

MINUTES OF THE  
SPECIAL MEETING – CITY COUNCIL  
MAY 3, 2007

The special meeting of the City Council of the City of Benicia was called to order by Mayor Steve Messina at 6:03 p.m. on Thursday, May 3, 2007, at the Benicia Fire Department, Fire Station 11, 150 Military West, complete proceedings of which are recorded on tape.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Council Members Hughes, Patterson, Schwartzman, Whitney, and Mayor Messina

Absent: None

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Messina led the pledge to the flag.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS:

A plaque stating the Fundamental Rights of each member of the public is posted at the entrance to the room, per Section 4.04.030 of City of Benicia Ordinance No. 05-6 (Open Government Ordinance).

ACTION ITEM:

F.Y. 2007-09 Strategic Plan Priorities Adoption:

Council Member Whitney stated that it was troublesome that Council establishes a top ten. Some of them get done and some don't, then it establishes another top ten. He suggested having an old and a new.

Council Member Hughes suggested Council should come up with a list, however the undone old should be put into the new projects. If there were two separate lists, there could be twenty projects. The lists should be integrated.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that four of the old projects ended up on the new list.

Mr. Erickson stated that Staff thinks that remaining projects that are undone that Council thinks are important should be rolled into the new list. As items are completed, they could be checked off. The next waiting project could be added to the list. There could be a 'reserve' list so to speak. It could be a 'rolling' list.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that he sort of disagreed, specifically with the X-Park project. He asked Staff for an update on the X-Park project. Mr. Dotson stated that it should be completed near the end of July. Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that in that case, it was as good as done and should be removed from the list.

Jim Erickson, City Manager, reviewed the staff report.

Council Member Patterson asked Mr. Erickson how the criteria worked toward building blocks for sustainable development. Mr. Erickson stated that some of the projects are like catalysts for other good things that could happen. One project that is not on Council's list, but was on Staff's list, was to adopt the Downtown and Arsenal plans. That is a stepping-stone for other good things to happen in those areas. If you look at some of the projects, they are foundation pieces for other projects to build on. Council Member Patterson stated that the Arsenal, in a sense, could contribute to sustainability.

Mr. Erickson stated that there were a few items that Staff thought Council should consider adding to its list: Downtown Plan and Arsenal Plan, and to complete the X-Park, disaster planning, full time code enforcement, traffic signal at BHS, Library basement, and promote courteous communications. Staff wants to have focus on this. Staff realizes there needed to be a limit, which has been set at ten.

Mayor Messina stated that it was important that Council identifies the most important priorities. There needs to be a list. Council has to identify and reach consensus on what the list means. There needs to be a sense on what Council's expectations are. There needs to be agreement on what Council means when it identifies projects. His goal would be to have the list done and reach consensus on what Council means.

Council Member Patterson stated that she questioned the list. There is not a reflection of the intensity efforts on any of the projects. There is no reflection of the duration of the projects. The list does not show the character or depth of some of the items. The Staff recommendations are more or less underway, with the exception of the traffic signal. She trusts her colleagues that they will not turn their backs on projects that are under way. She wondered if something could be established now to show the intensity, duration, etc.

State Park Road Bridge:

Mayor Messina stated that his expectation is that the bridge would be in use at the end of the two-year period. Mr. Schiada stated that it was realistic to think that would be able to be done.

Council Member Whitney asked about additional funds needed. Mr. Schiada stated that the City would probably have to ask for \$500,000 in local matching funds and \$1 million in additional grant money.

Council Member Hughes stated asked about the contingency costs. Mr. Schiada stated that they have 20-25% contingency built in the costs. There is a lot of state funding available for bicycle and pedestrian uses.

Marilyn Bardet – Ms. Bardet asked if there was any money coming in from the Bordoni Ranch project. Mr. Schiada stated that the City of Vallejo's conditions of approval for the Bordoni Ranch Project included the requirement to widen Columbus Parkway to 4 through lanes sometime before this project is half built-out and they will be required to pay for their fair share of the costs.

