

D-27564

Summary of Minutes

March 27, 2008

A Special Meeting of the Winston-Salem City Council was held on Thursday, March 27, 2008 at 12:15 p.m. in the Council Committee Room at City Hall, Mayor Allen Joines presiding and the following members present:

Council Members	Molly Leight	Vivian H. Burke
	Robert C. Clark	Wanda Merschel
	Dan Besse (<i>in at 12:45 p.m.</i>)	
	Joycelyn V. Johnson	

Members Absent: Nelson L. Malloy, Jr. and Evelyn A. Terry

Secretaries: Renée P. Henderson, City Secretary and Melanie Johnson, Recording Secretary

Mayor Joines called the meeting to order and welcomed Representative Virginia Foxx and thanked her for attending the meeting. He explained that today's meeting would consist of a discussion for approximately thirty minutes and then attendees would tour various federally funded project areas.

Mayor Joines indicated that City officials are immensely concerned about homeowners' lending issues and the need to increase Section 8 vouchers. He also explained that the City is addressing its Ten Year Plan to Combat Homelessness and hopes to be as successful as other major cities in areas of permanent housing, training, motivational programs and employment. Mayor Joines also pointed to the need for certain gang activities to be classified as stricter criminal offenses and stated that the City is need of funding for programs to address the problem.

Council Member Johnson noted that since Winston-Salem's industry base is moving more towards biotechnology and medical professions, there is a need for more federal funding of education in those fields. She indicated it would be helpful to have an increase in the return of gasoline tax dollars back into this community.

Mayor Joines explained that although the state should be receiving 92 cents back on every dollar, it is currently only receiving 86 cents per dollar.

Council Member Leight stated there is a need for funding to streamline the technology in all of the City's police vehicles.

Council Member Merschel pointed out that there has been an increase in armed robberies throughout the city in the past six months and many of the offenses are being committed by habitual felons. Although the City is working on efforts to address the issue and identify repeat offenders, she noted that interactions with repeat offenders in response to crimes is costing the City approximately \$1 million per year, and the City's "Weed and Seed" Program is in need of additional funding.

Representative Foxx inquired if City officials had met with Court representatives to address the problem.

Mayor Joines indicated that many meetings had been conducted and most of the cases are not being prosecuted because of the immense backlog in the Court system due largely in part to lack of funding for technology upgrades in its recordkeeping efforts.

Representative Foxx pointed out that if supporting data is present, more pressure should be put on the District Attorneys to prosecute the offenders.

Council Member Burke pointed out the Forsyth County District Attorney lacks adequate staff to address the number of cases in need of prosecuting. She indicated that the Winston-

Salem Police Department does have a gang unit but it is in need of more funding to address the gang issues throughout the city.

Mayor Joines pointed out that there are 300 identified gang members located in Winston-Salem.

Representative Foxx stated that most governments request additional funding to address problems, but she suggested that perhaps the District Attorney's office should reorganize and shift duties among its employees to address the backlog.

Mayor Joines noted that due to state regulations regarding allotment of technology, shifting duties and communication between jurisdictions remains difficult.

Council Member Johnson indicated that the City has been working with ex-offenders on job placement and training to encourage them to remain employed and possibly prevent repeat offenses from occurring.

Council Member Burke stated that a draft of the ex-offender program will be reviewed soon and the City will take steps to be a model for the rest of the business community in its employment efforts with ex-offenders.

Council Member Merschel indicated that there is a group called "Neighbors Against Releasing Chronic Offenders" (NARCO) that is working on these efforts and plan to release a report on their program soon. She noted that staff will send a copy of the NARCO report to Representative Foxx's office for review.

Council Member Clark indicated that due to a rapid increase, many detectives and police officers were assigned to the investigation of murders and violent crimes. As a result, excluding personnel needs to address the recent citywide annexation, an additional ten detectives were hired to address lower tier crimes such as petty theft and vandalism. He explained that

employment of law enforcement professional is costly in the way of salary, benefits and equipment and tools of the trade.

Council Member Clark further indicated that although earmarking of funds has become a less desirable practice, Winston-Salem has many successful projects that illustrate the productive use of taxpayers' money including a new railway for Norfolk Southern, the HOPE VI program, and Kimberley Park. He noted that in order to be good stewards of the taxpayers' money, there should be collaborative efforts by all involved entities and he pointed out that the Piedmont Triad Research Park is a good example of that type of collaboration.

In response to Council Member Burke's concerns, Representative Foxx stated she was not aware of the loss of funding for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), but noted that much program funding had recently been cut by the President.

Mayor Joines indicated that funding had been lost for CDBG as well as Energy Block Grant dollars.

Representative Foxx pointed out that the committee working on the Energy Block Grants is not an appropriations committee.

Mayor Joines stated that although there is no funding currently for the program, Senator Elizabeth Dole and Representative David Price have agreed to work on appropriations of the funding if made available. Representative Mel Watt's office has also been contacted to inquire about his assistance in those efforts. Mayor Joines indicated he would get information to Representative Foxx's office about the program.

Council Member Johnson stated that the City is working with other groups for a Summer Youth Program; however, the program needs additional funding to have a larger impact and perhaps branch out into a year round program.

In response to Representative Foxx's question, Council Member Burke stated that the Upward Bound program that had been operated at Winston-Salem State University had been cut out due to lack of funding. She indicated that the Airport Business Park and other corridors leading into the city are in need of funding for repairs and revitalization.

Mr. Lee Garrity, City Manager, indicated that staff would send information to Representative Foxx's office about the Airport Business Park and revitalization efforts along the Liberty Street Corridor.

Council Member Merschel pointed out that Winston-Salem hosts a downtown event each year called "Salute" as part of the viniculture efforts throughout the state and as a gateway to the Yadkin Valley wine industry. She invited Representative Foxx and her husband to attend this year's event.

(Council Member Besse entered the meeting at 12:45 p.m.)

Mayor Joines thanked Representative Foxx for her time and noted it was almost time to proceed to the trolley for a tour of the city.

Representative Foxx thanked the Mayor and City Council for inviting her to attend today's meeting and tour. She explained that her husband worked in downtown Winston-Salem for 14 years and expressed her support for all of the revitalization efforts downtown and in the surrounding areas. She noted that local officials should not have to approach the federal government for funding for these types of programs and pointed out that federal officials should be urged to cut taxes so that more money stays in the local municipalities where local officials know how and where the funding should be spent. Representative Foxx stated that although she is not ashamed to request funding for her municipalities, the earmarking system is not effective. Short of requesting earmarks, she stated she would do all she could to work on federal grant

funding. She urged the Mayor and Council to continue working on alternative methods to funding for addressing issues with the District Attorney's office. There may be no new funding of programs this year and she indicated she had voted against the latest budget because it included a large tax increase for everyone and much job loss for North Carolina. Representative Foxx pointed out that many manufacturing companies are being driven out of the country due to an increase in Federal requirements.

Adjournment: 12:59 p.m.