

\*\*\*\*\*April 9, 2012\*\*\*\*\*

The Signal Mountain Town Council held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, April 9, 2012, at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall. Those present were:

Mayor Bill Lusk  
Vice Mayor Susan Robertson  
Councilmember Annette Allen  
Councilmember Dick Gee  
Councilmember Bill Wallace

Also present were:

Town Attorney Phillip Noblett  
Town Recorder Mark Johnson  
Town Manager Honna Rogers  
See attached list for others present

Mayor Lusk led the pledge of allegiance. Stacey Seals, Fire Chaplain, gave the invocation. The roll was called.

### Minutes

The minutes for the March 12<sup>th</sup> regular meeting, March 20<sup>th</sup> special meeting and March 26<sup>th</sup> agenda session were discussed. With no additions, deletions, or corrections, the minutes were approved.

### Presentation – 911 Mapping

John Stuermer, Hamilton County 911 District Executive Director, presented a proposal for Town participation in a County-wide, 18-month, 911 mapping upgrade project. Brian Turner with Hamilton County's engineering department was also present. He explained that accurately identifying locations is critical to 911 operations, and to that end, the District and County Mayor have proposed a transition to a next-generation mapping system. He said that it had been proposed at various times during the past few years. He further explained that many addresses are not in the current GIS database and they are often only discovered during an emergency. He said that a reputable company delivered a total cost estimate of \$900,000. Hamilton County would like for this cost to be shared by the participating agencies, and that the estimated cost could be lower if addresses are identified first.

Mr. Noblett asked who would be considered "agencies". Mr. Stuermer said that it would be the Hamilton County municipalities that are paying to be part of the 911 district. Mr. Noblett asked if unincorporated portions of the County would be included. Mr. Stuermer said he wasn't sure. Mr. Noblett said that if all municipalities were not included, the Town would be paying a disproportionate share. Mr. Stuermer agreed, saying that it would be better for all beneficiaries to share the cost. Mr. Noblett said that it would seem

that there would be several duplicate streets across all Hamilton County municipalities. Mr. Stuermer replied that one purpose of the process would be to eliminate that problem.

Councilmember Wallace asked how many Town addresses would need to be identified within the database. Mr. Stuermer said that he was unsure, but two previously unidentified addresses in Harrison, Tennessee had been noted during recent storms. He said that often there is a problem in rural areas homeowners have subdivided their property and therefore homes may be further away from listed addresses. Councilmember Wallace said that the Town isn't building many new roads. Mr. Stuermer agreed. Mayor Lusk asked Police Chief Boyd Veal and Fire Chief John Vlasis if they had noted several unidentified addresses. Chief Vlasis said that there weren't many, but several address corrections have been made. Mayor Lusk said that with few unknowns, it would seem that the new mapping system wouldn't provide much of a benefit. Chief Veal said that it might aid in solving jurisdiction issues. Ms. Rogers stated that the ambulance service sometimes encounters issues within the Town because they do not know the streets as well. Mayor Lusk said that current 911 fees and property taxes are significant in light of services the Town receives and that they should be sufficient to pay for the service. Mr. Stuermer said that addressing is not the District's responsibility, but rather that responsibility belongs to GIS.

Mr. Noblett asked Mr. Stuermer to verify that the County doesn't have the authority to pass an ordinance regarding addressing, noting that per his understanding, only municipalities have that authority. He said that a problem would be created if duplicate street names have to be changed if placed on a County-wide system. Mr. Stuermer said that the Town is already in a County-wide system, but he was unsure if it was established by ordinance. Mr. Turner said that the municipalities that are part of the system signed an agreement with the County for the service. Mr. Stuermer said that the County followed the example set by other areas in which an agreement is established that includes policies for address duplication and discrepancies, appeals, etc. Mr. Noblett said that individuals tend to dislike adjusting to new addresses.

Councilmember Gee asked why addresses are necessary if latitude and longitude coordinates are used. Mr. Stuermer said that it can become an issue when callers are away from homes and don't necessarily know their location.

Councilmember Wallace asked who is actually at risk. Mr. Stuermer said that the number of people at risk is unknown, although the Signal Mountain may be at less risk than other municipalities.