Council Member Patterson stated that (regarding the representation of #1 project, #2 project, etc.) the way the City is managed is towards public safety. All the resources are going to have to go to public safety. That is not the way government works. Having a list makes sense. Having a numbered list conveys the wrong message. The matrix makes more sense.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman disagreed. Water and wastewater is always a priority. Roads and potholes – those are ongoing things that need to be taken care of. These projects need to be done. Once the bridge is done, it is done, but water and wastewater will continue. Council needs to decide what projects are most important.

Benicia Business Park:

Mr. Knox stated that realistically, in a two-year timeframe, there should be an approved project.

Council Member Whitney stated that he saw the projects as the goals for the City. Some of them received more votes than others. However, situations change, dollars appear, etc. Some projects can suddenly become easier to accomplish if grant funds become available.

Council Member Hughes clarified that the projects are capital improvement projects. They are not day-to-day operations. There are times when day-to-day operations will need to be taken care of before the projects. Public safety has to take priority over the projects. Some items have the same number of votes.

Marilyn Bardet stated that she saw a problem with the list of ten. Some are monumental projects, and some are smaller. Regarding the Benicia Business Park – she can see how it falls into each of the categories on the matrix. To meet LSA half way, the City needs to have a task force on the environment. The project is one of the key things that have to be accomplished. The City does not have some of the key criteria to get us there. The task force is a great way to meet those needs. There needs to be a sustainability taskforce or green task force.

Council Member Hughes stated that Council is deciding the ‘what’ and Ms. Bardet was talking about the ‘how.’ Council can’t ignore the budget resources that are needed for the projects.

Mayor Messina stated that the ‘how’ would be addressed during the budget sessions.

David Lockwood – Mr. Lockwood stated that taking the projects one at a time, Council has to figure out the resources the City has to get the objectives met. Should we really be asking ourselves if we are reaching the max out for growth in the City? Is the benefit worth the cost? We have to decide if this is really what we want as a city. We should not do what someone else wants, unless we as a city want it. The cost benefit analysis is not there. Mayor Messina stated that if there were not enough staff, it would have to look into outside help (consultants, etc.).

Norma Fox – Ms. Fox stated that the EIR does not go into a cost benefit analysis.

David Lockwood - Mr. Lockwood stated that in the process, there needed to be some milestones that are followed up on.

Council Member Patterson stated that regarding the list and matrix, it represents the favorite project, rather than the projects that may be the best for the City.

Mr. Erickson stated that the list and the matrix together show the value of each project.

Clocktower Preservation and Improvement:

The ADA improvements have been completed. In the next two years, the elevator improved and the bathrooms on the top floors made ADA accessible. Also, the improvements needed to be made on the lower floor. Funding is not currently available for the lower floor at this time. It probably could not be accomplished in the next two years because of the funding issue. If it was just the bathrooms and elevators, it could probably be done in the next two years. The work on the lower floors would have to be contracted out. The stonework on the outside of the building should be included in the costs.

Council Member Whitney stated that he previously suggested this project be separated out into a preservation project. It is not imperative that the City improves the lower floor at this time. He would like to see stairs, sandstone, elevator, and bathrooms accomplished. He does not believe the lower floor improvement should be in there.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that the pressure is off of the lower floor improvement since the Mills site has become available, however, it may attract more people to the Arsenal area and increase the use and activity.

Bonnie Silveria – Ms. Silveria stated that she has wanted all of the windows on the upper floors to be able to be opened for a long time. That should be addressed.

Marilyn Bardet – Ms. Bardet stated that the City needs as much public space as it can get for meetings, classrooms, etc. Rather than building new complexes and buildings, we should use the buildings we already have. The Clocktower would be marvelous for such uses.

Council Member Patterson stated that there should be a plan completed to address the lower floor. However, there are costs associated with that.

New Expanded/Restored Police Station:

Mr. Erickson stated that one of the challenges is to define what the project is. The facility is deteriorating. There are space issues. It would be an expensive project. Defining an acceptable project could be done in the next two years.

Chief Spagnoli stated that there is definitely a need for space. We need to define what is needed. Mayor Messina asked if she could define, by budget time, what is needed.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that we need a new police station. Now that the City has the Mills facility, space could open up. Why in two years, couldn't we have a plan or design for space for the new police station where the portables are?

