



**10 Robertson St.  
Virginia**

**The "New River" City  
August 22, 2016**

**Radford,**

**Regular Meeting Number 3 of Radford City Council, F.Y. 2016-2017**

The work session of the Radford City Council was convened at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers, 10 Robertson Street, Radford, VA. The Mayor of the City, Dr. Bruce Brown, was present and presiding. Other members of City Council present were Mr. Robert Gropman, Dr. Richard Harshberger, Mr. Daniel Keith Marshall and Mr. David Michael Turk.

Others present were as follows:

- Mr. David Ridpath, City Manager
- Ms. Jenni Wilder, City Clerk
- Mr. Basil Edwards, Economic Developer
- Mr. Donald Goodman, Chief of Police
- Ms. Melissa Skelton, Community Developer

The work session was a discussion of several items related to Economic Development. Mr. Ridpath started the meeting by discussing handouts, including a marketing packet for businesses, which is custom made as requested based on the businesses. He also went over agenda packet which contained community data, local incentives, a vacant property inventory and a report on the City's YouTube channel.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Marshall started the discussion by referencing the recent Radford News Journal editorial he and Mr. Turk wrote about economic development. The first idea of the article is to create an **Existing Business and Industry Retention Program**- Mr. Marshall stated that it is hard to recruit new business if we cannot retain the businesses we have. The first approach to retaining Radford's businesses is communication. Radford City Council Members and Staff need to do a better job communicating with businesses, to find out what is and isn't working. Mr. Marshall discussed direct meetings with larger employers: to begin a documented process of meeting at least quarterly with the major businesses, as well as sending e-mails, making a phone call, or dropping in on the small businesses. Mr. Marshall concluded the business retention discussion by stating that it is important that we start to have round tables and meetings that are purpose driven with businesses and business leaders, these meetings need to be purpose and goal driven. For example: Single Family home development or Parking in Downtown.

Mr. Gropman added that during these meetings with local businesses, staff and council need to educate business on grants available, singling out specific grants for specific companies.

Mr. Marshall then began to discuss the **Business Recruitment Team (Prospect Team)**- stating that this could be the most effective tool/resource Radford has. Team composition would be (Council member, staff member, 2 business/industry leaders, EDA member, and Commissioner of Revenue Office member). Mr. Marshall stated that the team needs to have specific goals: Timeline is as follows: Within two months of establishment, set priorities, and establish what the team needs from Council. Within four

months, there needs to be a marketing plan with specific areas to target. Within six months, the team should be meeting with clients, and bringing them in within eight months. Mr. Marshall concluded by saying that the team should provide City Council with specific recommendations on specific properties.

**Finders-Keepers program:** Mr. Gropman discussed his finders-keepers program and asked Mr. Ridpath if Mrs. Devilbiss had made any progress with the program. Mr. Ridpath stated that Mrs. Devilbiss was still on vacation.

Mr. Gropman and Dr. Harshberger discussed an idea they have been working on known as the **Reach Out Campaign-Internship Program with Radford University:** The idea would be that the Business Recruitment Team could oversee the campaign, but use interns from Radford University to send specific/targeted items to 50 companies in that business field.

Mr. Marshall addressed his third idea **Political Outreach**-by talking about the current approach used by Council to connect with Political Leaders. Currently council uses a scattered approach meeting with political leaders. Mr. Marshall stated that council needs to have a closer relationship with the political leaders because our politicians have a vested interest in Radford doing well. Mr. Marshall stated that Radford needs to let our voices be heard by attending the specified day in Richmond for communities to meet with legislators. Council should start discussing specific ideas with legislators four to six months ahead of time; these ideas should be met and agreed upon by City Council, but also with input from the EDA, RU, RCPS in order to come together for common community goals.

Dr. Harshberger discussed the **Vacant Property Inventory:** The inventory was put together by Mr. Basil Edwards. Dr. Harshberger stated that property owners should be patient when trying to find a business to lease or purchase their property and make sure the business has a good business plan, this will help keep businesses from going under, it is better to have nothing than to have businesses opening and closing continuously. If it looks like businesses will do well with Radford more businesses will be willing to open up.

