

A meeting of the Neighborhood Associations was held on **May 20, 2015** at 10:05 a.m. City Hall in the Planning Department's first floor conference room, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were the Neighborhood Association Representatives and City Staff.

### **FY 16 City Budget – Bill Prokop, City Manager**

Bill Prokop went over the City Budget for the Fiscal Year 16. This year's budget process has required staff holding spending levels flat and making decisions early enough in the process to affect outcomes by detecting changes in revenues and expenditures that will affect the city overall, not just individual departments. Without increased revenue and much needed expenditures in the near future, we will begin to lose the ability to attract residents, tourists and businesses should the quality of life in Beaufort and its unique character, the things that make Beaufort so special, deteriorate, he said. Creating a budget that best serves the various needs of our community is similar to fitting the pieces of a puzzle together. City Manager went over the seven strategic goals:

#### **#1: Economic Vitality:**

We need a vibrant mix of business and industry that promotes a thriving and balanced economy with increased employment, a well-educated workforce and personal income growth. We need more revenue and incentives, and we need to support existing businesses.

#### **#2: Unique Character**

We need to maintain our high quality of life by developing plans and infrastructure improvements that protect and enhance Beaufort's unique historic character, its physical beauty and cultural heritage. Also pursue acquisitions of vacant land and easements. Mr. Prokop referred to the Boundary Street project.

#### **#3: Smart Growth:**

Need to maintain our distinct urban form by encouraging the growth and development of walkable, urban, mixed-use neighborhoods, established by historic core of the city.

#### **#4: Public Safety (very important):**

Need to provide a safer community by better enabling police, fire, code enforcement and judicial operation to protect and serve. Mr. Prokop referred to the Baltimore situation and Beaufort. He also said, our response time from the Fire and Police Department is 4.3 minutes. He referred to the City of Beaufort Parking Ordinance and the ISO; our rating is 2 which is very good.

#### **#5: Environmental Sustainability**

Need to continue to develop plans and practices for stormwater, refuse collection and recycling, and emergency management that contribute to an even healthier and sustainable city, for our citizens now and for the future. Need to coordinate with the County on stormwater and also maintain vendors and contracts. Linda Roper has taken on the additional position of helping review these contracts in the early stages, so there are no surprises. We also need to monitor residential recycling, emphasize importance of tree requirement, and

promote green purchasing and conservation. Mr. Prokop spoke about the MS4 that is being federally mandated. The city is not on this list now but may be by 2016 and then we will have certain requirements to meet.

#### #6: City Governance:

Need to manage our resources well and continually improve the city government's effectiveness and its partnership with all who live in, work in and visit Beaufort. We need to meet the goals of the Civic Master Plan; seek new resources and meet the needs of the city residents. The City of Beaufort finances can now be seen on our website, [www.cityofbeaufort.org](http://www.cityofbeaufort.org), and on our Facebook Page. Our goal is to have excellent customer service. Also need to have permit and business license processing online. We need to start developing leadership and conduct performance and compensation plans. Mr. Prokop said within the next month, all department heads will go through a Performance Review Class. Employees haven't had a COLA increase in three years. Ivette Burgess has taken on the additional role as the HR person and is doing a great job, Mr. Prokop said. Lamar Taylor has also stepped up since Isiah Smalls retired and is doing a great job. He received three calls recently praising Public Works, Fire Department and Police Department. The goal of the department heads is to make Beaufort a great place to live and work in.

Mr. Prokop also went over the highlights of his budget presented at last night's Council meeting. He said the most important thing is community support because without their support, we won't be any better off next year. City Manager went over seven items that he wants to accomplish this year.

#### #1: Review of Committees

Council will conduct a comprehensive review of all our committees and their ordinances, streamlining them where necessary and setting clear goals with established measurable objectives for the upcoming year.

#### #2: Tax-Exempt Real Property

Council members and staff will meet with the major owners of property that is not on our tax rolls. This initiative is to be completed by the end of this calendar year. This ordinance would propose a more equitable fee structure to fairly reflect the use of city services, which are now funded primarily by our residential taxpayers.

