

MINUTES OF WORK SESSION  
OF THE NEWPORT NEWS CITY COUNCIL  
HELD IN THE 10<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM  
2400 WASHINGTON AVENUE  
JANUARY 10, 2006  
3:00 P.M.

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PRESENT: Joseph C. Whitaker; Charles C. Allen; Herbert H. Bateman, Jr.; Joe S. Frank; William F. Haskins; Madeline McMillan; and Sharon P. Scott (arrived at 4:16 p.m.) -----7

ABSENT: None -----0

OTHERS PRESENT: Edgar E. Maroney; Stuart E. Katz; Randy W. Hildebrandt; Neil Morgan; William P. Mitchell; L. A. Wallin, II; Len Ringler; Mabel V. Washington; K.M. Blanks; Al Riutort; John Hartman; Lisa Cipriano; Andy Stein; Stephanie Suttle; Mark Hargrave; David Kuzma; Chuck Young; Danny Butler; Greg Digiorgio; Wilma Moore; Mark Jordan; Iza Cieszynski; Joseph Street; Dr. Mostafa Sabbah; Everett Skipper; Cherry Croushore; Kim Lee; Mark Wimmer, Virginia Golf Cars and Batteries; and Jennifer Walker

I. Staff Presentation: eGovernment Project and Real Estate Web Information

Mr. Ed Maroney, City Manager, introduced Mr. Andy Stein, Director, Department of Information Technology (IT), to report on the eGovernment project and real estate web information. (A copy of the presentation is attached and made a part of these minutes.)

Mr. Stein noted staff began work over one year ago on an eGovernment project that would result in improvements in the appearance, content and usability of the City's web site. He explained Newport News needed to modernize its software base for delivering services over the web. Newport News was trailing its peers and the demand for services over the web would only increase over time. eGovernment, at its full potential, would no longer require citizens to come to City Hall because anything they wanted could be done through the internet by way of a Virtual City Hall.

Councilman Haskins inquired about who would have responsibility for answering a citizen request by way of a Virtual City Hall. Mr. Stein replied the work flow would be set up depending on the type of request and certain staff members would be authorized to answer the request; messages would be referred to designated staff members.

Vice Mayor Allen questioned whether management would be aware of requests in order to monitor response time. Mr. Stein replied management would have access to all incoming requests.

Councilman Haskins questioned how management would monitor productivity of its staff members. Mr. Stein replied the Virtual City Hall would take some time and it would take money to begin the process. The City must first invest in its web infrastructure and modernize the software base for delivery of services over the web.

Councilman Haskins questioned whether there was a cost benefit to invest funds to upgrade the City's web infrastructure. He inquired whether it would reduce personnel as a result of the City becoming more computer oriented. City Manager Maroney noted the City would possibly need

to hire additional personnel due to an increase of citizen complaints via the web. Mr. Stein felt citizens demanded functionality and noted benefits of the system would be realized at the point the City reached Virtual City Hall status. Before reaping the benefits of a Virtual City Hall, two to three stages of investment would be necessary. Councilwoman McMillan noted there would be a time management benefit.

Mr. Stein explained that IT was proposing an infrastructure with redundant network connections, servers and disks utilizing open source software. Open source software was public domain software which meant no one vendor owned it, and involved no licensing fees. IT planned to customize the open source software for local government use and to donate it back to the public domain. IT would encourage reuse and collaborative software development i.e. if one locality added video streaming capability then all localities got the functionality for free.

Councilman Haskins indicated it would be beneficial for IT to identify the aging system and the total cost to upgrade the system.

Mr. Stein noted it would cost \$491,000 to invest in the City's web infrastructure. He anticipated that eGovernment would go live by the end of 2006. He stated the Virtual City Hall would materialize in 2008, depending on funds, how fast the project took shape and how other localities shared enhancements with Newport News. Mr. Stein introduced Stephanie Suttle, Project Manager, to elaborate on the objectives, status and strategies of eGovernment.

Ms. Suttle stated the objectives of eGovernment were to improve the usability, content and appearance of the City's web site. It would include restructuring the site to effectively deliver essential information and online services to citizens, businesses, tourists, government agencies, employees and other visitors according to best practice web standards. Ms. Suttle noted in 2004 an internal IT group met and began research of eGovernment projects to find out what were state of the art projects, what sites were receiving recognition and why, what Newport News citizens wanted and expected and a gap analysis of [www.nngov.com](http://www.nngov.com). The group concluded that a set of best practices would be to get "the right content, to the right person, the right time, at the right cost." eGovernment project strategies were to communicate City leaders' eGovernment vision to all stakeholders, make enterprise level decisions by committee, adopt the use of a content management system, provide training and ongoing support for department content writers and publishers, build a new and improved City website that could easily support the integration of new services as they came online and support City initiatives to expand online delivery of constituent services. Ms. Suttle introduced Mark Hargrave, GIS Manager, Department of Engineering, to report on the Geographic Information System (GIS) on the web site.

