

MINUTES OF WORK SESSION
OF THE NEWPORT NEWS CITY COUNCIL
HELD IN THE 10th FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
2400 Washington Avenue
November 14, 2006
1:30 P.M.

PRESENT: William F. Haskins; Sharon P. Scott; Joseph C. Whitaker; Charles C. Allen; Herbert H. Bateman, Jr.; and Joe S. Frank -----6

ABSENT: Madeline McMillan -----1

OTHERS PRESENT: Randy W. Hildebrandt; Stuart E. Katz; Mabel V. Washington; Neil Morgan; William Mitchell; Alan Archer; Butch Blanks; Allen Jackson; Len Ringler; Al Riutort; Dr. Rhonda Sturgis; Iza Cieszynski; Florence Kingston; Reed Fowler; Gregg Jones; Deborah Everitt; Rhonda Everton; William Keeler; Lisa Cipriano; Michael Poplawski; Mike Barber; Roseanne Walters; Cleon Long; Jane Susan Frank; Don Ragland; Katie Whitehead; Stephen P. Terveer; Clayton Ashby; Sabine Hirschauer; Lottie Vincent; Cleder Jones; Kim Lee; and Jennifer Walker

I. Proposed Capital Improvements Plan

City Manager Hildebrandt introduced Assistant City Manager Neil Morgan to provide an overview of the recommended Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) and its relationship to the proposed capital financing and debt management policies.

Assistant City Manager Morgan acknowledged the Committee who helped with the CIP, Mr. Reed Fowler, Director, Department of Public Works, Mr. Mostafa Sabbah, Director and Mr. Everett Skipper, Assistant Director, Department of Engineering, Mr. Michael Poplawski, Director, Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism, Mr. William P. Mitchell and Mr. Alan Archer, Assistant City Manager, Ms. Izabela M. Cieszynski, prior Acting City Manager, Mr. John Hartman, outgoing Director, Mr. Gregg Jones, incoming Director, Department of Budget & Evaluation, budget staff members Rhonda Everton and William Keeler, Mr. Al Riutort, Director, Department of Planning, and Ms. Florence Kingston, Director, Department of Development.

Assistant City Manager Morgan indicated the City Code required the City Manager submit to City Council, no later than November 1 of each year, a multi-year CIP. He explained the CIP was a recommendation of major City project investments that identified cost and time frames for implementation, and was proposed to be adopted by January 2007. (A copy of the presentation, "City Manager's Recommended Capital Improvement Plan FY 2008 – FY 2012," is attached and made a part of these minutes.)

Assistant City Manager Morgan stated the CIP Review Committee developed a recommended CIP which ensured that the City's capital expenditures were in line with community needs and critical commitments, and could be accomplished with the City's financial capacity. The Committee used the following set of criteria as a guide in the evaluation of projects: 1) whether it was required by law; 2) whether it was based on previous commitments; 3) whether it was critical to maintaining City operations; 4) whether it created a positive return on investment; 5) whether it was required because of health and safety reasons; and 6) whether it was beneficial to citizens.

Councilman Haskins inquired of the criteria used to determine the positive return on investments. Assistant City Manager Morgan replied it varied by project, but would be more of a revenue estimate on a development type of project, and more of whether it reduced the energy cost on a City infrastructure project.

Assistant City Manager Morgan noted the recommended CIP was developed to include the self-imposed Debt Management Policy that called for an annual debt service not to exceed 9.5% of combined city and school revenue and designed to achieve three specific objectives: 1) establishment of a debt-to-assessed valuation ratio goal of 3.0% to be achieved within five years, with a limit of no more than 3.5%; 2) establishment of a Cash Capital Funding goal of using cash for 15% of the CIP expenditures in FY 2008, increased by 1% a year until reaching 20% at the end of five years; and 3) formulation of a rapid debt payout philosophy with 30% payout in five years and 60% payout in ten years. He stated based on projected borrowing needs for the proposed CIP, debt service obligations would be below the 9.5% threshold, with FY 2009 being the highest year at 8.2%. Based on the recommended CIP, the City would have reached the proposed Debt Management Policy goal of a debt burden as a percentage of full valuation that did not exceed 3% by 2011. The debt burden was projected to consistently decrease each year until reaching that level.

