

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
(Denbigh-Warwick Area Plan)
OF THE NEWPORT NEWS CITY COUNCIL,
NEWPORT NEWS PLANNING COMMISSION, AND THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF NEWPORT NEWS
HELD IN ROOM 113
DENBIGH COMMUNITY CENTER
15198 WARWICK BOULEVARD
JULY 16, 2019
1:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: David H. Jenkins; McKinley L. Price, DDS; Sharon P. Scott, MPA; Tina L. Vick; and Dr. Patricia P. Woodbury-----5

ABSENT: Sandra N. Cherry, D. Min. and Marcellus L. Harris III-----2

OTHERS PRESENT: Cynthia D. Rohlf; Collins L. Owens; Mabel Washington Jenkins; David Freeman; Lynn Spratley; Ralph L. Clayton, III; Sheila W. McAllister; Flora D. Chioros; Rhonda L. Russell; Saul Gleiser; Angela Hopkins; Brian Pierce; Johnnie Davis; Melissa Leskovar; Lisa Cipriano; Robert E. Pealo; Sarah S. Bowman; Joye L. Thompkins; Florence Kingston; Sam Workman; Carol Meredith; Elizabeth McCoury; Matthew E. Johnson; Kalila Walker; Priscilla Greene; Daniel Owens; Sumeet Saini; Kearston Milburn; Cherry Croushore; Jeffrey S. Johnson; L. John Marr; James R. Gower; Michael Grinstead, II.; Eric D. Randall; Brandon E. Creswell; Zina F. Middleton; Eoghan P. Miller; and Josh Reyes

WRT Design: Woo Kim, Principal; and Stacy Humphreys Blankin, Planner

Planning Commission – Daniel L. Simmons, Jr.; Katie Stodghill; Michael F. Carpenter; Mark W. Mulvaney; Elizabeth W. Willis; N. Steve Groce; Pastor Willard Maxwell, Jr.; and Sharyn L. Fox

Economic Development Authority of Newport News – Alonzo R. Bell, Jr.; Jennifer S. Smith-Brown; Cassandra P. Greene; Mary C. Aldrich; C. Gary Minter; Jeffrey C. Verhoef; and Raymond H. Suttle, Jr. (Legal Counsel)

Mayor Price welcomed all to the July 16, 2019 Special Meeting. He called the Special Meeting of the Newport News City Council to order and asked the City Clerk to call the roll and advise of a quorum.

Vote on Roll Call:

Ayes: Jenkins, Price, Scott, Vick, Woodbury

Nays: None

City Clerk, Mabel Washington Jenkins, announced that there was a quorum of the Newport News City Council.

Mr. Daniel L. Simmons, Jr., Chair, Newport News Planning Commission, called the Special Meeting of the Newport News Planning Commission to order and asked the Recording Secretary to call the roll and advise of a quorum.

Vote on Roll Call:

Ayes: Simmons, Stodghill, Maxwell, Fox, Mulvaney, Willis, Groce, Carpenter

Nays: None

Planning Commission Recording Secretary, Melissa Leskovar, announced that there was a quorum of the Newport News Planning Commission.

Chairman Simmons thanked his fellow commissioners for their presence.

Mr. Alonzo R. Bell, Jr., Chair, Newport News Economic Development Authority/Industrial Development Authority (EDA/IDA), called the Special Meeting of the Newport News EDA/IDA to order and asked the Recording Secretary to call the roll and advise of a quorum.

Vote on Roll Call:

Ayes: Bell, Aldrich, Verhoef, Smith-Brown, Greene, Minter

Nays: None

EDA/IDA Recording Secretary, Kearston Milburn, announced that there was a quorum of the EDA/IDA.

Mayor Price announced that a special tour was planned for the members of the Newport News City Council, Newport News Planning Commission, and the Newport News EDA/IDA.

RECESS: 1:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

Newport News officials received a full look at a Denbigh revitalization plan. Over the past year, City planning staff and consultants, WRT Design, developed the Denbigh-Warwick Area Plan (DWAP), inviting area residents to state their desires for the area - 12 square miles bounded by Boxley Boulevard, Enterprise Drive, the Warwick River and the CSX railroad.

Ms. Angela Hopkins, Senior Planner and Project Manager for the Denbigh-Warwick area plan, advised that the purpose of the tour was to provide an opportunity to observe existing condition and challenges, and to identify opportunities for redevelopment within the area. She shared the demographics of the plan area as follows:

Denbigh-Warwick area approximately 12 square miles
Contained over 48,000 people
Fourteen percent (14%) of family household led by females
Median household income over \$57,000
Median home value over \$210,000
Median rent over \$1,100

Ms. Florence Kingston, Director, Department, Secretary/Treasurer for the EDA/IDA, also participated in the tour, sharing several strategic property acquisitions made by the EDA/IDA to include (1) the former Hills property (429 Oriana Road), acquired in July 2006 for \$1.6 million; (2) Kmart (401 and 413 Oriana Road), acquired in March 2019 for \$2.9 million; (3) Sherwood Shopping Center (13785, 13771 Warwick Boulevard), and select outparcels, acquired in November 2016 for \$7.8 million. Ms. Kingston also shared façade improvement grants received, as well as other local incentives (*a copy of Ms. Hopkins and Ms. Kingston's comments are attached and made a part of these minutes*).