#### #3: Review of Fees

Staff will prepare recommendations regarding all fees and cost for licenses, permits, events, banners, staff special duty, tour buses, and use of city facilities by the end of September 2015. Many of the current fees have not been adjusted in over ten years. Council will review staff's recommendations and approve the adjustments it deems necessary. All changes to the fees shall take effect by November 1, 2015.

#### #4: Engage Beaufort's Employers

The leadership of the city must effectively engage with the leadership of its employer base. The need for reaching out in order to retain and grow our employer base is very important now. We must do all we can to retain jobs we currently have in the community, and take actions necessary to attract new opportunities to the area. The Redevelopment Commission will take the lead in this initiative. This will begin immediately and be ongoing.

#### #5: Review of Regulatory Processes

Staff shall conduct a comprehensive review and streamlining of all our regulatory processes in order to better address the needs of our customers. Many of our processes have already been in place, but not updated to reflect the changing needs of our customers and the advances in technology. This review shall be completed by the end of the fiscal year.

#### #6: Use of the Accommodation Tax ("A-Tax")

Staff is recommending the total of amount of money allocated to our various community organizations be frozen at the Fiscal Year 2015 expenditure level for the next three years. All revenues earned beyond the FY 15 level will be used to offset our operating cost for tourism-related expenditures as defined by the state law. This will be accomplished by the A-Tax committee and overseen by the City Clerk and Director of Finance.

#### #7: "Beaufort Pride of Place".

Staff shall create a "wish list" of items that members of the community and civic organizations requested or expecting to see in the budget, but had to be eliminated due to lack of revenue. Staff will ask Council to approve the establishment of a special fund to accept monetary donations and/or needed materials. This initiative, "Beaufort Pride of Place", will be a community improvement and beautification program that we hope will be supported by members of our community, businesses, tourists, and civic organizations. The purpose is to enhance and maintain the appearance and infrastructure of Beaufort while building on the pride and community spirit that has been part of our social fabric for many years. An ongoing donor recognition will be created to thank those who contribute. Staff has come up with a list of key preliminary projects that are needed and ready once funds are available such as: Playground equipment, flowers & shrubs for parks and roadsides, Spanish Moss Trail improvements, park benches & tables, park maintenance, trail extension at Pigeon Point Park, street lighting upgrades, bike racks, solar operated electric auto charging stations, public safety equipment (Fire & Police), youth employment programs, light pole flower baskets, outdoor art, way finding signage, downtown holiday decorations, and public safety personnel cost. This is when the neighborhood associations and residents are very helpful. Donations are tax-deductible. There is where we need your help and understanding, Mr. Prokop said.

Mr. Prokop ended his presentation by giving a brief summary stating that the most difficult part of our budget proposal is for Council and staff to demonstrate the courage and commitment to implement and follow through on all these initiatives and to convince our residents to join us in accomplishing them. For us to be truly successful and get off the dead-end-road, this must be a community-supported effort, he said. He talked about the budget deficits, the aging and

deteriorating buildings, and the lacking of State funds for roads, highway, and sidewalks. The entire budget is on the city's website and also available in our office, he said.

**Phil Hodges** thanked Mr. Prokop. He said he's lived here over 16 years and finally feels now things will happen.

**Councilman McFee** thanked the department heads for sculpting the budget the way they did.

**Councilman Cromer** said there is going to be a big change in the city and then thanked Mr. Prokop.

**Councilman Murray** thanked Bill and the department heads for their effort and time. He said the Redevelopment Commission is being reformed and they are looking for new people.

**County Council Member, Alice Howard**, said all is great.

#### **NEWS FROM CITY STAFF AND STRATEGIC PARTNERS**

**Waste Pro, Lamar Taylor**, thanked the City of Beaufort and Council for all they do. Regarding Waste Pro he said since the routes have changed to one day pick up things are going good; not many complaints. **Rob Scott** agreed the one day service is good. He said there are different trucks now which are faster and more economical. He said damaged carts can now be replaced. The yard debris is just about done and we will be getting ready for the summer season. He reminded everyone to use the Tracez System.