Councilman Haskins inquired whether the annual debt service of 9.5% needed to be revisited for a reduction, based on the tremendous increase in assessed value of real estate property. City Manager Hildebrandt replied that was why he recommended that the City look at the debt burden (ratio of assessed valuation to the debt service) in his Debt Management Policy. He agreed that 9.5% might not be the right policy in the future, but noted the City was reducing the debt burden down to 3% over the next five years in the CIP recommendations.

Councilman Haskins inquired about the percentage of debt if the City Manager had calculated the ratio by the old revenue. City Manager Hildebrandt replied he would provide the information to City Council.

Councilman Haskins felt the debt payout philosophy, with 30% payout in five years and 60% payout in ten years, was good if the City could afford it. He stated if most homeowners held that philosophy, as something they could do, they probably would not own their homes. He stated the City had a debt and tax rate greater than it had ever been.

Assistant City Manager Morgan stated the five year plan would bring the debt ratio down with cash capital going up and formalize a rapid debt pay-out.

Councilman Haskins felt the City needed to relate the five year plan to an average homeowner, by looking at their debt. He stated citizen's taxes were going up to take care of the City's ability to reduce debt. Eventually, citizens would not be able to afford to pay taxes.

Assistant City Manager Morgan stated the total General Fund Recommended Combined Funding and Self-Supporting CIP for FY 2008 – FY 2012 totaled \$261,367,000 (Total Cash Capital - \$29,590,000; Total GOB Funding - \$166,619,000; Total Grant/Other Funding - \$10,586,000; Total Self-Supporting Funding - \$54,572,000 (Sewer Rehabilitations - \$15,420,000; Solid Waste - \$5,872,000; and Stormwater Drainage - \$33,280,000). He noted the following funding recommendation category highlights: 1) Development – \$35,800,000 [GOB Funding] (South Jefferson Park Redevelopment; Southeast Redevelopment; City Center; Economic Development Initiatives; and Asheston). Over half of the Development category allocation (\$18,000,000) represented bonding authorizations reserved for economic development initiatives, which created a positive return in the form of expansion of the City's tax base. Allocating capital resources in this way addressed one of the issues raised by Moody's by ensuring that capital investments made through EDA/IDA for economic development were included in the CIP process. These investments over the next five years would involve, among other initiatives, the Southeast Urban Waterfront activities and possible City Center expansion. The City should also reserve monies for future matching grants from the Governor's Economic Opportunity Fund; 2) Community Facilities - \$4,400,000 [Cash Capital Funding] (USS Monitor Center; Virginia Living Museum; and CNU Warwick Village); 3) Transit - \$1,610,000 [Grant/Other Funding] (Transit Services Enhancement; and Citywide Bus Shelter Program); 4) Equipment - \$27,427,000 [Cash Capital Funding - \$9,400,000 and GOB Funding - \$18,027,000] (Fire Apparatus/Replacement Program; E911 Telephone & Logging Replacement; Public Service P25 Radio Subscriber Upgrade; Public Safety P25 Radio Subscriber Upgrade; and P25 Infrastructure Upgrade, Controller & Banding); 5) Parks & Recreation - \$16,585,000 [Cash Capital Funding - \$1,505,000; GOB Funding - \$12,550,000; and Grant/Other Funding - \$2,530,000] (James River Fishing Pier; Historical Preservation; Recreational Facilities; Newport News Park Sewage Pumping Station; Martin Luther