Council Member Patterson asked her to look at providing information on a phased approach. The first step is to look at the needs.

Council Member Hughes stated that he agreed the City needs a new police station. The current station is embarrassing. Even with the money the City spent on the 'band-aid', it is still not good enough. The City needs to educate the public.

Chief Spagnoli stated that spending money on improvements needs to be carefully considered if a new police station is in the near future.

Council Member Whitney stated that one of the key components is that it is about creating a clear understanding of the needs, creating an aggressive education program for the community. Until the City does a better job with the public, it will be spinning its wheels with this issue.

Marilyn Bardet – Ms. Bardet stated that the cost issue has to be dealt with in a clear manner. If you talk about phasing and something that could benefit the whole campus – it would be an advantage. The whole police campus needs work. Construction costs are going up. We have to face the music on how this can be accomplished in the most efficient cost effective way.

Mills:

Mr. Dotson stated that the City's goal is to occupy the building by next June.

Council Member Patterson stated that the City talked about having a plan for Mills. It does not have that yet. That needs to be done. She thought getting in there would be a phased approach (community garden, medical facility, etc.) However, the goal would not be to slow down the physical improvements of the site.

Marilyn Bardet – Ms. Bardet stated that as a neighbor of the Mills site, she thought there needed to be a repaving of the site. The alley would need to be paved as well.

Mr. Dotson stated that the City was working with the commission to establish some rules for the facility. The issues of noise, types of uses, etc. were being discussed. That would all be part of the process.

David Lockwood - Mr. Lockwood asked if the City was considering Mills as its permanent community center. Mayor Messina confirmed that was correct. There was a

40-year lease with two ten-year options. Mr. Lockwood stated that with all of the traffic, it might not be a suitable location.

Wayfinding and Directional Signage Program:

Council Member Whitney stated that a number of the Council Members attended a meeting at the Library. One of the issues was the need for signage in order to have a vibrant Downtown area. Some people may have no idea about the wonderful Downtown area if they are just coming to town for the first time.

Council Member Patterson referred to the recommendations in the OPTICOS Plan, Downtown Plan, and Arsenal Plans. She would like those recommendations to be part of this. The issue of wayfinding is very important.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that he thought this issue was very important, but something on the list might be more important. If it is part of the OPTICOS Plan, it has not been finalized yet.

Mr. Knox stated that he thought there were some things that could be accomplished in two years, but he was not sure about the landscaping, gateways, etc.

Council Member Whitney stated that he thought this project was deliverable. Part of what drives his choices is choosing things that are obtainable.

Council Member Hughes stated that the previous projects had three votes. The rest of the items only have two votes. Council needs to go through the process to identify the top projects.

Mike Iokimedes- Mr. Iokimedes stated that he would never turn away money that would increase tourism downtown. The city would benefit from a comprehensive tourism plan. We need to look at the tourism issue collectively. Every year, the City should make an investment in Downtown. They are looking for a long-term investment strategy. The signage is a wonderful idea, but it needs to be looked at long-term.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman wondered if Council should add a comprehensive tourism program to the list and put this issue as part of that item.

Council Member Hughes stated that he would not put this under 'Downtown.' It should be citywide. He would put it under a comprehensive tourism program for the City.

Council Member Patterson stated that 'strengthen Downtown' was listed in the plan. If you could show on a chart where you have crosscutting programs, wayfinding could be one of them; you could actually see the strengths.

Council Member Whitney stated that Council seemed to be in agreement in the way it wanted to go with this. He asked Mr. Iokimedes what he felt about this issue. Mr. Iokimedes stated that as a City, we should not limit ourselves to looking at immediate

impact. He would say to implement tourism and look at what part of that plan could be done to show immediate impact.

Council Member Hughes suggested titling this as development of a comprehensive tourism program, and this being the first step (wayfinding and signage). Council Members Patterson, Schwartzman, Hughes, and Whitney agreed that was acceptable.

Norma Fox- Ms. Fox asked if this would involve hiring a consultant. Mayor Messina stated that was not being discussed, that would be addressed at a later date.