The meeting reconvened at 2:20 p.m.

Ms. Sheila McAllister, Director, Department of Planning, welcomed members of the respective boards in attendance. She introduced the consultants from WRT Design – Ms. Stacey Blankin and Mr. Woo Kim. She thanked Ms. Blankin and Mr. Kim for their work on the DWAP. Ms. McAllister advised that once the DWAP was adopted by City Council, it would become an amendment to the One City One Future Comprehensive Plan 2040.

Mr. Kim and Ms. Blankin presented the DWAP (a copy is attached and made a part of these minutes).

Vice Mayor Vick inquired about the strategy for getting people out of their cars and into a walkable mixed-use environment. Mr. Kim replied the strategy was to create a destination. He urged creating a place and a destination to give people a reason to want to be here. He indicated this strategy would call for a partnership between the public sector and the private sector in order to make the vision a reality. Vice Mayor Vick mentioned adding the attractions for the citizens would be the winning piece.

Ms. Hopkins asked for feedback from members that participated in the bus tour.

Vice Mayor Vick responded that she liked the concept of having a municipal area for people using services, but were unable to drive. Referencing the Municipal Center in Denbigh, which included the Police and Fire Stations, as well as Human Services and the Grissom Library. Vice Mayor Vick indicated it would be great to have these services on a street which included access to public transportation.

Mayor Price expressed concern about connectivity and how citizens were able to safely cross streets. He suggested creating a path parallel to the roadways to increase walkability and bicycling, to enable citizens to get safely from one side of the street to another.

Vice Mayor Vick urged, as the City planned and seek funding from the public and private sector, to be mindful of creating a good marketing budget. She cited the Peninsula Town Center in Hampton as an example, which included fountains where citizen could bring their children to play, as well as listen to bands, and have different attractions, as a method to get people out, and encourage them to get out of their cars.

EDA Chairman, Mr. Alonzo Bell added, as a longtime resident of the Denbigh area, he recalled all of the sites in their original iteration, and was excited as he envisioned future opportunities. He shared that the EDA/IDA had worked to create locations for viable opportunities as discussed. He questioned the length of time to implement some of the planned opportunities. Chairman Bell believed the City was moving in the proper direction. The DWAP created an opportunity to revitalize the Denbigh-Warwick corridor, which was an integral part of the City of Newport News. He advised that he looked forward to being a part of the process.

Councilwoman Scott indicated that she enjoyed the tour. She felt there could be more diversity in the area with the EDA/IDA support and the acquisition of the various parcels. She shared that many residents, citizens, and members of the military, had suggested a fitness center near the gate at Ft. Eustis. Also suggested was a Starbucks. Councilwoman Scott believed the Kmart site provided the perfect opportunity for a Town Center concept, which would lead to increased traffic in an already congested and tight area. She indicated the possibilities for this site added synergy to the DW Center, and could be very positive and possibly bring people together in a place, for entertainment and attractions such as mini-concerts.

Mayor Price believed Village Centers were a key and could be a focal point in key areas.

Mr. Kim shared that the City did not have to wait until all of the parcels were assembled, and the DWAP complete, but some things could be done immediately. He suggested community clean-up days, or pop-up events. He indicated there were examples across the country where publicly-owned land was underutilized, but advised the market could be tested with Pop-up Events. This would allow the City to consider how to deal with traffic for events that could conceivably bring in hundreds of people. Mr. Kim indicated there were also examples of closing down segments of roadways, and handing them to pedestrians and bicyclists to test, which were low-cost/no-costs measures to try.

Councilwoman Woodbury inquired about the timeline for the DWAP and the needed steps to implement the plan.

Ms. Hopkins replied, some projects would be in the long-term, but there were some that could be done in the short-term of zero to three years. The short term projects would be considered first.

Referencing Mr. Kim's comment that the City did not have to wait until all of the parcels were assembled to begin working on projects, Councilwoman Scott inquired how to begin looking for businesses who would want to be in the Denbigh-Warwick area, and what type of businesses they believed would fit in the district. She also reminded, whatever was done, that the Lee Hall area be included, as often it seemed that Lee Hall was another City. She stated once one passed a certain point, Lee Hall appeared not to belong to Newport News. She added that it would be important to ensure that Lee Hall appeared as a part of the North District. Councilwoman Scott indicated she wanted some synergy with what was already in the North District as the City moved forward.

