

11-3-2001 Minutes

An adjourned meeting of the Council of the City of Bedford, Virginia, continued from the November 2, 2001, meeting was held at Mountain Lake, Virginia, on November 3, 2001, at 8:30 a.m.

Members present: Mayor G. Michael Shelton; Councilman Larry D. Brookshier; Councilwoman Mary L. Flood; Vice Mayor E. Thomas Messier; Councilman W. D. Tharp; and Councilman Robert T. Wandrei.

Members absent: Councilman Thomas M. Padgett

Staff present: City Manager F. Craig Meadows; City Attorney W. W. Berry, IV; and Clerk of the Council Teresa W. Hatcher.

Mayor Shelton opened the meeting.

The City Manager spoke regarding problems getting volunteers for boards and commissions.

City Manager Meadows reviewed a list of proposed Legislative Priorities for the 2002 Legislative Session, as follows:

CITY OF BEDFORD

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2002 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

State and Local Tax Structure. The City requests that the General Assembly end its "analysis paralysis" and take action on meaningful restructuring of the state and local tax structure within Virginia. There have been several studies initiated over the past few years, and the results of these studies, if implemented, would greatly enhance the localities' abilities to serve its citizens.

Specifically, the localities should be assured revenue sources that are clearly reserved to local governments and guaranteed through the state constitution. Independent cities such as Bedford are struggling to meet increased demands for local service, while also meeting funding

requirements for state mandates. Further, there needs to be less dependence on the local real estate and BPOL tax to fund local services.

HB599 Funding. The City feels strongly that the General Assembly must honor its commitment to localities by providing full funding for HB 599, and that there should be no reduction in funding due to budgetary constraints at the Commonwealth level. This is a revenue source that was pledged to the localities by the Commonwealth, and any reduction in funding is required to be made up at the local level.

Electric Utility Deregulation. As a municipal electric provider, the City has the ability to elect to not participate in a deregulated marketplace in Virginia. However, we are very concerned that the state has not fully evaluated the impact that deregulation will have on the state as a whole, and we would encourage the General Assembly to carefully review the legislation it has enacted in this area.

Education Funding to localities. The City of Bedford requests that the General Assembly provide full funding for educational Standards of Quality (SOQ) initiatives, and in a manner that does not require a maintenance of effort provision to the localities. The current funding program creates an unbalanced partnership between the commonwealth and its localities, and requires the localities to fund a portion of the state's fair share for operating our local school system.

Taxing Authority. The City of Bedford strongly opposes any efforts of the General Assembly to reduce the taxing authority of local governments. Should the state pre-empt or remove taxing authority, then that authority should be replaced with a revenue source that ensures that our revenues will not decrease, produces the same level of revenue growth, and is not subject to further state actions to reduce funding.

Placement of Communications Towers in VDOT Rights-of-Way. The City opposes any legislation allowing placement of communications towers in VDOT rights of way without the request being submitted to the local zoning authority for approval.

On motion by Councilman Wandrei, seconded by Councilman Tharp, voted upon and carried, Council adopted the list of Legislative Priorities as reviewed by the City Manager.

The City Manager distributed information regarding electric deregulation. Mr. Meadows reported that the City is not required to participate in deregulation.

Discussion ensued.

City Manager Meadows stated it is the recommendation of the staff that the City does not take any action at this point regarding participating in electric deregulation.

Further discussion ensued. Items discussed: explaining the City's position on deregulation to its customers and determining the cost of generating, buying, and distributing energy.

On motion by Councilman Wandrei, seconded by Councilman Tharp, voted upon and carried, Council chose to do nothing about electric deregulation, to begin a study on costs, and to begin a proactive PR program to explain the situation to all customers.

City Manager Meadows recommended that Council establish formal financial policies dealing with transfers and fund balance reserves.

Discussion ensued.

It was the consensus of Council that the staff develop financial policies dealing with transfers and fund balance reserves and bring these back to Council for consideration.

There was a discussion regarding a combined facility for public safety (Fire Department, Rescue Squad, and Police Department). The lack of space in the Municipal Building was also mentioned.

The City Manager will begin discussions with the appropriate parties regarding this matter.

Council took a break from 10:07 a.m. until 10:25 a.m.

The City Manager stated that the temporary tourism facility is in place. A T-21 grant has been awarded to fund an architect to do a design for a permanent facility.

The City Manager spoke regarding personnel needs. Mr. Meadows stated an Assistant City Manager is needed in order for him to be more effective.

Discussion ensued regarding the use of the Old Grammar School.

It was the consensus of Council for the City/County Relations Committee to approach Bedford County and Central Virginia Community College as to their interest in a lease of the Old Grammar School building based on plans prepared by Brian Wishneff & Associates.

The City Manager stated that if there is an interest by the County in leasing the building, then he and the County Administrator could work out the details to present to Council and the Board.

City Manager Meadows stated that the Electric Department needs to be in one location as the present setup is inefficient.

The next item discussed by Council was the water moratorium for County customers and a strategy for long-range water/sewer needs.

On motion by Councilman Tharp, and after further discussion, seconded by Councilman Brookshier, voted upon and carried, Council approved the following: to have a consultant review the City's current water moratorium for County customers and review long-range needs in the City for water and sewer also recognizing that the County has developed a very aggressive expansion plan for its water and sewer operations, and help the City identify how it can take existing assets and parlay those for the best long-term future of its customers and gain some things through that process.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the renovation of the outside of the Municipal Building

Councilman Tharp suggested that Council address the issue of the Public Safety Building then address the Municipal Building.

The City Manager brought forth a request from the Bedford Area YMCA for additional funding for its capital campaign.

On motion by Councilman Brookshier, seconded by Councilman Tharp, voted upon and carried by a roll call vote, Council appropriated \$25,000 from the unappropriated contingency to the Bedford Area YMCA for Phase 2 of the capital campaign. Roll call vote follows:

Councilman Brookshier	aye
Councilwoman Flood	aye
Vice Mayor Messier	aye
Councilman Padgett	absent
Councilman Tharp	aye
Councilman Wandrei	aye
Mayor Shelton	aye

Mayor Shelton adjourned the meeting at 12:00 noon