**The Greenery, Lamar Taylor**, said we are on the second cycle and cleaning out the neighborhoods. We also cleaned up the cemeteries and they looked very nice on Mother's Day. He said feel free to contact The Greenery if you want a certain section of the cemetery cleaned up for a holiday.

**Public Works, Lamar Taylor**, went over the current RFPs. He said the Solid Waste public RFP is tomorrow at 12:30 p.m. at City Hall. He said the RFP for landscaping for the Waterfront Park, smaller parks, and City Hall will be in by June 5. Mr. Taylor went over some outstanding projects: West Street Extension will be completed May 29; Duke Street Phase II will be completed June 3; Waterfront Park irrigation repairs, plant replacement, and trip hazards are being done. We ordered 600 2 x 2 tabby pavers that will be in next week. Regarding the road drainage issue on Battery Creek Road, the contractor will redesign the drainage. Tonight is the CDC Meeting at the county and the Southside sidewalks will be discussed. The county, BJWS&A and city plan to partner to repair some erosion along the trail. We need to get together more, he said.

Liza Hill spoke about the projects at Southside Park. Ms. Hill said the tree farm will be completed by this Thursday morning and on Friday, kids will be planting trees in the morning. This is a great for cost savings and good learning opportunity, she said. The dog park will be

done by the end of this fiscal year. There is 1.0 acre for large dogs and 1.5 acres for smaller dogs. Mr. Traylor mentioned the event that Bridges put on this past weekend. It looked like a State Fair.

Mr. Hopey thanked Public Works for clearing the tree that fell at the trail.

Josh Gibson said the limb that fell at Scott & Duke Street was cleared very fast.

Rod Mattingly said Waste Pro's contract is up for renewal and wondered if more people would be hired during high demand times. Mr. Taylor said yes. Mr. Mattingly said they have not been on time lately and the leaves are still not picked up in the Pigeon Point neighborhood. Mr. Taylor will look into this. Mr. Mattingly said residents and other people are still dropping off their garbage, at Pigeon Point boat landing. Mr. Taylor said we can post it, but it's hard to have eyes everywhere. He reminded him to call Public Works or Waste Pro right away. Mr. Mattingly said he used the Tracez System and it worked great. Dave Easton said the "jungle" area has been cleaned, thank you. Mr. Taylor said we need a bush hogging service in there.

Councilman Murray said there were tree limbs in Pigeon Point Road and were quickly removed. Councilman McFee said then the entire tree fell down, but it too was taken care of quickly.

Edna Horn thanked Public Works.

**Resident** asked if leaf debris can be in plastic. Cora Lee Shoemaker from Public Works said when it was plastic, staff had separated it. Leaf debris in plastic cannot be recycled. Mr. Gibson said Waste Pro recycle bins are very small, and asked if there are there any other options? Mr. Taylor said we have proposed in our budget to have larger containers.

Mr. Prokop, said if in paper or tied, it can go directly to the dump.

**Park Beaufort, Alice Wallace**, said SPT has taken over the parking as of February 1, 2015. We have not made any big changes, but we have added a hot line to the meters. The response time is less than 5 minutes. She said currently the repairs on the meters are done by her, but staff is being trained. Also, there is a vehicle traveling around town to accumulate license plate numbers to better help have more information in their system. She said she can be reached 24/7 on her cell. She also gets alerts on her cell phone when something is wrong with the meter, like tampering. Overall, all is going pretty good, she said. Resident asked what the benefit of taking the license plate information is. Ms. Wallace said it tells us how often a car has been sitting in a place. The average person parks in one spot for 2 hours and 14 minutes, not 2 hours. Pete Palmer said there are some business owners that use the 2 hour parking to park in front of their business and then they move a few spaces down and park again for 2 hours.

**City Fire Department, Chief Negron**, said Fire Marshall, Steve Baske, is currently at a Sprinkler System Class and when he returns, they will have an in-house sprinkler system use training.

Regarding Codes Enforcement, Mr. Baske is overseeing it with the assistance of two inspectors. The inspectors are out every day and putting information into the city database. Chief said the bright orange door hangers are very effective. Chief meets with Bruce Skipper, City Building Official bi-weekly to go over issues. He said for Code Enforcement issues people can call 322-7915. If anyone feels it's an emergency, they can call the Fire Department at 522-7055.

