, make sure that we have an infrastructure that supports the health and wellbeing of our citizens and that supports the community?

Mr. Daniel – Agreed with everyone and all of it is important.

Mr. Jones – Short Term Rentals/Workforce Housing

Continuing to maintain our existing infrastructure and extending and enhancing it where we can.

**Trends:**

Mayor Copelof – Would like to see us collaborate and partner more with the County. I think we share goals with housing and also the development of the Ecusta Trail.

Mr. Baker – History is something to share. Being forward thinking in terms of what we can work on now and not worry about how it went in the past.

Mr. Jones – We can add economic development i.e., Sylvan Sport. We worked with the County on that.

**6 Years Out:**

Mayor Copelof – Environment and sustainability. How are we being proactive with policies and examples we set in terms of protecting our environment? We could also partner with the County.

Mr. Jones – Biomass; the reputation we have is Brevard, Bikes and Brews.

Mr. Baker – Cycling. Bike infrastructure. We've been given this distinction of being the biking capital of the south but not necessarily what we've done with the community. Tourism based economy and finding balance with that. Transylvania County Tourism is another group that we should be partnering with.

Ms. Dinkins – If we connect our multi-use path, everything else will come.

**What Will Brevard Be Great For in 2028?**

Mr. Morrow – Authenticity, understanding what we value and protect and it's a shared value.

Mayor Copelof – Our strong sense of community and connection across different segments.

Mr. Daniel – Was going to say what Mayor Copelof said.

Mr. Baker – Not resort.

Mr. Jones – Generational families because they're starting to move out. They can't afford to stay and not seeing the possibilities when it comes to jobs.

Ms. Dinkins – Friendly and feel lucky to be here.

**Short Term Strategies and Priorities****Fiscal Year 2022-23 Budget Preparation**

- **Fire Department** – Fire Chief Bobby Cooper requested three full-time engineers to work rotating 24 hour shifts; asked to work with HR to increase the minimum pay rate for probationary firefighter from \$8.71/hr. to \$15/hr. over the next few years; consider switching from NCLM to VFIS for apparatus and portable equipment coverage; replace a 1995 4WD engine; increase travel budget by \$5000 to cover expenses for final inspection of new rescue truck in Hamburg, NY.
- **Police Department** – Police Chief Tom Jordan requested two new positions; a code enforcement officer and instead of a deputy chief, he would like to have two captains so one position is for an additional captain.
- **Public Works / Water & Sewer Fund** – Public Works Director David Lutz is requesting four new positions. One position in Building and Grounds; two in Sanitation and one the Water Distribution Division.
- **Mary C. Jenkins Community Center Operations** - Mr. Harrell explained that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will include the hiring of a Community Center Director who will report to the City Manager and would also oversee the Depot Railroad Avenue Park and the French Broad Community Center. Salary range is the hiring rate of \$20.87/hr. or \$43,402 annually and after six months \$21.91/hr. or \$45,572 annually.
- **Communications/IT** - Mr. Harrell explained that the purpose of providing in-house IT services would provide a much quicker turnaround on computer and internet needs of the City. They would manage the City website, social

marketing, be the point person for public relations etc. The reach out to the public would be very useful with regards to keeping the public advised as to projects and why certain stances have been taken.

- **Downtown Main Street: Water/Sewer Work Prior to Repaving** – Mr. Harrell explained that the final design of the improvements has been completed and is awaiting NCDOT Encroachment Agreement. Projected construction begin date is projected as 4/1/22 and a construction end date of 9/1/22. The City of Brevard American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding has been slated for this project at a cost of \$600,000 of the \$2.5 million ARPA funds allocated to the City.

### **Priorities**

**Short-Term:** Council agreed that hiring 11 new positions across the City is a top priority. The COLA was another topic in terms of retaining quality employees. Mr. Baker asked to see the total ARPA money and also a total head count for the City for the last 10-15 years.

~~ 2:15 PM took 15 Minute Break ~~

### **Long-Term:**

- Out of Space. The City is out of space in the current building. If we hire 11 new people, we have nowhere to put them. Mentioned approaching the County about the City using the Courthouse
- Long Term Parking. How will we grow it and use it
- New Wastewater Treatment Plant. Working on a grant that would start the process
- Significant debt through 2030
- Solar Power
- Cathey's Creek and its impact on the river
- Updating our UDO
- Housing
- Multi-Use Path
- Workforce Housing. Perhaps take on a role to advocate for changes in state law
- Districts. Single family residential homes may make it hard to apply a district tax
- The trail is THE top priority to complete

~~3:41PM took 15 Minute Break ~~

### **Tracking and Communication of Plans and Priorities**

Mr. Jones – I think this has been the best that this Board has communicated with each other and listened to one another. Utilize the mailing of our water bill.

Ms. Dinkins – To me all of our staff is working well, but now that we have a new City Manager and new Finance Director, we have real and realistic opinions.

Ms. Daniel – Our Committee system allows us to work directly with staff on certain issues and it works really well.

Mr. Baker – I think there has been a history of information gatekeeping and that's between Council and staff and between the City and the public and some of that was not intentional and some of it was. As we head into a new era of getting a new City Manager, that's top for me. Getting info from staff and communicating it to us.

Mayor Copelof – I'm very pleased with communication between staff and myself. That IT person is very important. They will be more proactive with social media and making our website more dynamic. I think communication has been improving with the public a lot. Also, having more City Council meetings has been helpful.

**Feedback on Retreat**

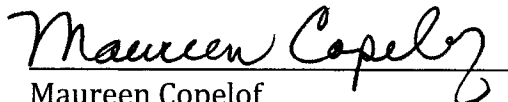
- Next time have the room set up facing the public.
- Give the public an opportunity to weigh in somehow leading up to the session.
- Liked the facilitator.
- The timing of this retreat worked well.
- Enjoyed the lunch.
- Room was too warm and microphones weren't working.
- Good recap of where we were since the last time.
- Having a synopsis of today before going into the budget would be helpful.


**Closed Session(s)** – Mayor Copelof asked the City Attorney if it would be appropriate for Council to hold a closed session to discuss a potential litigation acquisition. City Attorney advised pursuant to **GS § 143-318.11. (a)(3)** It would be appropriate to convene a closed session on the matter. A closed session requires a separate motion, second and vote to discuss the matter. Council will enter and exit regular session for each closed session.

**Closed Session #1** - At 4:30 p.m. Mr. Morrow moved, seconded by Mr. Daniel to enter into closed session to discuss a potential litigation and clear the Rogow Room. Motion carried unanimously. Authorized to remain for the closed session with Council and the Attorney were the City Manager and City Clerk.

**Council Returned to Regular Session** – at 5:10 p.m. Council resumed the meeting in regular session. No official action was taken in closed session and the Minutes of the closed session are authorized to be sealed.

**Adjourn** – There being no further business, Mr. Jones moved, seconded by Mr. Daniel, the meeting be adjourned. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

  
Maureen Copelof  
Mayor

  
Jill Murray, CMC  
City Clerk

Minutes Approved: March 7, 2022