

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
CITY COUNCIL

March 6, 2023

Ronnie Thompson, Mayor

Sally W. Sandy, City Manager
Louis E. Vinay, Jr., City Attorney

Wendy Cato)
Christopher Hawkins) Council
Chris Jernigan – Not present)
Butch McSwain)

Interpreters
Ernest Williams IV
Danette Steelman-Bridges

- I. Call to Order - The Mayor called the regular meeting to order in the Council Chambers at City Hall at 6:00 p.m.
- II. Public Comment – The Mayor stated the guidelines for public comment and said speakers were to be called in order of sign-up for those who appeared in person; however, due to COVID-19 the Council was still accepting public comments via email, U.S. mail or hand-delivered letters. No one signed up to offer any comments. No other comments via email, U.S. mail or hand-delivered letters were received.
- III. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag – Councilmember McSwain led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- IV. Invocation – Given by City Attorney Louis Vinay, Jr.
- V. Introduction of Council – The Mayor introduced Councilmembers and staff. Councilmember Chris Jernigan is absent due a business trip.
- VI. Retirement Resolutions
 - A. Mayor Thompson read a retirement resolution honoring Sarah S. Williams, Chef/Kitchen Manager, Community House Department. She was not present to receive the resolution, which will be presented to her at a later time.

Upon motion by Councilmember Cato, seconded by Councilmember McSwain, and carried unanimously, the Council adopted Resolution #23-08 honoring retiree Sarah S. Williams.
- VII. Public Advocacy Issues and Strategies
 - A. Recognition: Historic Morganton Festival received an award for “Best Event Associated with an Event” from the NC Association of Festivals and Events for the MADE (Morganton, Arts, Design and Engineering) Competition.

Mayor Thompson introduced Abby Gentry, Manager of the City Main Street Program. She was accompanied by Paul Gantt. Abby stated that she was thrilled and honored by the recognition. Mr. Gantt thanked everyone for the support for the group and for the students. He stated that the recognition elevates the level and the skill of the students and the standing of the group. They are looking forward to another great year. Abby advised that this year’s event will be Friday, October 20th at CoMMA and will be open to Middle School and High School students. For more information, go to the website at www.Morgantonfest.org.
 - B. Proclamation: Celebrating a 30-Year Sister Cities German Partnership
Accepted by: Tracey Trimble, Western Piedmont Sister Cities Association.

Mayor Thompson read the proclamation. Councilmember Chris Hawkins presented the proclamation to Tracey Trimble, Chair and Catawba County Designee of the Western Piedmont Sister Cities Association. She shared that the association includes four counties and that a delegation will be coming from Germany in October 2023. She thanked the Council for the proclamation.

Upon motion by Councilmember Cato, seconded by Councilmember McSwain, and carried unanimously, the Council adopted the proclamation Celebrating a 30-Year Sister Cities German Partnership (Resolution 23-07).

C. Mayor Thompson announced the following events:

- **Downtown/City Hall**

Chili Cook-Off - Thursday, March 9th from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Morganton Community House. The Mayor introduced the Downtown Association video advertisement for the Chili Cook-Off. The ad ran for the Council and those present to view.

Burke Trails Days – Saturday, March 11, 12p to 5p at CoMMA in the auditorium. This is a free event and is part of the 2023 Year of the Trail.

Pop-Up Farmers' Market
Saturday, March 11th from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at 111 North Green Street.

Art in the Hall: John David Brown, III – is an artist, graphic designer and director that lives in Conover, North Carolina. His work has a whimsical folk-art, storybook style, with colors and shapes informed by mid-century design. He strives to create happy art that resonates with people of all ages and backgrounds. His art will continue to be displayed in City Hall during the month of March 2023.

- **CoMMA Performing Arts Center**

Friday, March 10th at 7:30 p.m. – Fairytales on Ice

Tuesday, March 14th at 7:30 p.m. – US Air Force Heritage of American Band – Tickets are required – They are FREE!

Saturday, March 25th at 7:30 p.m. – Hipler Ballerinas

Friday, March 31st at 7:30 p.m. – Yesterday & Today – The Interactive Beatles Experience

Monday, April 3rd at 7:30 p.m. – On Your Feet! – The Story of Emilio & Gloria Estefan

VIII. Consideration of Changing City Council Meeting time for April 3, 2023

City Manager Sandy stated that due to CoMMA programming to begin at 7:30 p.m., City Staff recommend that the time of the City Council meeting for April 3, 2023 be changed from 6:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Upon motion by Councilmember McSwain, seconded by Councilmember Hawkins, and carried unanimously, the Council approved changing the City Council Meeting time of the April 3, 2023 City Council Meeting from 6:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

IX. North Carolina Municipal Power Agency Number 1 Update – City Manager Sandy stated that the rate committee for the power agencies as started budget meetings.