Vice Mayor Vick suggested musical bands and markets as the City considered Pop-up Events, as this would attract people from other areas. She was excited to learn the City did not have to wait for all parcels to be assembled. She believed the Kmart site was a great location for Pop-up Events to occur.

Newport News Planning Commission Chair, Mr. Simmons, agreed with the comments made. He believe there was a lot of synergy; but expressed concern about the public's safety as the City created new connections and a segue for the citizens. He indicated it was important to consider safety as the communities were created and walkability brought into the area. He also expressed concern about available services in the area of the Grissom Library. He believed there were opportunities in that area for the EDA/IDA to consider acquiring property that would enhance the library or even expansion of the site. Chairman Simmons agreed with Councilwoman Scott that the Lee Hall community seemed to be forgotten, and should be connected to the DWAP moving forward. He expressed appreciation to the Planning staff and ideas being suggested to enhance the quality of life for the citizens in the City of Newport News.

City Manager Rohlf reminded that the meeting was about the DWAP only. She advised that staff was in the process of updating the Lee Hall Area Plan. It had been 25 years since City Council signed off on the Lee Hall Area Plan. City Manager Rohlf advised that some parts of the Plan were out of date and would not happen. Staff would be reviewing the process in conjunction with the DWAP. She advised that developers had expressed an interest in the Lee Hall area. City Manager Rohlf thought the DWAP was great, but advised that interest must be generated before businesses would step forward. She mentioned that Pop-up Events were discussed often. She envisioned Pop-up Events beginning immediately, energizing the Kmart site, by adding sod, installing lights, having something done with the old Kmart building, such as getting children to decorate the outside or having an art contest. City Manager Rohlf indicated that some things could happen relatively quickly, but citizens must feel comfortable to venture in

the area, as opposed to driving by. She felt the way to fix that was to have energize the area and have activities. She suggested an afternoon jazz session or a similar activity on a Saturday or Sunday. Regarding connectivity, City Manager Rohlf advised that it was not only connectivity in the DWAP, but throughout the City. She shared a conversation with the Director of Planning about connecting the Denbigh area somehow to the City Farm Park. It would not be an easy task, but there was a route making it possible with some of the narrow roadways.

City Manager Rohlf questioned the method needed to open up amenities, encouraging citizens to take advantage of those amenities as well. She felt it was important to get other developers and businesses interested in an effort to plan long-range projects, but to do what was necessary immediately to generate activity, particularly related to the planning phase for the Grissom Library and the Fire Station.

Vice Mayor Vick suggested a celebration of the Hampton Roads Transit incorporating the bus system in an event; i.e., "Fun Day in Newport News as we ride HRT," which would bring people out of their cars to the celebration, particularly since the City allocated millions of dollars to support HRT.

WRT Consultant, Ms. Blankin added, in terms of connectivity, the area of Old Courthouse Way was looked at to alleviate traffic and move the traffic off of Warwick Boulevard, maneuvering through other roadways and creating other connections. She also suggested making similar connections/multi-modal through bike or pedestrian connections. Ms. Blankin added, with the Kmart site, one proposal created a multi-use trail across the rear that ran along the Stoney Run corridor, in an effort to take advantage of beautiful, scenic views. The hope was that the trail would extend across Warwick Boulevard and pick up Old Courthouse Way. A stronger connection with bikes and pedestrians across the east-west connections to the neighborhood were also considered. With Atkinson Boulevard, Ms. Blankin recommended bike facilities in the long-term to ensure connectivity to other parts of the City and employment centers. She advised that the Sherwood and Kmart sites were focused on to create a mixed-use center, with a variety of housing and services, in an effort to promote links to the existing public transit, which ran along Warwick Boulevard.

City Manager Rohlf advised there had been discussions on the staff level about various initiatives, such as activating the Kmart site. She encouraged other suggestions or thoughts as far as activities and attractions to give the area a sense of place within the community. She welcomed feedback and hearing from the public about other opportunities to consider.

Councilwoman Scott recalled carnivals held on the site of the old Kmart, to include rides, pony rides, and fun family type activities. She added that car shows were also a big deal in the Denbigh area in the parking lots of restaurants or parks. She believed that car shows would be great because they brought families out. She suggested reflecting on Historic Denbigh, and have people resurrect historical artifacts, particularly tractors, as Denbigh was once a rural area. She recalled being in Luray, Virginia, and attending one of the largest events in the town,

with old cars, tractors, and bicycles. She suggested adding food to the event, which would make it an even grander event, with something for the children, making it a great family event. She advised that more people could be attracted to a family event than an individual event, which was her experience as she travelled around the United States to other areas with the National League of Cities.