Vice Mayor Robertson asked if participants would have to absorb the cost of non-participants. Mr. Stuermer said that he wasn't sure, but currently the County Mayor isn't asking for a financial commitment, only a commitment to pursue the project.

Councilmember Gee asked if the conversion was optional; i.e., is the Federal government imposing it? Mr. Stuermer said that there isn't a federal law dictating the conversion, but there probably will be in the future. He said it is being driven by the need for correction.

Mayor Lusk asked if the Police and Fire departments need the new system.. Chief Vlasik said that since many people don't have landline telephones, an upgraded system would ease the effort to locate them. He noted that the Chattanooga area has been a communications leader.

Mr. Noblett asked Mr. Stuermer to verify that the District's funding is partially determined by landline vs. cell phone use. Mr. Stuermer said agreed that is true. He said that landlines are reliable, but 80% of calls now come from cell phones. He explained that coordinates are not as accurate with cell phones, but the study should address that issue. He also noted that the cost of responding to cell phone calls is higher, while less funding is received for them. Also, multiple living unit complexes like apartment buildings can be difficult to respond to because all the units in one complex have the same address.

Mr. Noblett said that per his understanding, VOIP service, which works differently than landlines, would pose another problem. Mayor Lusk said that he has a VOIP system, and it requires address verification for 911 services. Mr. Stuermer said that a GIS database is maintained for regular phone calls, but agreed that VOIP systems send address verification promptly to the caller.

Ms. Rogers asked if any other municipalities have made the commitment. Mr. Stuermer said that they haven't, but he has spoken to many town managers.

Councilmember Allen asked if the address research would involve physical inspection or "across the desk" research. Mr. Stuermer said that it would be physical inspection. Councilmember Allen asked what kinds of costs would be incurred. Mr. Stuermer said that most of the cost would probably be labor costs relating to the inspectors.

Mayor Lusk asked if an answer would be needed immediately. Mr. Stuermer said that it wouldn't, but the County Mayor wants an answer relatively quickly.

Mr. Noblett asked if Walden is one of the agencies. Mr. Stuermer said it isn't because it has a separate contract with the County. Mr. Noblett said that if the County isn't considered an agency, it could cause problems. Mr. Stuermer said that the County would be considered an agency.

Ms. Rogers said that she wanted to discuss proposal to share in the costs with other municipalities. She suggested the Council discuss the proposal again at the next work session. Vice Mayor Robertson said that the Council should keep an open dialogue.

### **Presentation – Canopy Study**

Noah Long, Tree Board Chairman, opened a presentation on a recent tree canopy study, completed by Tennessee's Senior Urban Forester, Bruce Webster. The Town was chosen as one of eight "Tree City" municipalities by the Tennessee Division of Forestry for a

tree canopy study to measure the density of trees in the town. He introduced Dr. Jennifer Boyd, Tree Board member and UTC biology professor, to review the results of the study.

Dr. Boyd began by reviewing the benefits of trees, including shade, energy savings, aesthetics, oxygen production, and storm water drainage. She also compared the results of tree canopy in other cities around the country. She explained the canopy study process, saying that overhead photographs were taken and translated into a grid. The grid was used to measure coverage. She said that the study reflected stable coverage of 73% from 2007-2010, which was deemed "excellent". The study valued the tree coverage at \$14 million. Dr. Boyd also noted that the study recommended identifying potential spaces for tree plantings should trees have to be removed. She explained that replacing tree canopy is expensive whereas maintaining canopy is not.

Councilmember Gee asked if a distinction is made between young and mature trees. Mr. Long said that the software and the types of photographs taken could only identify full coverage.

Councilmember Gee asked if it would be practical to increase the canopy to more than 73%. Mr. Long said that 73% is very high in comparison to the average 24% coverage of U.S. cities. Dr. Boyd said that the Town's goal should be to maintain canopy, unlike Chattanooga, which only has 7% coverage, and is looking to increase canopy.

Councilmember Gee asked how much canopy could be lost before the Town is downgraded from "excellent." Dr. Boyd estimated that 50% would still be considered "very good".

Councilmember Gee asked how the Town compares to other municipalities in the Tree City USA program. Mr. Long said that he wasn't sure.

### **Citizen Comments**

Mayor Lusk invited comments from the audience. There were none.