Mr. Hargrave explained the GIS internet site was started in 2002 as an internal website to initially provide geographic information to City staff, improve job performance and communication between departments, help city employees to better respond to citizens' concerns and questions, and to provide one stop shopping with an array of information in one location. During 2005, the Department of Engineering begun customizing the Internet/Intranet to improve the overall look and functionality of GIS by making it user friendly, improving search capabilities for addresses and street intersections; adding a measuring tool for approximate distance, and providing better printing capability in

HTML and PDF forms. In May 2005, 300,000 GIS map images were available and produced from this web site. The data layers available on web from GIS include parcel lines, streets, aerial photography, schools, museums, parks, fire and police departments, and voting districts. Future data Engineering would like to include in GIS are flood zones, Planning Department projects, zoning, bike routes, Chesapeake Bay Preservation areas, and other data layers.

Councilman Haskins inquired about hospitals being added to GIS. He felt Engineering needed to analyze the City as a whole to determine what affected the most people. He questioned whether GIS had zoom in capability. Mr. Hargrave replied Engineering and Codes Compliance were in the process of including photographs of properties on the internal website. Councilman Haskins inquired of a time frame for photos to appear on the website. Mr. Hargrave responded they were working diligently to get the information on line as soon as possible. Councilman Haskins felt a schedule needed to be composed with dates and deadlines for implementation of the information on the website. Mr. Hargrave informed he would work on a deadline schedule.

Councilman Haskins inquired whether Engineering could include, from a design standpoint, information regarding the location of sewers and water and power lines into GIS and whether web users could add modifications to the system. Mr. Hargrave replied web users could view and click onto the information, but no design work or modifications could be done from a user stand point.

Councilman Bateman inquired whether there was logic suggesting that a fee be imposed for someone wanting to go beyond a certain tier in GIS. Mr. Hargrave replied Engineering was currently charging consultants for digital files.

Mr. Hargrave referred the floor to Mr. Joe Street, City Assessor, to report on real estate information on the web. Mr. Street reported Newport News was one of the earlier adopters of real estate information on the web. Property information, including assessments, has been available on the Internet since 2001. In 2005 they improved the presentation of property information and added a link to the GIS maps. The commercial and residential realm of the real estate information system allowed citizens to look up assessment and owner history, zoning, special conditions, subdivision, census blocks and information pulled from numerous departments.

Mayor Frank inquired why property owner names were not listed in the real estate information system. Mr. Street replied City Council made a decision in 2001 to leave the property owner names off the system due to privacy issues. Mayor Frank questioned the validity of the decision made in 2001 and whether City Council should revisit the issue. Mr. Street noted localities differed in how and what they displayed in their real estate information systems. Complaints against including owner names dealt with privacy issues and arguments against inclusion of names dealt with public information matters.

Councilwoman McMillan noted that the names of property owners were listed in the Charlotte/Mecklenburg County Real Estate information system and questioned how they handled the matter. Mr. Street noted Norfolk put property owner information on the web in 2001 and had to delete it shortly after due to problems.

Mayor Frank noted City Council's decision in 2001 was due to privacy issues as it related to judges, police officials, and security officials. Mr. Street noted another concern in 2001 was privacy issues as it related to the deployment of military personnel. Mr. Street stated that members of the Regional Appraisers Association praised Newport News for its real estate web site and noted it was one of the best, because it was user-friendly and contained a wealth of information.

Councilman Haskins stated he wanted a needs assessment done before implementation of the eGovernment and Virtual City Hall project. He questioned whether there was a need and justification for each aspect of the project. Mayor Frank replied it was clear that localities around the country were providing information over the web and the internet was a growing business. Residents expected to do business with their communities, just as they were doing with banks and other businesses. He felt Newport News had to implement the eGovernment project on behalf of its citizens. Councilman Haskins reiterated a needs assessment be conducted, just as it was done in the private sector, to determine what the City should and should not get. Mr. Maroney replied a needs assessment would be done in order to bring the City's web page up-to-date.

Councilwoman McMillan indicated she was pleasantly surprised that the cost to upgrade the City's web page was below \$800,000.00. She recalled receiving weekly emails from disgruntled citizens complaining about the City's web page. She felt the eGovernment project was a wonderful idea and the cost associated with it was nominal.

Mr. Stein explained that IT planned to implement Version I of the eGovernment project by the end of 2006. Version I was the foundation which included a new look, more reliability and was a starting point to Versions II, III, IV and V that included the Virtual City Hall. He felt the initial investment in Version I had to begin in order to continue with the analysis of how far to proceed with the Virtual City Hall.

