

The Signal Mountain Town Council held a worksession on Thursday, November 3, 2016 at 11:30 a.m.

Those present were: Mayor Dick Gee  
Vice Mayor Bill Wallace  
Councilmember Chris Howley  
Councilmember Bill Lusk  
Councilmember Robert Spalding  
  
Council Candidate Dan Landrum  
Council Candidate Amy Speak

Others present were: Town Manager Boyd Veal  
Town Attorney Phillip Noblett  
Finance Director/Town Recorder Carol White  
See attached list for others present

Mayor Gee led the pledge of allegiance. A moment of silence was observed.

### Minutes

The minutes for the September 12<sup>th</sup> regular meeting were presented. There being no changes, the minutes were approved.

The minutes for the September 30<sup>th</sup> worksession were presented. There being no changes, the minutes were approved.

The minutes for the October 10<sup>th</sup> regular meeting were presented. There being no changes, the minutes were approved.

### Discussion

a. Public Works – Swaploader System

Town Manager, Boyd Veal, informed the Council that the Public Works Department was seeking approval to purchase a swaploader. Public Works Director, Loretta Hopper, explained that she is requesting the Council to purchase the swaploader in place of a dump truck purchase that Council has previously approved for the expansion of the leaf pickup program. Ms. Hopper explained that the swaploader is a more versatile machine which can also be used to spread salt and brine in addition to its use as a dump truck. Ms. Hopper explained that there is an additional cost of \$55,000.00 over the funding Council had previously authorized. She recommends funding this by not replacing dump truck #316 as scheduled in next year's budget.

Councilmember Howley asked if Ms. Hopper would be asking for more swaploaders in the future. Ms. Hopper replied that there may be future requests, but that the swaploader is expected to provide a great deal of versatility and that fewer vehicles will be required.

Council agreed with this purchase. Mr. Veal will have a resolution available at the next Council meeting.

b. Fire Station Design

Mr. Veal reminded the Council that they had directed staff to begin the design process in order to plan for an additional fire station on Shackelford Ridge Road as required by the plan of services in connection with the recent annexation. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was done for architectural services. After reviewing the submitted responses to the RFQ, Fire Chief, Eric Mitchell, has recommended to contract with Allen & Hoshall.

Mr. Veal reminded the Council they had authorized the Town to engage Allen & Hoshall to provide a preliminary design. He said that has been completed and a copy of that plan was provided to the Council. David Bryant, Architect with Allen & Hoshall and Chief Mitchell, reviewed the plan with Council and discussed the engineering that would be required next. During discussions it was determined that the costs for this station will likely reach \$2 million dollars. In addition, the Council discussed the need for additional funds to staff and equip the new station.

After Council discussions, Mr. Veal said that he will prepare a resolution to award Allen & Hoshall the architectural and engineering contract. He said once the final documents are completed they will be forwarded to the DRC for review.

c. MACC/Town Facility Scenarios

Mayor Gee said a large part of the upcoming discussion will be about costs and budgets. He said what will be presented are not individual solutions to a problem and that these are not discreet decisions, in that the Council is not asked to pick A or B or C or D. He said all the options were designed to be like pieces of a puzzle such you can interlock and move them around.

Mr. Veal reminded the Council that when mold and major structural issues were discovered in the Mountain Arts Community Center (MACC) auditorium about a year ago, the Council decided they wanted to know the cost to repair the buildings and, additionally, how to improve the facilities functionality. He said in the Physical Needs Assessment (PNA) completed by the architects Hefferlin & Kronenberg, the original 1926 school building is labeled "Building A" and the other buildings are labeled "Buildings B & C".

He said the original PNA addressed what we know needs to be fixed in the buildings and then, secondarily, addresses some improvements, primarily HVAC throughout the building, sprinkler systems, an alarm, and some ADA improvements, but the functionality (more appropriately sized classrooms) of the building was not addressed in this phase. He said this came to be called Phase I. The estimate of costs for Phase I in Building A are \$1,231,427.00. The estimated costs for Phase I in Buildings B & C are \$1,495,432.00, which is a total cost of \$2,726,859.00.

He said Phase II is about how to make the facility as a whole more functional, including some additional ADA upgrades, additional parking, development of small classrooms and dressing rooms for the auditorium and additional restrooms. Mr. Veal said the costs for these improvements are estimated to be \$1,958,824.00, which brings the total cost for all renovations and improvements to the MACC to \$4,685,683.00.

Mr. Veal said that the Council decided to explore options that might accomplish similar ends without that level of investment. Mr. Veal said the question was then to determine exactly whether the MACC is the building or the programs, and the answer was that it is the programs. He said this means the Town has to have good, functional space for the MACC programs. He said that in looking at the

potential \$4.6 million costs, the question then was raised as to what other needs could be addressed with those same funds, how many lives of the community could be touched, how many segments of the community could be impacted, if the Town makes that level of investment.

Mr. Veal explained that one option the Town chose to explore was the possibility of demolishing Buildings B & C and replacing them with a new 12,000 square foot stand-alone structure. He said the Town engaged the firm of Hefferlin & Kronenberg to provide the design for this new structure. He said the final design is just under 13,000 square feet and had arts studios, dance studios, pottery, an art gallery, a multi-function room that can be divided up, 6 music studios, a larger ensemble percussion room, and restrooms. Mr. Veal said the design is very nice and very functional and is presumed to be placed next to Building A. He said the estimated cost for this structure is \$2,987,349.00.

Mr. Veal explained that another option that was explored was to determine what could be done at the current Town Hall to retrofit it for use by the MACC programs. He said this option was designed by Wayne Williams, Architect. Mr. Veal said this design is a very functional plan for the needs of the MACC, and that the anticipated cost of this retrofit is \$1,365,872.00.