**City Police Department, Chief Clancy**, said an arrest has been made in the recent murder at Greene Street. Community communication was key in this case. He talked about crime prevention and said we have a major increase this year in vehicle burglaries (35). The majority of them had keys left in the car. We've had some unusual burglaries: a person broke a window and reached in to take the items; guns were fired. An alarm system went off and the suspects ran out. In Northwest Quadrant a house broken into during the day. The homeowner came home and saw someone in the upstairs of her house. The same house was broken into this weekend at night. Suspects found an open window and cut the screen to get in. Then in the Mossy Oaks area an elderly woman was home on an oxygen machine while her husband was working in the yard. The suspect walked right in the front door and said, her husband said to come in. The same suspect did the same thing another day, but when he came in the unlocked front door, the homeowner had a panic button she pressed. Chief reminded everyone, unfortunately today we have to lock our doors and windows even if we are home. Please call us anytime "you" think some looks suspicious, he said.

Mr. Gibson said is there anywhere on the Police Department's website public information on current arrests? Chief said no, but there is a Daily Media Sheet at the front office at the Police Department and you can go to our Facebook page. Chief mentioned the Reverse 9-1-1 System that sends a mass phone call to neighborhoods when an emergency is going on. He said we used it twice in the last seven years; once for a lost child and once for a suspect on the run with a gun.

**Building Codes, Bruce Skipper**, said there is a small amount of single-family developments permitted and many residential renovations permitted. He reminded everyone to get permits for all work being done. If the contractor says he is getting the permit, verify he did this by asking to see the permit or you can call our office at 525-7049. Also, make sure the contractor is a reputable company, has a current City of Beaufort business license and has insurance. Unfortunately, some contractors are not honest.

**Beaufort Housing Authority, Angela Childers**, said the Federal Government has published the median income information. Right now, a family of four has an income of \$68,900; last year was \$63,400. There is substantial income in the city. Councilman Murray said were numbers pulled out for the city? Ms. Childers said, no, just the county.

**City Planning Department, Libby Anderson**, went over the city projects:

- 806 Boundary Street is doubling in size to be a CPA office.

- 902 Boundary Street is being upfitted for a restaurant.
- Airport Junction Retail Stores (a/k/a Island Shops) is going through the design review process; it will include a 499,000 sq. ft. Wal-Mart. We are also reviewing their Traffic Impact Study.
- Zoning Board of Appeals is meeting tonight at 5:30 p.m. and reviewing a short term rental application at 2413 Oak Haven Street, and a lot line adjustment at 2316 Wilson Drive.
- 814 Newcastle Street has received approval from the Historic Review Board for demolition; now in permitting stage.

**City Planning Department, Liza Hill**, talked about the 45 Leadership students that were in Beaufort for three days. They volunteered at the trail, specifically at Broome Lane and Depot Road. A public drinking fountain has been donated and will be located at the Depot Road trail head. She thanked the Pigeon Point Watch folks who donated to Pinckney Park. She also thanked Sunrise Sanitation who donated portable toilets and maintenance for them. We are hoping to have a restroom in the Depot building, Ms. Hill said. She recently attended a grant program in Columbia, SC, regarding this. There is free mulch available if anyone is interested at Allison Road, Ms. Hill said. Donnie Beer thanked Ms. Hill.

#### **NEWS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES**

**Battery Point**, we called Codes Enforcement a few times and they were great.

**Mossy Oaks, Edna Horn**, said, "Thank you for resolving the community farm".

**Northwest Quadrant, Dave Easton**, said Waste Pro has been very prompt.

**Old Commons**, liked having the speed sign, but it can be removed now.

**Pigeon Point, Donnie Beer**, thanked her neighbors. She also mentioned the Veteran Tribute event that will take place at the Waterfront Park on August 8. There is no cost. She is hoping to see a great turnout.

**Spanish Point, Joan Sedlacek**, said the "shots fired" incident Chief Clancy talked about were in her neighborhood.

Next Meeting is June 17, 2015

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.