

MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
February 23, 2024
Morganton Community House

Ronnie Thompson, Mayor

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

Wendy Cato
Christopher Hawkins
Chris Jernigan
Butch McSwain

Others present included Department Directors, staff, various city employees, and media including the News Herald and The Paper.

➤ **Call to Order and Welcome**

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 8:15 a.m. in the Cobb Room at the Morganton Community House. He welcomed everyone and asked the City Manager to introduce the agenda.

The City Manager said she was very excited for the future. She then asked Finance Director Jessie Parris to begin the day with a financial update.

➤ **Financial Update/ARPA Update**

Jessie gave a quick update on City finances reviewing:

- **General Fund** – She reviewed revenues and expenditures, and stated that the City General Fund is in a great place at this time.
- **Utility Funds** – She reviewed revenue and expenditures, and advised that the City Utility Funds are in a good position currently.
- **Current Debt** - #13,551,187 – Compared to 2020 of \$20,475,432 – Again, Jessie stated that the City is in a good position. Our current debt capacity allows the City to buy assets over a longer period of time.
- **Major Projects** – Jessie updated Council on the following projects included in the current budget and project timeline for each project:
 1. ARPA Projects –
 2. Bethel Park Restoration
 3. North Green Street Streetscape
 4. Stormwater Masterplan
- **Looking Ahead** – Jessie updated Council on the implementation of a utility billing platform, an online payment and tax bill platform, recruiting software, employee time and attendance software and a paperless purchase order system. She also advised Council that a work order system and a full AMI roll out are to be implemented in the future.

Jessie stated that overall she is very happy with where the City is currently. She thanked the team for working so well together. She thanked her staff and the department directors for their support and their willingness to work as a team.

Mayor Thompson thanked Jessie for the update. He recognized Wendy Smith, Director of Development & Design.

➤ **IMAGINE Morganton 2040/Comprehensive Plan Update**

Wendy introduced Jonathan Whitehurst with Kimley-Horn. He gave an update on the development of a comprehensive plan – IMAGINE Morganton 2040. He advised that the Council has been involved in several meetings over the past year for the Comprehensive Plan update, most recently in a joint workshop with the Planning and Zoning Commission in December.

He stated that City Staff continues to work with Kimley-Horn on development of the final plan, including the vision, future land use map, guiding planning principles and proposed action plan to meet the vision.

This session is a quick update on what has occurred so far and how we get to the expected plan completion around August 2024. Most recently, we have been solidifying the designations on the future land use map to illustratively show what types of uses are best situated where throughout the city.

Wendy presented a brief look ahead of the next steps for the City upon completion of the Comprehensive Plan, and announced the next Advisory Committee meeting, which will be held on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, 2 to 4 p.m. with a Community Workshop to follow from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. There will be an additional Community Workshop on Thursday, April 11, 2024, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The meetings will be at City Hall in the Council Chambers.

➤ *City Manager Sandy called for a break at 9:30 a.m. The meeting resumed at 9:45 a.m.*

➤ **CIP Overview**

City Manager Sandy stated that, as has been the case in the last several years, the needs as presented by the department directors will be with few cuts so the Council can get a perspective on the CIP needs city-wide. She noted that the requests total \$27,911,330 (Utilities - \$9,994,830 and General Fund - \$16,781,500) for next year city wide. Six-year needs total \$140,384,930.

As in the past, these requests will be re-evaluated, tweaked and prioritized with matching resources later in the budget process. Several requests have associated revenues and some of the projects lend themselves to borrowings. City Manager Sandy advised that Staff are continuing to pursue grants and other funding sources.

This year's presentation of capital requests will highlight just a few requests to allow time for the field trip to view current and future projects. The following Department Directors made presentations focusing on their requests for fiscal year 2024/2025:

- Wendy Smith, Director of Development & Design
- Sharon Jablonski, Director of Cultural & Creative Development
- Michael Chapman, Director of Public Works
- Bryan Fish, Director of Parks & Recreation
- Chief Jason Whisnant, Director of Public Safety
- Greg Branch, Director of CoMPAS Cable/IRMS
- Brad Boris, Director of Water/Wastewater Services
- Brooks Kirby, Director of Electric Services
- Jessie Parris, Director of Finance
- Rus Scherer, Director of Human Resources

➤ *Mayor Thompson called for a break for lunch at 11:20 a.m. The meeting resumed at 12:45 p.m. with the Mayor advising everyone to board the Greenway bus for a field trip.*

➤ **Field Trip to Visit Recently Completed Projects and Upcoming Projects**

Council, Department Heads and other City staff boarded the Greenway bus and traveled to the following locations:

- Root & Vine – New Location
- CoMPAS Building
- Wash Station
- Future WPCC Emergency Service Training Site
- Morganton Wastewater (Sewer) Plant
- Mountain View Gym
- Bost Road Sewer
- Freedom – Tennis/Playground
- Carbon City Park
- Silver Creek Pump Station
- Public Safety Station #3
- New Public Safety Station Site – Patrick Murphy Drive
- Bethel Park
- Morganton Community House via By-Pass/College Street

Department Heads, supervisors, and/or City Manager Sandy made comments at each location regarding the status of completed, current and future projects.

➤ **Wrap-up and Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Thompson at 3:50 p.m.

Preparation of Minutes. These minutes were prepared by Renee C. Carswell, City Clerk. 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