He said this leads to the questions of what to do for a town hall building. He said that residents have asked why there is a need for a new town hall. Mr. Veal said that while there is room for improvement in the current facility, there is no need for a new building. He said what is needed is good, functional space for the MACC programs and the Town Hall is a viable option as indicated by the architects. Mr. Veal said the need for the MACC is what drove the whole process. Wayne Williams also designed a new town hall which includes a large conference room, restrooms, and a lobby that could be open to the public apart from daily operations that people could use while the rest of the building is secured. He said the expected cost for this building is \$1,515,993.00

Mr. Veal then said that basketball is a youth athletic sport that needs more space, so the town looked at a new gym with 2 courts with enough space for bleachers, storage areas, 2 concessions, and 2 large restrooms. He said beyond that, the design addresses the need for functional emergency sheltering space complete with an emergency generator. Mr. Veal said this design includes an area above the front rooms which can provide secured storage of emergency equipment and supplies. He said the concession areas can serve as food service stations, and the restrooms are sizeable enough to accommodate a large number of people. Mr. Veal said there will be a suitable location for this new gym facility on Timberlinks adjacent to the ball fields. He said the cost of this new gym is estimated to be \$885,000.00.

Following this portion of the presentation, Mr. Veal provided the Council with a spreadsheet showing the costs of each of the construction options he had presented (copy attached). He then stated that as Council discusses how to proceed, there needs to be consideration beyond which building, which function, or which plan ultimately is chosen. He said the decision needs to be framed within the anticipated economic environment. Mr. Veal presented the Council with a line chart (copy attached) which shows the Town's debt history. He said the chart shows that historically the debt level (without the school loan which has had a dedicated funding source) has been stable. He said the chart indicates projected debt based on anticipated loan requirements of \$4 million. He said this would put the Town at about the same level of debt as in 2008 (with the school loan) without any dedicated funding source.

Mr. Veal said that based on current conditions, a \$4 million debt will equate to an approximate annual \$200,000.00 debt service payment, and would require \$.11 cent increase on the tax rate. Mr. Veal provided a handout of the potential impact on the property tax rate (copy attached). He reminded those

present that the state legislature has passed legislation that repeals the Hall Tax incrementally over the next few years. He informed the Council that to replace this lost revenue will require an additional \$.30 cent increase to the property tax. Mr. Veal pointed out that the most comparable communities in our area collect millions more in sales tax dollars. Accordingly the loss of the Hall Tax revenue is a major issue for our budget.

Mr. Veal hypothesized that if the Town is not using the old school for operations, then instead of investing \$2.7 million the Town could look at what is needed to change the trajectory of the building. He said that the Town could look at what would be required to stabilize the building and treat it as a historic preservation project which would provide some time to look for private funding and grants.

Dan Landrum, Council Candidate, told the Council that people want the original school building preserved. He said there needs to be a master plan with more community involvement. He said he would like to see the same level of community involvement as when the Town prepared the land use plan. He asked the Council to slow down the decision making process on these issues until more resident input can be obtained.

Mayor Gee said there have been discussions regarding these issues over the last year. He said the Council needed this information before going to the community and that no decisions have been reached. He said the Council is going to have public hearings now that there is reliable information for the residents to consider. He said the Council is going to ask for the residents input and reaction to these options as well as original ideas that may not yet have been considered.

Councilmember Lusk said the Council needed a starting point to assess what the needs are and that this plan has done that. He said this presentation paints a picture for the community of what could be done to address the needs. He said now is the time to have the same type of input as during the land use planning process. Councilmember Lusk said the Town can tell residents that this is what one of the best historic preservation architects has provided as potentials for the Town and then ask residents what they think about it. He said this is a good foundation for a larger discussion in the community and that without this basic plan we would be left throwing darts in the dark because there would be no thought process into designing or assessing the need for facilities. Councilmember Lusk said he agrees wholeheartedly that now the Town needs the community involvement to tell the Council what they want and what they are willing to spend.

Amy Speek, Council Candidate, said that she would prefer a master or strategic plan indicating the Town's needs and the resident's wishes for the Town 10 years from now.

Mayor Gee spoke about the sprinkler system needed in the MACC facilities to comply with the Fire Marshall's directives. He said if the Town wants to consider full use of the building again then the sprinkler system is required.

Councilmember Spalding left the meeting at 2:15 p.m.

e. November agenda session rescheduled date

Following discussion, the next agenda session is rescheduled to Friday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 12:30 p.m. The Council asked that two open house meetings on the issues presented today be held prior to the next agenda session.

f. Board appointments/reappointments in December

The Council was provided a list of all Board positions that are scheduled for appointments in December.

d. Oath of Office ceremony

Mr. Veal reminded those present that once the election has occurred, there will be an Oath of Office ceremony at the Town Hall on Saturday, November 12<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. He said that the ceremony will be presided over by Judge Hollingsworth. He said that all citizens are invited to attend.

**Board Liaison Reports**

None

**Manager's Report**

Mr. Veal said that there were 4 water projects bids opened yesterday. He said he anticipates having a recommendation on the agenda for the meeting on November 14<sup>th</sup>

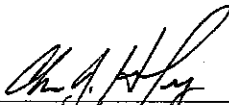
**Tentative Agenda**


Council discussed a tentative agenda for the November 14, 2016 regular meeting.

**Other Business**

Mr. Veal said that Council had recently approved the purchase of a knuckleboom truck from CMI Equipment. He said the Town was informed by CMI that the purchase will be direct from Petersen Industries. He said that a resolution will be on the next regular meeting agenda to revise the authorization.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

  
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Chris J. Howley, Mayor

  
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Recorder