Mr. Gropman discussed his **Shop Local Rewards Program**- At this point it is just a plan to build upon and work off of, which is a local incentive buying card where citizens can shop and dine local and get rewarded. Mr. Gropman mentioned that the Radford Chamber could work on this, with members.

Mr. Gropman also introduced his **Crisis Intervention Team Partnership Idea**- This would be a partnership with Radford University and the City to provide training for CIT workers. Mr. Gropman stated that we have all the pieces of the puzzle here to be trailblazers in the CIT field. This would allow Radford to manufacture people, creating a service to citizen with job opportunities.

Mr. Marshall asked Mr. Edwards what tools he wished he had in his tool box that would help him tomorrow with economic development. Mr. Edwards discussed cleaning up the look and feel of West End Radford and for property owners to take pride in their properties. Mr. Edwards stated that if Radford looks tired and run down then people will think we are a tired and run down community.

Mr. Edwards discussed how losing the Main Street Program of 2 years has hurt Radford as well. Main Street provide Radford with some tools and funding to attract business, retain business and clean up the Main Street of Radford. Mr. Edwards discussed how the economy is changing, there are fewer and fewer large companies and industries moving around, many communities are turning inward and looking at developing smaller businesses within the community, the Shop Local idea.

Mr. Edwards gave a shout out to the EDA for the new incentive for small business program they have been working on. The program is for small businesses that succeed after their first year in business, the



EDA would refund taxes paid in the first year, in an amount up to \$10,000. He then discussed how the EDA has \$315,000 in funds, but will need assurances from Council that their funding can be replenished if money is used in attracting a larger industry or on incentive programs. They are also working on an incentive program, which would help Main Street have a more uniformity and an established look.

Mr. Ridpath stated that CDBG funding could be used to clean up entrances to Radford, as well as for enhancement programs throughout the City. Also Code Enforcement is looking into ways to issue citations or change the ordinances to give property owners that extra nudge to clean up their space. Mr. Ridpath discussed that staff is responsive to code violations and that the consolidated plan for the next five years of CDBG funding is coming up and council can look at how they want to spend funds.

Mayor Brown discussed how Radford has already begun to enhance the community with the addition of street lights on West Main Street. He then discussed that possibly the Chamber could work with vacant storefront owners to put up signage that says "Watch Us Grow", which will help create the illusion of growth and encourage more development. Mayor Brown stated that Radford needs to work within the metropolitan region to attract businesses. Mayor Brown also discussed that he has talked with Mr. Ridpath about doing a three year citizen survey to get input on what citizens want from Council and Staff.

Mayor Brown then discussed an article titled *11 Signs That a City Will Succeed: Private/Public Partnerships that are real: For example: In Greenville, SC there is an elementary school for engineering, the city runs the school, but GE staffs it with engineers to teach and run events at their own expense. The article also states the city has or is near a research university and has a strong relationship with the community college. Radford has two universities nearby and should begin working with New River Community College to help bring the ACE program to Radford students, which would provide for free tuition, if students qualified. Mayor Brown stated that the final point mentioned in the article is that these cities have a craft brewery, we need to be able to attract and retain millennials to live within our community and a craft brewery is a way to do that.*

Mayor Brown continued by mentioning that Radford needs to work towards moving forward, City Council is elected to create the vision for staff to carry out and there need to be tangible goals. Mayor Brown mentioned these could be niche, boutique hotels, an amphitheater and cleaning up/revitalizing Downtown. The little things bring the big things. Mayor Brown discussed the new economy and stated that he believes there are job and development opportunities out there, but we are not communicating to leverage those jobs, it is the City's job to move into the new economy and create growth.

Mayor Brown stated he wanted to clear the air about Legislative Day at the General Assembly. Radford Council, including himself have been to legislative day and he finds it more effective to sit down with legislators here at home, when it is not so much like speed dating.