- X. Consent Agenda – City Manager Sandy presented the Consent Agenda and asked if any items should be removed. No request was made to remove any items.

Upon motion by Councilmember Hawkins, seconded by Councilmember Cato, and unanimously carried, the Council approved the Consent Agenda and each individual item adopted as stated, those being as follows:

- A. Consideration of Approval of Minutes – Approved minutes Regular Meeting held on February 6, 2023.

- B. Consideration of Tax Releases – None to Report.

- C. Consideration of a Budget Amendment in the Amount of \$15,000 to Recognize Receipt of a Restricted Contribution for the Main Street Public Art Program

Approved a budget amendment in the amount of \$15,000 to recognize receipt of a restricted contribution for the Main Street Public Art Program.

- D. Consideration of Master Agreement for Professional Engineering Services with Garver Engineering Services

Approved and authorized master services agreement with Garver Engineering to provide professional engineering services for Water Resources Department

- E. Consideration of Master Agreement for Professional Engineering Services with Highfill Infrastructure Engineering

Approved and authorized master services agreement with Highfill Infrastructure Engineering to provide professional engineering services.

- F. Consideration of Participation in the 2024 Urban Archery Season

Approved an Urban Archery Season for 2024 (January 13, 2024 to February 18, 2024) in accordance with the regulations established by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and authorized the City of Morganton to submit a Letter of Intent to participate in the 2024 season.

- G. Consideration of Approval of Downtown Calendar of Events and Ordinance Scheduling Street Closures

Approved the Downtown Calendar of Events and approved Ordinance Scheduling Street Closures.

- H. Consideration of a Resolution to Amend the Electric Transfer Policy of the City of Morganton

Approved a resolution to amend the Electric Transfer Policy of the City of Morganton.

- I. Consideration of a Resolution to Amend the Fund Balance Policy for the City of Morganton's General Fund

Approved a resolution to amend the Fund Balance Policy for the City of Morganton's General Fund.

- J. Consideration of a Resolution in Support of The Innovation Campus Project of The Industrial Commons

Approved a resolution in support of The Innovation Campus project of The Industrial Commons.

- XI. Items Removed from Consent Agenda – There were no items removed.

XII. New Business

A. Other Business

1. Consideration of Award of Community Development Block Grant Small Business Loan to Morganton General Store (DBA Swede's Café)

City Manager Sandy stated that Harvey & Beth Hicks, owners of Morganton General Store, LLC located at 116 West Union Street in Morganton (which includes Swede's Café), have applied for a CDBG Small Business Loan in the amount of \$30,000 to assist in the purchase and installation of a cooking hood with exhaust fan. Morganton General Store, LLC offers general merchandise and Swede's Café provides breakfast and lunch items. They will meet the requirement of creating a job for low and moderate persons by hiring one full-time employee. The SBL requires at least the creation of one job for a low to moderate income person and this requirement has to be met within a year of signing the Small Business Loan Agreement.

The City has set aside CDBG Funds for the purpose of encouraging small businesses that meet HUD hiring guidelines as well as City of Morganton Mission 2030 goals. Entrepreneurial development, downtown revitalization and tourism enhancement were each identified as essential Mission 2030 goals for economic development. This business loan is being recommended by the staff to promote these goals. A personal guaranty will be required for this loan.

Upon motion by Councilmember McSwain, seconded by Councilmember Cato, and carried unanimously, the Council awarded a CDBG Small Business Loan in the amount of \$30,000 to Harvey and Beth Hicks with Morganton General Store, LLC, to be used to assist with the purchase of restaurant equipment for the business of Swede's Café located in downtown Morganton.

2. Consideration of Approval of CoMMA Performing Arts Center Master Plan

City Manager Sandy introduced Sharon Jablonski, Director of Cultural & Creative Development. Sharon shared a power point presentation.

Sharon stated that the DLR Group was retained to facilitate a Master Plan and Vision. The CoMMA Master Plan Steering Committee, the Morganton community, City Council, City staff, business leaders, liaisons from the town's Guatemalan community and CoMMA staff have collaborated with the DLR Group.

DLR Group identified three guiding principles from the input of all the groups:

1. SUPPORT COMMA'S MISSION STATEMENT: To inspire creativity and broaden the mind of all through the power of the arts.
2. IMPROVE THE PATRON EXPERIENCE
3. POSITION COMMA TO BECOME A REGIONAL DESTINATION FOR INCREDIBLE CULTURAL PROGRAMMING.