Councilman Haskins stated he also received comments from citizens regarding the difficulty they had with obtaining information off the City's web site. He was concerned about the probability of a tax increase and felt a cost analysis needed to be done. He did not believe \$480,000 was all that was needed to update the web site. Mr. Maroney explained the \$480,000 was to start the renovation process of the City's web site. He stated the City would need to spend \$30 - \$40 million over the next ten years to upgrade the entire computer system. Councilman Haskins indicated that information should be included in the needs and costs assessment. He felt the City needed to look at where it was going, the initial cost and where the money would come from for the project.

Councilman Haskins questioned what the City would get for the \$491,000 appropriation to IT for the eGovernment project. Mr. Stein replied updating the web site was the first step toward the Virtual City Hall which would be a huge benefit to the City.

Mayor Frank felt City Council needed to move forward with the eGovernment project. He indicated as time moved on a needs assessment could be done to justify continued investment in the

project. He asked for City Council's support to move forward with the project. City Council was in concurrence to move forward with the project.

Mayor Frank inquired about Wi-Fi hot spots and noted Philadelphia and Atlanta were moving to a city-wide Wi-Fi hot spot. Mr. Stein explained the Wi-Fi hot spots allowed Cities to provide free or for fee internet access with a laptop. Wi-Fi hot spots were being pushed as an economic development incentive and as vitality for business and residents. He noted the biggest issue with Wi-Fi hot spots were who owned and paid for the service. There were legal and logistical issues involving security and cyber- terrorism if the City funded a Wi-Fi hot spot. Wi-Fi hot spots also required yearly updating due to fast paced technology issues. Other cities, such as Philadelphia, San Francisco, Atlanta, were aggressively pursuing the idea of owning Wi-Fi hot spots. The City of Hampton had incorporated a Wi-Fi hot spot through a partnership with downtown businesses who paid a vendor to provide the service. He felt Hampton was not an economical nor viable model for the City to follow. Mayor Frank asked the City Manager to research Wi- Fi hot spot service for Newport News. He requested that an RFP be put out to see what type of response the City received and what type of coverage area the City could get with a goal of providing the service on a city- wide or sectional basis.

## II. Residential Golf Cart Usage Policy

City Manager Ed Maroney introduced Mr. Everett Skipper, Assistant Director, Department of Engineering, to provide a brief presentation on the Residential Golf Cart Usage Policy. (A copy of the policy is attached and made a part of these minutes.)

Mr. Skipper reminded City Council of an Ordinance passed in the spring of 2005 putting the City in line with the State Code requirement regarding golf-cart and utility vehicle usage. The ordinance allowed City Council to designate specific areas for golf-cart utility vehicle usage. It required that the drivers be licensed, vehicles have specific safety equipment, and that City Council specifically designate each street that a golf-cart utility vehicle could be used on. It also required safety reviews by Engineering for City Council to include in its deliberations.

The Department of Engineering had received a request from the neighborhood of Village Green to allow cart utility vehicle usage. In order to establish a baseline for safety and public involvement, Engineering prepared a policy defining the general requirements for approval of golf-cart and utility vehicle usage in neighborhoods. The policy was prepared in consultation with representatives of the Virginia Golf Cart Manufacturer's Association. The Association objected to the requirements in the policy that a neighborhood have a specific golf cart vehicle location, such as a club house, and a petition showing that 75% of the neighborhood was in support of the project. Mr. Skipper noted the 75% was the same standard applied to areas requesting traffic calming measures. He further noted City Council was not required to act on the policy, but Engineering was sharing the information to make sure City Council was in agreement before implementation of the policy.

Councilwoman McMillan stated she had a problem with the golf cart utility vehicle usage due to safety issues. She noted subdivisions such as Denbigh Plantation did not have a common facility serving the area and she assumed neighborhoods had to meet all requirements. Mr. Skipper replied if a request came to the City to allow golf cart usage in neighborhoods not having a common facility, Engineering

would deny the request. Councilwoman McMillan shuttered at the thought of golf carts on Village Green Parkway in route to the pool and pool house. Although the speed limit was 25 mph, most motorists traveled above the speed limit. She questioned where the petitions would come from in an area such as Windsor Great Park, where the pool was in a community establishment. Mr. Skipper stated Engineering had not yet specifically defined a neighborhood.

Councilwoman McMillan questioned whether the previous ordinance passed by City Council, in the spring of 2005, was for utilitarian reasons for CNU maintenance personnel to move around the campus. She asked what was the purpose of allowing golf cart utility vehicles in neighborhoods. Mr. Skipper replied the State Legislature decided to provide local governments the authority to make the decision to allow golf cart utility vehicle on a case by case basis.