King Plaza; Golf Course Renovation; Park Facilities; Lee Hall Train Station & Relocation; and Historic Preservation); 6) Public Buildings - \$36,805,000 [GOB Funding] (Emergency Power; Fire Station #3; Justice Building Renovations; Public Safety Building Annex; North District Community Recreation Center; Public Safety Renovation/Jail Expansion; South Police Precinct; Fire Station #9; City Farm/Jail Study; Library Facilities Study; and Major Renovations & Repairs); 7) Schools - \$46,842,000 [Cash Capital Funding - \$9,685,000 and GOB Funding - \$37,157,000]. This category was taken directly from the School Division's last CIP submission to the City. Relying on cash for buses would save approximately \$3.8 million in interest costs; 8) Sewer Extensions - \$3,000,000 [Self-Supporting Fund] (Taliaferro Road Area Phase II; Bell King Road; Moyer Road; Warwick Boulevard/James River Drive; and Jefferson Avenue/Huber Road); 9) Streets and Bridges - \$32,326,000 [Cash Capital Funding - \$4,600,000; GOB Funding - \$21,280,000; and Grant/Other Funding - \$6,446,000] (Arterial Street Reconstruction & Resurfacing; Road & Pedestrian Safety Improvements; Richneck Road; Route 105 over C&O Railroad; Huntington Avenue, Bridge over Newport News Shipbuilding; Warwick Boulevard, Bridge over Lake Maury; Route 105 over Reservoir; Old Oyster Point Road; Mariner's Museum Bike Trail; J. Clyde Morris Boulevard, Bike Trail Phase IV & V; Warwick Boulevard Sidewalk Widening; Jefferson Avenue Sidewalk Widening; and Citywide Signal & ITS Upgrade); 10) Sewer Rehabilitations - \$15,420,000 [GOB Funding] (Pump Stations Nos. 44, 67, 70 and 87 Renovations; Ivy Avenue Sanitary Sewer Phase II; Pump Station Emergency Generator Program; Roanoke Avenue Sanitary Sewer Program; Warwick Boulevard Sanitary Sewer; Richneck Road Sanitary Sewer; Pump Stations Nos. 19, 76 and 99 Rehabilitation; Pump Station No. 85; Pump Station No. 37; Huntington Avenue Sanitary Sewer Program; Hampton Avenue Sanitary Sewer Program; Washington Avenue Sanitary Sewer Program; Washington Avenue Sanitary Sewer Program; Walnut Avenue Sanitary Sewer; Pump Station No. 91 Rehabilitation; Maple Avenue Sanitary Sewer; Jefferson Avenue Sanitary Sewer; Sycamore Avenue Sanitary Sewer; and Chesapeake Avenue Sanitary Sewer); 11) Solid Waste - \$5,872,000 [GOB Funding] (Denbigh Landfill Post Closure- Phase 2; Menchville Landfill Post Closure - Phase 2; and Denbigh Landfill Gas Project); 12) Stormwater Drainage - \$33,280,000 [GOB Funding] (Stoney Run Watershed; North End Huntington Heights; Remapping (Aerial Topo); GIS Storm Drain (Stoney Run & Lucas Creek); Groome/Woods Road; Lower Huntington Drain- Navy Housing; Lake Enhancement Program; Concrete Swale Contract; Citywide Drainage; Windsor Great Park; Hogge Pond Outlet Replacement; Green Oaks-Phase 3; James River North Hilton); 39th Street Channel Improvement; City Center North; South Rivermont Community; Browns Pond Culvert Replacement; Lower Moyer Road Drainage Improvements; Christopher Shores; Briarfield Road/Orcutt Avenue; Beechmont/Delaura/Sumter Drainage; Nicewood Drive Drainage Improvements; Woodhaven Area; Arline & Rexford Drive Drainage; Barbour Drive Drainage; Crestwood Drive Drainage; Country Club Road Drainage; Allison Road Drainage;

Glendale Pool; Shields Road Drainage Improvements; Ivy Farm Drainage Improvements; Hemlock Road Drainage; Dora Drive Drainage Improvements; Bayberry Drive/Wendfield Circle Drainage Improvement).

