

**City Council of the City of Greenville
Work Session**

**Monday, August 8, 2022
3:30 p.m.**

**Meeting Location:
Greenville City Hall, Council Chambers, 206 S. Main Street**

MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL: Mayor Knox White, Councilmember John M. DeWorken, Councilmember Lillian B. Flemming, Councilmember Kenneth C. Gibson, Councilmember Wil Brasington, Councilmember Russell H. Stall, and Councilmember Dorothy H. Dowe

CITY STAFF: City Manager John F. McDonough; City Attorney Leigh Paoletti;
City Clerk Camilla G. Pitman

Mayor White called the meeting to order for the purpose of discussing the following matters.

Due to technical issues with the Resonance virtual presentation, the meeting proceeded with the Swamp Rabbit Trail presentation.

Swamp Rabbit Trail Update

Office of Management and Budget Director Matt Efirm began the discussion with a presentation of updated information, as provided in Council's agenda packet. Mr. Efirm referred to the history of the Cleveland Connector ("paper clip") project and to adjustments in the budget over time. Mr. Efirm commented on the single bid received from L-J, Inc. in July at \$2.3 million and on escalations in construction prices. Mr. Efirm also commented on staff's efforts to engage in negotiations and to identify a savings of about \$240,000 through scope reduction and redesign. Mr. Efirm stated the project is still over budget by approximately \$770,000, and the biggest issues are material scarcity, contractor scheduling, and a compressed timeline.

Mobility Coordinator Calin Owens provided information on the project's status and timeline. Mr. Owens commented on the potential of additional savings once it is under contract and under construction. Regarding the timeline, Mr. Owens stated the road bridges are scheduled for a December 2022 completion. Mayor White asked staff to continue to maintain contact with the County regarding the completion date. Mr. McDonough advised that paving is anticipated to occur in September.

Councilmember Gibson asked questions regarding the bid received, the ability to rebid and obtain additional bidders, and consequences if the project is pushed back. Mr. Owens responded by explaining the process of rebidding and advising if the project is pushed back, individuals could have access to the trail, but not directly at Cleveland Park. Mr. Efirm stated the rebid process would take approximately six to eight weeks. Assistant City Engineer Nick DePalma shared that there were a few contractors at the pre-bid who did not submit a bid due to scheduling conflicts.

Councilmember Dowe asked could the number of submitted bids increase if the project is rebid. Mr. DePalma responded yes, and he stated while the City is currently seeing a lot of demands, the trouble is with delivering projects due to the lack of materials. Councilmember Dowe asked for the grade on Ebaugh Avenue and questioned if the neighborhood has been engaged

with the prospect of the trail traffic on their street. Mr. Owens responded that Ebaugh Avenue is not ADA compliant and is not conducive as a bypass route. Mr. Owen advised that the neighborhood has been involved in public input regarding the tunnel closure.

Councilmember Brasington asked if there is an expert who can assist in projecting the inflationary pressures and stated it would be preferable to get a better handle on it. Mr. DePalma responded that he only sees demand growing in the next few years. Councilmember Gibson agreed with Councilmember Brasington and stated he would like to receive more information on extending the timeline to allow for more bids and the potential of decreasing costs before making a decision.

Councilmember Dowe asked if Council postpones this item, will the City lose the current bidder. Mr. DePalma responded that there is an opening where the contractor will be mobilizing to meet the August 15th date. Councilmember Dowe stated if the City delays this project, then the County should not be held accountable for their timeline. Councilmember Dowe also stated that she does not agree with Ebaugh Avenue being a substitute option, that she does not see postponing as an option, and if postponed, the City loses the bidder, risks price inflation, and possibly jeopardizes the project.

Councilmember Gibson stated he is committed to doing the paperclip and affirmed there is a temporary solution for people to access the trail. Councilmember Gibson also stated he is not comfortable with paying the premium without knowing the answers to his questions.

Mr. Efird advised that the City has reached the end of its negotiation on this bid, and if it cannot be settled, then staff will have to shut the bid down and start over again. Councilmember Brasington asked if there are any alternative approaches that were not considered the first time that could yield a more favorable outcome. Mr. Efird responded no, and he stated this is a pure competitive process and the City cannot limit competition with a sole source or any other opportunity.

Mayor White stated the project has been discussed for approximately eight years, that it was a county project, and that the City wants the road bridges for safety reasons. Mayor White also stated the return on investment will be worthwhile.

Councilmember Dowe stated that there is more certainty with going forward than there is with postponing. Councilmember Dowe also stated she has yet to hear of a price going down on anything and to postpone this project prolongs a project which has been eight years in the making that Council committed to. Councilmember Dowe referred to the project as an economic development component advising that there are a lot of businesses counting on the project as a critical piece of the Cleveland Connector.

Economic Development Strategic Plan (Resonance)

Economic Development and Community Development Director Merle Johnson introduced Steven Pedigo with Resonance to present a presentation update on the Economic Development Strategic Plan, as provided in Council's agenda packet. Mr. Johnson advised that Resonance would return in September to present a draft of the proposed plan.