DLR Group also analyzed CoMMA's performance calendar and benchmarked it against peer institutions. The results of this analysis are critical: CoMMA currently has many more dark days than peer institutions, but CoMMA also has a much smaller staff than peer institutions. These two statements are obviously linked. For CoMMA to host more events, it will almost certainly require more staff. We will also need to update the facility to better host community events – community events are the best opportunity for increasing programming - in addition to the traveling performances that it currently supports.

The Guiding Principles and this recognition of a need for growth shaped DLR Group's recommendations for renovations and strategic additions to the building. The recommendations for work are to be completed in phases, as time and funding allow. The phases are as follows:

Phase I: Performance System Upgrades - Upgrades to performance systems and infrastructure, as well as auditorium renovations, making it fully handicapped accessible. New seats and finishes are included in this phase. DLR Group further recommends investigating more dynamic and flexible seating options in the house to appeal to younger patrons and create opportunities for unique patron amenities.

Phase II: Back of House Renovations and New Addition – This includes additions for performer spaces and a loading-dock extension with much needed storage, restrooms and office space for crews and staff.

Phase III: Front of House Additions and Renovations - This phase is designed to very much improve patron amenities, restrooms, the box office, and the appeal of the building's main lobby. Highlighting the Ben Long fresco is important in this phase. The Master Plan would culminate in a new addition with a beautiful new ballroom for 200-seated diners or a performance area with stage for up to 300 patrons. This new space would provide new revenue streams and flexibility to host more and varied community events. Improved and inviting outdoor space is included in this phase.

The Master Plan was undertaken to use community and staff input to develop a plan for CoMMA's future. The plan presents a combination of facility maintenance and upgrade recommendations to support an achievable vision for the arts within the growing Morganton community in a way that recognizes and respects the advancement of the arts that was CoMMA's original purpose.

City Manager Sandy stated that the CoMMA Performing Arts Center was built by the City of Morganton as a civic auditorium, it has served as a regional center for the arts since 1986. The only significant renovations to the building since that time were to install a new fresco in the ceiling of the lobby by the celebrated artist Ben Long in 2004 and various upgrades to mechanical systems. Performance systems at CoMMA have aged beyond their expected life.

Upon motion by Councilmember McSwain, seconded by Councilmember Cato, and carried unanimously, the Council approved and adopted the CoMMA Performing Arts Center Masterplan.

3. Consideration of Approval of Contract with Kimley-Horne for Comprehensive Land Use Plan

City Manager Sandy introduced Wendy Smith, Director of Development & Design. She advised that the City of Morganton's current Comprehensive Plan – *Mission 2030* – was adopted in 2009 to lead the City towards 2030. Since that time, a tremendous amount of economic, cultural, and environmental change has taken place, with new trends and existing conditions reshaping Morganton in ways beyond the guidance offered within *Mission 2030*.

For this reason, City Staff issued a Request for Proposal for a Comprehensive Land Use Plan on January 17, 2023. The new plan will develop a new foundation document to help guide the anticipated growth and development over the next 15 years. Four proposals were received by the closing date of February 6, 2023.

All proposals were reviewed by a team comprised of:

- Director of Development and Design Wendy Smith
- City Manager Sally Sandy
- City Attorney Louis Vinay
- Project Engineer Michael Berley
- Senior Planner Wade Griffin.

It is the recommendation of this team that a contract for the new Comprehensive Land Use Plan be awarded to Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. at a price not to exceed \$200,000. The review team was very impressed with their submitted proposal and similar planning documents produced by the firm, and the team received positive references from past clients of the firm for similar projects.

Jonathan Whitehurst, Project Manager with Kimley-Horn, presented an overview of the project's purpose, community engagement and timeline to the Council and Planning & Zoning Commission at the February 24th Council Workshop.

Upon motion by Councilmember Hawkins, seconded by Councilmember Cato, and carried unanimously, the Council awarded a contract to Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. for the development of a Comprehensive Land Use Plan at a price not to exceed \$200,000 and authorized the Mayor and/or the City Manager to execute all agreements regarding this contract.

4. Appointments to Boards and Commissions – None to report.

5. 30-Day Notice Boards and Commissions – None to report.

XIII. Other Items from City Manager and City Council Not on Agenda

XIV. Reports – No reports given.

XV. Adjournment – The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Preparation of Minutes. These minutes were prepared by Renee C. Carswell, City Clerk. Copies of all resolutions, ordinances and orders referenced in these minutes are intended to be incorporated into these minutes as if fully set forth herein. Prior to including them into the official minute book, the minutes have been read and approved by the City Manager and the City Attorney, then distributed to each member of the City Council for further review and final approval, at a subsequent Council Meeting.



Ronnie Thompson, Mayor



Renee C. Carswell, City Clerk