Mayor Frank reported two concerns from the Golf Cart Association in that they felt a homeowner's association should be allowed to approve the request for golf cart utility vehicles on behalf of a neighborhood and felt 75% of the residents was too high. Mr. Skipper noted that all homeowner associations did not include 100% of the resident population. In such instances one could not rely on the homeowner's association. He felt public involvement was important.

Councilman Whitaker noted that Newsome Park Townhomes had golf cart utility vehicles traveling throughout its neighborhood for many years. He questioned whether permission was now required from the City for a neighborhood to use golf cart utility vehicles. City Attorney Katz replied State law prohibited operation of golf cart utility vehicles on public streets, unless it was designated.

Councilwoman Scott questioned whether it would be the responsibility of Engineering to bear the burden of proof in order to prove that 75% of the people wanted golf cart utility vehicles in their community. Mr. Skipper stated Engineering would bear the burden of proof.

Mayor Frank questioned why guidelines were being used if a community was still allowed to come to City Council for approval after denial by the Engineering Department. He further questioned why there was not an ordinance implementing the guidelines. Mr. Katz replied the State Code required City Council to identify and designate a certain street or portion thereof for golf cart usage.

Councilwoman McMillan inquired whether City Council could vote to deny the usage of golf cart vehicles in residential neighborhoods. Mr. Katz replied the State law prohibited the use of golf cart utility vehicles in residential neighborhoods, except by an act of a locality's lawmakers. Mayor Frank replied if the City Council did nothing, golf cart utility vehicles would be illegal in Newport News, other than where they were already authorized. Engineering came up with guidelines wherein a process had been established to allow golf cart utility vehicle usage in certain neighborhoods. The question before City Council was whether the guidelines and process were acceptable.

Mr. Mark K. Wimmer, Virginia Golf Cars and Batteries, felt golf cart utility vehicle usage was a safe and alternative method of transportation. (A copy of information explaining the benefits of golf cart usage in communities is attached and made a part of these minutes.) He stated most municipalities were proactively looking at different modes of transportation due to rising fuel costs, air quality and a desire to make travel easier. Golf cart vehicles were economical and efficient, quiet and environmentally friendly, with no emissions, easier on roadways, used less space for parking, were an excellent form of transportation around a community, and were fun, safe and useful. He felt City Council

should be proactive and not require the 75% rule. He felt an Engineering report, either by Newport News or an independent, qualified, Engineering firm, was sufficient.

Mr. Skipper stated Engineering was requesting that City Council allow them to apply basic guidelines for golf cart utility vehicle usage in Newport News. This would provide City Council with a consistent package of information for each request received by the City.

Mayor Frank felt City Council should approve the guidelines as proposed by the Department of Engineering with inclusion of the 75% requirement.

Councilman Haskins suggested that the policy state 75% of homeowners in a neighborhood, rather than 75% of the neighborhood. Councilman Bateman stated he also had difficulty in defining the 75% rule.

Vice Mayor Allen questioned verbiage in the policy limiting golf cart utility vehicle usage only to communities having club houses and swimming pools. Mayor Frank inquired whether the City Council wanted to take the amenities out of the proposed policy that would limit golf cart utility vehicle usage only in neighborhoods that had a golf course, pool, clubhouse or other common facility serving the area. It was the consensus of City Council to take the amenity requirement out of the policy.

Vice Mayor Allen questioned whether State law allowed a dedicated right-of-way for golf cart utility vehicles. Mr. Katz stated that the vehicles would be operating on a public street. Mayor Frank explained the State Code allowed the City to designate a portion of a public street. Mr. Katz indicated the City would designate that the vehicles be operated on the right-hand edge of a public street, such as bicycles.

Mr. Skipper explained the policy would note that the cart could be used on the street or the designated path, whichever Engineering felt was appropriate for the segment of the street proposed for golf cart vehicle usage.

Mayor Frank inquired what would be done regarding where the vehicle would be parked, whether in the front or backyard, or driveway of a residence. He inquired about liability insurance, the age of people who operated the vehicles and safety issues. Mr. Skipper noted the ordinance required that the drivers be licensed, and did not address safety issues. Mayor Frank felt a policy needed to be adopted to include all of the desires of City Council regarding rules and regulations for the operation of golf cart utility vehicles before adoption of the policy. He felt it would afford City Council members who did not want to have the amenities deleted from the policy. Mr. Skipper replied he would put all the information together and report back to City Council in the near future.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS  
THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5:10 P.M.

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Jennifer D. Walker, CMC  
Deputy City Clerk

Joe S. Frank  
Mayor

A true copy, teste:

City Clerk