Assistant City Manager Morgan noted the major projects not included in the FY 2008 – FY 2012 CIP: 1) Development Initiatives; Peninsula Rapid Transit Project-Phase 1; Lee Hall Library; Campbell Road Improvements; Warwick Boulevard Enhancement (Rivermont); and Middle Ground Boulevard.

Councilman Haskins inquired whether it was possible to get a table from the revenue received in 2004 – 2007 from the self-supporting fund calculations of the sewer rehabilitations, solid waste and stormwater drainage. Assistant City Manager Morgan replied he would provide the information to City Council.

Councilman Haskins inquired whether it was possible to get original investment estimates of City Center as compared to factual figures to date. City Manager Hildebrandt replied those figures were forthcoming and he would provide the information to City Council.

Councilman Haskins stated the City must have criteria about the positive initiatives over five years related to the \$18,000,000 set aside for Economic Development Initiatives in the CIP. Assistant City Manager Morgan reiterated the \$18,000,000 was not an appropriation, but a plan should a major project materialize.

City Manager Hildebrandt explained the City was reserving the \$18,000,000 in the CIP Development category for economic development initiatives. This forced the City to look at expenditures against other expenditures that were infrastructure and facility related to ensure the City stayed within the financial boundaries it set-up.

Councilman Haskins inquired why the use of \$18,000,000 rather than \$2,000,000. City Manager Hildebrandt replied \$18,000,000 was used because the total development category was 20% of the CIP budget. He felt it was reasonable to invest 20% of the CIP on things that would generate tax revenue and development in the community. He indicated that was a policy decision that City Council had to make. He felt 20% was a worthy goal, given the City's financial perspective.

Councilman Bateman inquired whether the \$18,000,000 reserved for economic development was consistent with what other municipalities used.

Assistant City Manager Morgan replied the City had not received figures from other municipalities. City Manager Hildebrandt replied the \$18,000,000 was based on the City's current economic debt service, which was 20%.

Councilwoman Scott inquired what would happen to the \$18,000,000 should an economic development initiative not materialize in a certain year. She inquired whether the funding would be used for another critical project or be rolled over to the next fiscal year. City Manager Hildebrandt recommended that City Council roll the funding over to the next year rather than spending it for non-economic initiatives.

Mayor Frank explained the CIP was only a plan, which reflected City Council's policy and gave staff guidance. He replied if something came along that City Council felt compelled to do, the CIP could be changed.

Vice Mayor Allen stated the City should be reaping returns on investments it had already made. He inquired whether the City was meeting projected returns on its investments. He indicated those returns designated the level at which the City could continue to invest. City Manager Hildebrandt replied the Department of Development was actively working on the information, which should be available for City Council before the November 28, 2006 Work Session.

Councilman Haskins stated the City could not use the rationale of 20% economic development initiative investments, without looking at what the total economy was doing. He stated the City needed to look at what the national economy was doing before it talked using the 20% rationale.

Councilwoman Scott inquired whether the City Center met its forecasted projections before expanding its infrastructure to the east. City Manager Hildebrandt replied he would make sure the projections were met before expanding the infrastructure.

Mayor Frank inquired whether there was any federal funding for the Public Service P25 Radio Subscriber Upgrade, since it was a federal requirement. Assistant City Manager Morgan replied the City might be able to get at least \$1 million in federal funding.

Councilman Bateman inquired whether a real estate tax rate decrease would be possible if the City saved enough money during the course of the year, through its budget and expenditure process. City Manager Hildebrandt replied once City Council figured out what it had to spend over the next five years and whether they had enough

funding to do both was a policy decision. He felt there was not going to be enough money left over to pay for all the IT investments and the pension issues to realize a significant reduction in the tax rate from any surplus realized by the City.

Councilwoman Scott questioned the scheduled completion of the North District Community Recreation Center not occurring until FY 2012. Assistant City Manager Morgan replied the Center would be built in phases with final completion in FY 2012.

