

April 27, 2020

Working Session

The Working Session of the Denton Town Council was called to order by Mayor McNinch at 6:00 PM on this date, leading everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

This meeting was held using online Microsoft Teams Meeting Format – access to the meeting was made available on the Town website.

Mayor McNinch conducted roll call and asked that the record reflect that Councilman Branson and Councilman Johnson were also in attendance.

Councilman Lister was working and unable to participate.

Councilwoman Wilson later joined the meeting.

Staff attending included Mr. Don Mulrine, Town Administrator, Chief Rodney Cox, Karen Monteith, Clerk-Treasurer, Denton Public Works Mark Chandler and Phil Clark, as well as David Renshaw from Planning & Codes.

Mayor McNinch explained the procedure on how attendees can use the Questions and Answers feature to submit any comments. Staff will monitor comments and share as received.

Discussion was held on the following items:

Public Hearing Requirements

Staff shared that on May 7, 2020 during the Town Council meeting Public Hearings will be held for the Constant Yield Tax Rate and the FY21 General Fund Appropriations Ordinance. Staff worked with the State and the Town Attorney to prepare the notices that have been sent for publishing in the Times Record. In order to comply with the State recommendation for holding the online CTYR Hearing, public comments will need to be submitted in writing and will be accepted through May 14th. To accommodate the extended Public Comments submission time, the Town Council will hold a Special meeting to address the comments, set the Fiscal Year 20-21 Tax Rate and act on Ordinance #705. This Special Meeting will be held on May 18th at 6:30 PM, prior to the already scheduled Working Session.

General Fund Budget and Public Hearings

Mr. Mulrine provided a synopsis of the General Fund Budget, reductions made by each department to present a balanced budget.

Mrs. Monteith explained revenue projections; the anticipated effect of real property tax assessment appeals that are pending on some large commercial properties; the unknown effect the COVID-19 pandemic may have on other anticipated tax revenues.

Due to the uncertainty of how COVID-19 will affect tax revenues, Staff recommends maintaining the current tax rates.

Councilwoman Wilson joined the meeting at 6:10PM.

Mayor McNinch talked about a conference she participated in earlier today, and the discussion about Highway User Revenues, and the possibility they may also be affected.

Mr. Mulrine discussed capital needs.

Mr. Mulrine provided an update on the effects of COVID-19 to our local businesses.

His Hope Ministries Emergency Ordinance

Discussion was held about His Hope Ministries needs and the State's request to keep the Homeless Shelter open throughout the Summer to help with the COVID-19 Pandemic.

2020-9

The shelter would normally have closed on April 24th but has been allowed to stay open at its current location, at least through the month of May.

HHM and Mr. Mulrine have been working with Aaron's Place, which is located at the former Wesleyan School Building, about opening a temporary shelter to house the homeless if they need to relocate by June 1st. There are some zoning restrictions on the use of the property, however the Town Attorney has recommended that under the State of Emergency the Town can enter into a lease with Aaron's Place for temporary use and have HHM be the property manager. An Emergency Ordinance #706 has been prepared by the Town Attorney to accommodate the need and have a plan in place by June 1. The Ordinance will be on the May 7th agenda for consideration of adoption.

Further discussion was held on the Town's liability coverage, having a quorum to pass the Ordinance, building security during the use.

Mr. Mulrine invited the Mayor and Council to join him on Wednesday on location to look over the facility and meet all parties that will be involved in the agreement.

Paving Road Projects

Mr. Mulrine provided an overview of the most recent estimate for road repairs and the funding shortfall to complete them all.

Discussion was held on the ranking of the many areas needing upgrades and future funding.

Water and Sewer Budget Transfers

Discussion was held on the master meter reading software failure and the need to redirect funds to be able to purchase and upgrade the remaining 641 meters to Kamstrup Meters. The meters are currently been read manually.

Phil Clark and Mark Chandler talked about water and sewer capital items they have been able to hold off on purchasing this year. They are looking to redirect those funds to assist with getting more new water meters purchased and installed prior to the end of this fiscal year.

Discussion on capital assets, on updating the inventory replacement plan was held.

3rd & Market Street Traffic Signal

Following up on discussion from then April 16, 2020 meeting, staff recommended to leave the traffic signal as is right now, while staff pulls together a more affordable plan to install an all-way stop.

Miscellaneous

Mayor McNinch asked if anyone had any questions or comments:

Additional discussion was held on the tax rate and constant yield.

Additional discussion was held on COVID-19 regarding the affects to the community, housing, mortgages, rental units and local businesses; the cumbersome small business grant/loan application process.

Mayor McNinch expressed the need to start preparing and planning for the recovery phase.

Councilwoman Wilson talked about COVID-19 and health disparities, mentioning they are seeing information that indicates African Americans have an increased health risk, primarily due to living conditions in apartment complexes and the difficulty to social distance. Also, the language barrier for the Latino and Haitian communities.

Councilwoman Wilson is working the Mid Shore Maryland Behavioral Health Board and many others on outreach campaigns to help get word out about the health concerns.

2020-10

*Councilwoman Wilson shared that Caroline County Census response rate is doing good.
There were no comments or questions received from the attendees.*

Mayor McNinch asked for final comments.

*With no further comments, McNinch adjourned the April 27, 2020 Working Session at 7:02
PM.*

Respectfully submitted,

*Karen L. Monteith,
Clerk-Treasurer*