Maintain Air Quality:

Council Member Patterson stated that it was mislabeled. It is actually energy conservation and greenhouse gas reduction program. The City could join ABAG's energy audit program and use their technical assistance to determine our carbon footprint and identify ways to reduce energy demand for greenhouse gas reduction, energy conservation, and air quality.

Council Member Whitney stated that something else that could be added to this program is getting the VN's from Valero directed back to the community for air quality enhancements. We could use those dollars to convert to clean running vehicles. He has been working on that issue for a few years now.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that he was also thinking about additional air monitors. It seems to him that we need more. He would like to see that as part of the program.

Citizen – The citizen represents Benicia Inconvenient Group (BIG) – The citizen stated that the group has been discussing the fact that this is of great importance to the City. She would like to push for the City having a sustainability taskforce to make sure all of this happens. It needs to have citizen input.

Kirsten Schwind, Bay Localize – Ms. Schwind stated that the price of gas is projected to rise in the future. She discussed the issue of shifting from a fossil fuel based economy to a localized green economy. Bay Localize is working to improve the viability of local business enterprises, advance localization policy measures, and empower community-based organizations. Ms. Schwind discussed how other communities are working to address the issue of energy and fuel.

Mayor Messina stated that he wanted to go in the direction of defining some tangible goals that could be met within the two years. The City could possibly provide incentives for citizens who install solar panels, etc. It needs to be achievable, but also stated that we want to go in a particular direction.

Council Member Patterson stated that the City would still need to join ABAG. ABAG could help the City identify its needs.

Council Member Hughes stated this item did not show up on his list. He did not know what it was. If it could be identified and initiatives could be listed, he would be open to it.

Mr. Erickson stated that Staff could come back in about three weeks with some alternatives that are achievable.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that he would like to put in air monitors, citizen incentives (solar panels), etc. That seems achievable.

Council Member Whitney stated that with regards to the fleet, he would like to have Staff work with Supervisor Silva on this program, along with ABAG.

Mayor Messina asked Mr. Erickson to come back to Council with some definitive information on this issue. Provide some options, talk with outside agencies, and come up with something tangible that could be done in a two-year period.

Marilyn Bardet – Ms. Bardet recommended having a task force for accountability and input on this issue.

Ferry Service:

Council Member Patterson asked for a Staff perspective on this. Mr. Erickson stated that ferry service was a daunting task. He agreed the issue was a priority. Perhaps that ferry service could become a reality in two years, but it is a very costly issue.

Mayor Messina asked Staff to come back with a proposal on what it would cost to bring ferry service to Benicia.

Council Member Whitney stated that it was a daunting task. However, if we are talking about developing a plan or strategy with some real world costs, he was open to that.

Council Member Patterson stated that legislature is looking at funding for the overall bay ferry plan. Prop 1E passed. Funding will go to the ferries. When the freeway collapsed, it was made clear that we needed a reliable ferry service to rely on.

Mayor Messina suggested if that was the case, maybe the timeframe should be bumped up to have the plan done in 6 months to one year.

David Lockwood – Mr. Lockwood stated that it was critical to have a definition for what it wants the ferry service to be. There are parking issues, as well as other issues involved. Would it be a commuter ferry service or a tourist ferry service?

Norma Fox- Ms. Fox stated that there was parking available in the Yuba area. That would work well for the ferry. It would be a huge tourist draw to have ferry service.

Fire Rescue Boat:

Council Member Whitney stated that he brought this issue forward. Council majority was in favor of this in the past. The firefighters came to him with the idea. If it saves a life, it is worth every penny. The City's responsibilities don't stop at the shoreline. The City should clearly look into the issues raised by Mr. Serratt (via email). He would rather rely on what the professionals have to say. Public health and safety is the number one concern for the City. He would like to hear about the assessment on this item before it is dropped off of the list.

Mayor Messina asked Chief Hanley for a line item cost for all costs (training included) for this item.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that he went along with this last year. However, he gets the feeling it is a ship afloat without an anchor. Council has not received numbers on it, information on corporate sponsorship, etc. He is willing to listen to numbers, but he is just not sure what it involves at this point.