### **Resolutions**

The following resolutions were presented:

1. "A RESOLUTION APPOINTING JASON ROYAL AS A MEMBER OF THE TOWN OF SIGNAL MOUNTAIN'S MOUNTAIN ARTS COMMUNITY CENTER BOARD." Councilmember Gee moved and Councilmember Allen seconded that the resolution be approved. Mayor Lusk asked if this completely filled the MACC Board. Councilmember Gee said that it did temporarily, but another position recently opened as well. The motion passed unanimously.
2. "A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT WITH THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT

FOUNDATION, ACCEPTING THE DONATION OF A CHESTNUT TREE TO BE PLANTED ON THE PROPERTY OF THE TOWN OF SIGNAL MOUNTAIN.” Councilmember Gee asked where the tree would be located. Mr. Long said that he was unsure, but Vice Mayor Robertson and Tree Board member Barbara Womack had been looking for an appropriate place. Vice Mayor Robertson said that the cost of a chestnut tree had the Town had to purchase it would have been \$250. She moved and Councilmember Allen seconded that the resolution be approved. Mayor Lusk said this also authorizes the Town Manager to sign the American Chestnut Foundation’s Germplasm agreement. The motion passed unanimously.

3. “A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE AWARD OF A CONTRACT TO BROWN DOG CONSTRUCTION FOR TOWN HALL AND GYM SIDING IN THE AMOUNT OF TWENTY SIX THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED FIFTY AND 00/100 DOLLARS AND AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO EXECUTE ANY NECESSARY DOCUMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH THIS AWARD.” Mayor Lusk noted that this was about one-fourth of the original estimate. Councilmember Wallace asked what the scope of the work would be. Ms. Rogers said that Brown Dog Construction would identify damaged boards in need of replacement, replace them, and install a skirt board. She noted that the contract doesn’t include painting or gutter replacement. The gutters are estimated to cost \$4,100, and the Town is awaiting an estimate for painting. She said that Brown Dog Construction would also evaluate needed exterior repairs at the Fire/Police building.

Councilmember Gee asked if the siding would be a mixture of materials. Ms. Rogers said that it would and noted that originally Hardie Board was going to be used everywhere, but that now it would only be used as necessary. Councilmember Wallace asked if the work would result in a building that looks essentially the same as it does now. Ms. Rogers said that it would be the same style, but the look will be improved.

Mayor Lusk moved and Councilmember Gee seconded that the resolution be approved. Councilmember Gee suggested that the difference between what was originally budgeted and the actual cost be applied to the Police/Fire building. The motion passed unanimously.

### Discussions

Ms. Rogers updated the Council on the fiscal year 2012-2013 budget process. She said that meetings with individual department heads were complete and a draft budget will be prepared for the Council soon. She noted that revenues are trending slightly upward, but the overall budget would not be balanced because of annexation costs that were anticipated. Mayor Lusk asked if there were any opportunities to reduce costs. Ms. Rogers said that there were, and the goal is to balance the budget excluding the

annexation costs. Councilmember Wallace asked what Ms. Rogers' charge was to the department heads. Ms. Rogers said that they were told to hold budgets level with the prior year's budget. She said that without capital project expenditures, the budget excluding annexation costs would balance.

Councilmember Allen noted that April 22, 2012 is Earth Day, and the Thrasher and Nolan Elementary Schools' "Recycling Challenge" will be held on April 21<sup>st</sup> at the recycle center. She also noted that events would be held in Chattanooga at the aquarium plaza and Coolidge Park.

Ms. Rogers noted that it had two years since the Town undertook in-house animal control. She said in that period 20 animals had been picked up. Owners claimed 16 of those. She also noted that in-house animal control has saved the Town approximately \$68,000. She thanked the Police, Fire, and Public Works departments for their efforts.

Ms. Rogers noted that Councilmember Gee had recently offered to continue serving as the Town's WWTA representative in Ms. Rogers' stead. Mayor Lusk moved and Vice Mayor Robertson seconded that Councilmember Gee be allowed to serve as representative at the next WWTA meeting. The motion passed unanimously. Ms. Rogers said that she would present a formal resolution to the WWTA appointing Councilmember Gee as the Town's official representative.

Councilmember Wallace thanked Chief Veal for his work as Assistant Town Manager during Ms. Rogers' maternity leave.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.



Bill Lusk, Mayor



Recorder