EDA/IDA Vice-Chair, Jennifer Smith-Brown, observed numerous vacant offices and businesses, as well as retail units along the Denbigh corridor. She expressed appreciation for what the City was doing to revitalize the Denbigh community. She shared that her family came to Newport News in 1997 and began their business on Denbigh Boulevard, making the community special to her family. Seeing the decline in the market was not easy to experience, but when one observed it, one had to also acknowledge the potential. Vice-Chair Smith-Brown advised that she would be interested to hear the feedback and take-a-ways the consultants received from the local businesses owners incorporated into the DWAP to help other businesses flourish. She stated the City could build it but they would not necessarily come; and as a business owner, she was not willing to build without some assurances that there was sustainability in the community.

Mr. Kim shared, the first questions he always asked a Korean-American business owner was "What are you doing here?" He stated their usual response was "Because of the economy around Fort Eustis." Mr. Kim indicated, in response to that statement, the plan was to make sure that the economic revitalization component of the plan, as it related to Fort Eustis being an economic engine and making sure the connections to Fort Eustis were identified. One Korean-American business owner of a small grocery store advised most of his customer were not Korean. Mr. Kim was surprised, but indicated it showed how diverse and open the community was.

EDA/IDA Chairman Bell advised that everyone should be cognizant that business decisions were prominently demographically driven. The residential neighborhoods should be supported because businesses look for rooftops and income. The City needed strong residential neighborhoods in order to have any commercial revitalization. The businesses would come because of the people, the community and the disposable income to have the ability to buy the goods and services. Mr. Bell indicated this was the case of Ms. Smith-Brown's statement regarding her business. One had to have a community to service, that had money to spend on what was available. Everything done had to support the ability to grow the residential communities and their activities, and to show support to avoid those communities becoming blighted.

Planning Commissioner Sharyn Fox concurred with Councilwoman Scott's idea about a car show, which was a great way to establish and build interest and vibe in the community at the Kmart site. Commissioner Fox suggested food truck competitions, which was one of the most popular activities in the area. With a diverse population, there was a great opportunity to share different foods and cultures. She suggested a "bounce house" for children, which should not be very expensive. It was necessary to think about the City's demographics and attracting people back into the area.

Planning Commissioner, Elizabeth Willis, advised that there had been discussions about transportation and connectivity, but nothing was mentioned about benches. She indicated that people could only walk so far before getting tired. Many bus stops did not have benches, and people were left to stand while awaiting a bus. Commissioner Willis indicated there were benches situated along the trails in the Kiln Creek neighborhood. She shared that she had travelled to a large city, with benches or some kind of art to sit on, allowing people to talk, and stop to observe the environment. She recalled the carnival that had come to the Kmart site, in years past, which was always a fun and exciting time. Inviting a carnival back, or having an event monthly, such as a car show or pop-up event, would help to attract people to the area.

Councilwoman Woodbury shared that she had an occasion to visit the Virginia State Fair, and there were a plethora of activities for families, such as rides, food, and dog shows. There were many small attractions that would be ideal for the Kmart site. She suggested contacting some of the coordinators.

Councilwoman Scott shared, while on a trip to Chicago, she attended an event entitled, "A Taste of Chicago," which was held in a large shopping center, with many different foods, to include ice cream smoothies, and icees. She suggested that the Kmart site would be the perfect place, and it could be entitled, "A Taste of Newport News."

Ms. Hopkins thanked members of the Newport News City Council, Newport News Planning Commission, and the Newport News EDA/IDA for their attendance and participation. She advised the period beginning July 16, 2019 was the beginning of the public comment period for the draft DWAP. She invited citizens to review the plan, and visit the website at nnva.gov/2401/Denbigh-Warwick-Area-Plan. To share feedback, or ask questions, citizens were welcome to contact Angela Hopkins at 926-8077 or hopinsay@nnva.gov. The public comment period was open from July 16, 2019 to July 31, 2019. Once comments were received and reviewed, a final document would be prepared for the Public Hearing process for the Planning Commission and the City Council, which was tentatively scheduled for September or October 2019.

Adjournments:

Mayor Price adjourned the July 16, 2019 Special Meeting of the Newport News City Council.

Planning Commission Chairman, Mr. Daniel L. Simmons, Jr., adjourned the July 16, 2019 Special Meeting of the Newport News Planning Commission.

EDA/IDA Chairman, Mr. Alonzo R. Bell, Jr., adjourned the July 16, 2019 Special Meeting of the Newport News Economic Development Authority/Industrial Development Authority.

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(Denbigh-Warwick Area Plan)
July 16, 2019

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS,
ON MOTION, COUNCIL ADJOURNED AT 3:34 P.M.

Mabel Washington Jenkins

Mabel Washington Jenkins, MMC
City Clerk

McKinley L. Price, DDS
Mayor
Presiding Officer

A true copy, teste:

City Clerk