Council Member Patterson stated that the City had a lot of public safety needs. It would get more bang for its buck if it addressed some of the other public safety needs. She toured the Maritime Administration Ready Reserve Fleet, which includes two rescue boats. The maritime could get to Benicia very fast. They can fight fires, rescue, etc. They are interested in a partnership with Benicia for those needs.

Council Member Whitney stated that you couldn't put a dollar on saving lives. He was disappointed Council Member Patterson abandoned ship on this issue.

Chief Hanley stated that this has taken longer than it normally would have. He is almost there in looking into corporate sponsorships, etc. They have located a donated boat. He could have all the necessary information by the next Council meeting. He has two steps left to follow up on. He would be uncomfortable with not following through on this issue.

Council Member Hughes stated that this was on his list, but he did have the same questions the other Council Members had. There is some risk assessment that needs to be done. He wants to see the risk benefit as well as the cost analysis.

Marilyn Bardet – Ms. Bardet stated that she was very interested in the fire rescue boat. She was curious whether or not Valero supplied the city with fire rescue boat or security boat for the port. Mayor Messina stated that Homeland Security handled security. Chief Hanley stated that there is currently no security patrol for Benicia's waters.

Expand Existing Services at the Senior Center:

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that he could be more convinced to leave this on the list if it addressed health and safety. He was not sure exactly what this item entailed.

David Lockwood – Mr. Lockwood stated that Benicia does not provide its senior citizens with ample programs (food, medical, etc. that would enhance the quality of life). The

sooner the City realizes this is an aging population, the better. It is time to move the seniors up into a category where the City focuses on them.

Mayor Messina suggested putting a line item into the City's budget to address programs for seniors.

Council Member Patterson stated that she went with Mr. Knox to Solano County for a conference on healthy communities. If we do what the Mayor suggested, the City could take advantage of funding that is available through healthy community programs and others.

Council majority agreed that if that were the case, this item could be taken off the priority list and addressed via line item in the City's budget.

Commandant's Building Stabilization and Preservation:

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that it was critical to get this item done. Council majority agreed this had to be done.

Council Member Patterson stated that if Council continues with the projects underway that were part of the last cycle's priorities, they would all be addressed, with the exception of the traffic signal at BHS.

Mr. Schiada stated that the traffic signal had not even gotten underway. The cost was \$350,000, but the costs are still rising. There are potential grant monies that might be available. This is an important project to Staff. Mayor Messina confirmed the City would have to come up with half as part of the 50/50 match.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman confirmed that this item was important.

Council Member Whitney stated that it was previously suggested that as projects are completed, they are removed from the list.

Mr. Erickson stated that Council should focus on ten top priorities, and have other projects in 'reserve.' He suggested having five projects in the reserve. He suggested leaving the Downtown and Arsenal Plans as well as the X-Park on the list.

Mr. Knox stated that he would feel more comfortable if the staff recommendations the Downtown and Arsenal Plan and the X-Park were left on the list.

Council Member Hughes suggested leaving those two items on there.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that he was persuaded to leave the two items on the list as well. He was fine with leaving the Downtown and Arsenal Plans on, however the X-Park seems to be finite, and completion is imminent, so he could leave that item off.

Status on items 16-21:

- Traffic signal - goes away
- Full time code enforcement - goes on the budget as a line item
- Library basement – include it in the top 11
- Disaster Planning – ongoing
- Downtown parking and streetscape amenities – incorporate it into the tourism plan
- Ongoing cemetery fund – make it a line item in the budget
- Support disabled citizens – put it with expanding the existing senior services item

Mayor Messina asked for preliminary information on this at the 5/23 Council meeting.

Norma Fox- Ms. Fox suggested adding an x to the asset column for the air quality item. She discussed the issue of community choice with regards to energy options. Council Member Patterson stated that was on the list that ABAG looks at.

Marilyn Bardet – Ms. Bardet discussed the importance of having a task force to work on this issue. The task force would be a liaison between the community and the City to help get this underway.

David Lockwood – Mr. Lockwood stated that Council’s willingness to have the public participate has been a very good thing. It helps him to know that Council is really interested in what the public thinks.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Messina adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.

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Lisa Wolfe, City Clerk