Mr. Pedigo provided an overview of the process thus far and the discussions conducted with the City and the community. Mr. Pedigo reviewed the four phases including (1) development of project work plan and construction strategy, (2) demographic and economic assessment, (3) stakeholder and public engagement, and (4) strategic plan development and implementation. Mr. Pedigo advised that the process is currently in phase four.

Mr. Pedigo provided a summary of the research they have collected and presented ten key takeaways:

1. Greenville is a fast-growing community, outpacing the State and United States.
2. Greenville is an attractive launching pad for talent, ranked among America's Best Cities.
3. Greenville is positioned to attract new companies and investment, serving as a leader in placemaking.
4. The Greenville Region has competitive export clusters, a foundation for growing specialized business and professional services for industrial sectors in the City.
5. Greenville has the foundation to grow a robust innovative economy, including research institutions, skill talent, quality of place, a pro-business climate, and more.
6. Greenville boasts a growing life sciences sector, which is a pillar for the City's innovation district and economy.
7. Greenville faces stark equity challenges.
8. Greenville has access to a robust higher education system, but its underleverage.
9. Greenville is experiencing the growing pains and challenges of its successes.
10. Greenville needs stronger alignment around economic development goals and responsibilities.

Mr. Pedigo referred to opportunities with the key regional industry clusters, including automotive, production technology and heavy machinery, advanced materials, life sciences, business services, and fintech. Mayor White suggested including advertising and marketing as part of a creative class as an additional industry. Mr. Pedigo responded advising that it is included under business services, however, it can be pulled out as an additional sector, if the City chooses.

Councilmember DeWorken reminded everyone that this plan was born out of the Greenville 2040 plan where there were three pillars, however, economic development was missing from it and needed a plan as well. Councilmember DeWorken advised that this plan should provide a roadmap of the City's role in economic development and will give the City a benchmark to appropriate money and pass policy that reflects the plan.

Councilmember Flemming stated she does not see anything about transportation or accessing quality transportation in order for individuals to get to work is a major issue.

Councilmember Gibson asked if there are any other industries or sectors that Greenville should be leveraging. Mr. Pedigo responded that he believes life science, including technology and research, provides an opportunity to leverage. Mr. Pedigo stated that starting a cluster or sector from scratch takes years upon years to develop. Mr. Pedigo provided suggestions in looking for news clusters, including workforce capabilities, remote work and access to enterprise creation, and attracting headquarters, or the brain center and business services, to a sector.

Councilmember Gibson noticed that the City is low in equity and diversity. Mr. Pedigo explained that Greenville has a large equity gap between the haves and have nots of approximately \$36,000 between black and white residents. Mr. Pedigo suggested thinking through skill training programs, transportation, and how to support entrepreneurs of color. Councilmember Gibson referred to the presentation including the effects of gentrification and affordability, and he asked Mr. Pedigo to look at balancing the area median income (AMI) and the affordable housing scope. Councilmember Gibson also asked Mr. Pedigo to look at ways to motivate children who grew up in Greenville to return home after college. Mr. Pedigo encouraged Council to work on a strategy to determine how to create wealth in the community for entrepreneurs of color.

Regarding diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), Councilmember Dowe asked if it is true that Greenville is coming up short in that area, that over time it will compromise Greenville's ability to attract talent back to Greenville and also attract industry and business. Mr. Pedigo responded yes, and he stated it is not enough to build an innovative based economy, but you have to have a commitment to diversity inclusion as part of your economic portfolio. Mr. Pedigo stated that people are looking at challenges with DEI and the climate as well as changes to it.

Mr. Pedigo presented strategy components including the following vision statement: "Greenville is one of the best launching pads in the world for dreamers, doers, and makers. We create opportunity here." Mr. Pedigo also presented and discussed the seven goals including: (1) upstate innovation, (2) investment for the future, (3) a launching pad for talent, (4) a place for everyone, (5) maintaining livability, (6) intentional placemaking, and (7) effective implementation. Mr. Pedigo stated the next steps will be to receive Council's comments and feedback and then build those comments into a detailed implementation plan.

Mayor White stated the organizational structure has to focus on the process and he does not believe we are quite set up at this time. Councilmember DeWorken expressed his excitement with the plan and thanked Mr. Pedigo for his efforts. Councilmember Brasington asked if recommended key financial indicators will be included, and Mr. Pedigo responded yes.

Motion - Executive Session

During the open Work Session, Mayor White asked for a motion to go into Executive Session. City Attorney Leigh Paoletti recommended going into executive session under S.C. Code §30-4-70(a)(2) negotiations for proposed contractual matters covered under attorney-client privilege involving the Grand Bohemian Hotel and Unity Park Maintenance Facility.

Councilmember Flemming moved, seconded by Councilmember DeWorken, to go into Executive Session. The motion carried unanimously.

(Executive Session)

There being no further discussions, Councilmember Flemming moved, seconded by Councilmember Gibson, to go out of Executive Session. The motion carried unanimously. No action was taken.

With no further discussions, the meeting adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

Camilla G. Pitman, MMC, Certified PLS
City Clerk

Meeting notice posted on August 5, 2022