Mayor Brown also discussed development of a **City YouTube** channel that would feature businesses, Riverway and the Radford way of life. This channel would help in recruiting businesses to locate in Radford, he believes development of this channel is the responsibility of the PIO Office, not the Chamber or Tourism, but all should work together. He sees the timeline as follows, by January 1, 2017 have videos of the Riverway, and two to three businesses.

Mr. Marshall began to address the Master Plan of the Recreation Commission, which has development of an amphitheater in Bisset Park, which would be an excellent place for bluegrass festivals, gospel concerts, etc. He then discussed a study which listed Radford as a top five youngest community in the U.S. He said what makes Radford different is that we are missing the middle age work class; they are choosing not to live here because there are no jobs/housing for them. Mr. Marshall briefly discussed Main Street saying the program was a disaster and Council had to act, he would have to feel a lot different about the Main Street Program before bringing it back again.

Dr. Harshberger stated that we have a large group of young people who enter Radford for four years at Radford University, while they are here we need to make them feel welcome, they need Radford to feel like home.

Mayor Brown then stated that Radford needs has been working in the right direction with the regionalism approach to business, but that the city needs to figure out what we can afford to spend to generate more revenue. Sometimes you have to spend money to make money.

Mr. Turk discussed that four the past two years we have concentrated on regionalism and not on Radford. We need to talk about Radford. Council needs to stop doing the same things; people do not attend meetings because Council is not accomplishing anything. Mr. Turk stated that Council needs to get the committees up and moving forward and change the way they have been operating for the past two years and move forward for the next two. Mr. Turk also stated that he believes that wisdom of the experts and the more guidance from those, the better.

Mr. Marshall brought up an idea him and Mr. Turk thought of to help out local restaurants and encourage citizens to eat out in Radford. He said in the summer businesses suffer because students are gone. Their idea will be Radford restaurants, "**Hometown Sunday**" will be on September 11, 2016 and City Council is encouraging citizens to eat out in Radford that day. Citizens are encouraged to take pictures and post them to social media with #hometownsunday.

Mr. Gropman suggested that for the Business Recruitment Team, business owners who do not live within the City of Radford should qualify to serve on the committee, which relaxes the rules for City Boards and Commissions. Mr. Marshall said he knew of several business owners within the City, who he thought would be willing to serve and do a fine job without having to relax the rules.

Mayor Brown brought the meeting together and stated that now might be the time to assign tasks and recommend what Council wants to get moving on.

Mr. Marshall recommended Mr. Turk to serve as the Council Chair on the Business Recruitment Team, alongside Mr. Edwards, Ms. Flinchum, a member of the EDA and a business leader to be announced.

Mr. Marshall agreed to head up Legislative Day.

Dr. Harshberger and Mr. Gropman will serve together, alongside Mr. Edwards with Business Retention.

Mr. Gropman stated the Boards and Commissions should conclude their meetings with action items to bring to City Council.

Mayor Brown stated that there will be a retreat in September with Boards and Commissions where that can be discussed.



Mr. Ridpath agreed to reach out to Main Street and inquire about becoming an affiliate Member of Main Street.

Ms. Flo Graham, Chair of the EDA discussed briefly the EDA's new plan called "**Radford on the River**", which would include Radford University, as well as the ideas outlined by Mr. Marshall and Mr. Turk.

Mr. Joe Carpenter, Vice-President for Communications at Radford University said he liked what he was hearing in this meeting and the Radford needs to work toward creating conditions for businesses to grow and develop in the community and that starts with a qualified and well trained workforce.

Mr. Don Hill, citizen briefly discussed his idea for recruiting new businesses, which goes along with Mr. Gropman's Finders Keepers Program: He stated that business need to know what's available, and Radford has citizens who can serve as potential business recruiters, if you know somebody who owns a business, tell them about Radford. This plan would have a financial incentive for bringing a new business to Radford.

Mr. Lynn Burris, Radford School Board, said there will be a meeting at the School Board Office on September 13, at 6:00 p.m. on the **ACE Program**.