Councilwoman Scott stated the City was in a crisis, but noted it was totally unacceptable that the North District Community Recreation Center would not be completed before FY 2012 or beyond. She stated the North District Recreation Center should have been started in FY 2005. She felt City Council needed to revisit some of the other things that would be less of a service to the citizens and include the North District Community Center, which was greatly needed. She stated residents had been complaining and waiting for the Center, and indicated the North District had too often been put on hold. The residents did not want to be put on hold any longer. She encouraged the City Manager to revisit that line item in the CIP. City Manager Hildebrandt replied that was a matter that City Council would need to revisit. Staff had to decide whether to delay the facility or begin to develop it in phases. He indicated it was up to City Council whether they wanted to spend \$20 million for such a facility within the next two years.

Mayor Frank indicated he wanted a comprehensive study to see what other communities were doing around the country, in terms of delivering library services, rather than a facilities study as noted in the Public Buildings category of the CIP. Ms. Izabela Cieszynski, Director, Libraries and Information Services, stated the Library Facilities Study was a facilities and space use study. Libraries would look at its existing facilities, and how they were used by the community to see whether they could redesign and reuse them, in addition to looking for other areas where the City might need additional library facilities. The study would recognize that the role of the library had changed significantly in the community, and note that people were using libraries differently.

Vice Mayor Allen voiced his concern that City Council had talked about a library in Lee Hall since 1992 when he was first elected to City Council. He felt the \$100,000 allocated in the Public Buildings category of the CIP for the library facilities study should be used to pay an architect to design and conceptualize the library building in Lee Hall. He felt the funding for a study could be taken out of the general budget, and indicated the study was not a CIP cost. City Manager Hildebrandt stated if that was City Council's desire, he would find \$100,000 out of the City's reserves that could be

appropriated to start the library study, within the next couple of months, rather than wait until the new CIP.

Councilwoman Scott inquired why improvements to Campbell Road were eliminated from the Streets and Bridges category of the CIP. Assistant City Manager Morgan replied, as a transportation improvement, Campbell Road was not as critical as Richneck Road. City Manager Hildebrandt replied the improvements included in the CIP were of higher priority than Campbell Road.

Councilwoman Scott inquired how the Committee decided Campbell Road was not important, when so many people complained about the danger from the curbs and the big ditches along Campbell Road. She indicated Campbell Road should be closed at Warwick Boulevard so it would not be used as a thoroughfare if City Council was not going to make any improvements. Assistant City Manager Morgan replied Campbell Road was an important transportation improvement compared to other relevant proposed projects on the list. He stated Richneck Road was a through road, and noted citizens could take Bland Boulevard rather than Campbell Road.

Councilman Bateman recalled City Council previously discussed an approved condominium development behind First Baptist Church Denbigh, south of Bland Boulevard that recommended improvements on Campbell Road. He did not understand the City staff's version of improvements, but felt City Council congealed that something needed to be done to improve Campbell Road. He recalled City Council agreed that if they did not fix Campbell Road, in full, they were at least going to try to clean out the ditches and find a way for pedestrians to walk up and down the side of the street.

Mayor Frank stated City Council had appropriated funding for a professional engineering services agreement for the Campbell Road Improvements Project.

Assistant City Manager Morgan stated City Council had appropriated funds for a conceptual design of Campbell Road, and noted that work was ongoing. The premise was for a curb, gutter and sidewalk type of road.

Councilwoman Scott inquired whether a conceptual design agreement meant the City did the design to put on a shelf, only to be repeated again in ten years. She felt the design would be outdated in five years. City Manager Hildebrandt replied a conceptual design was not a detailed design.

Assistant City Manager Morgan concluded by noting that the CIP budget process had been an open and honest process. He thanked staff for their participation.

Councilman Haskins noted assessments had been completed for FY- 2005 – 2006, and inquired whether the City Manager could come up with an estimate of the increase of the total value of the City's real estate for FY 2007 – 2008. City Manager Hildebrandt replied he could provide City Council with a rough estimate for next year.

II. Ball Field Renovation and Capacity Expansion Plan

City Manager Hildebrandt introduced Mr. Michael Poplawski, Director, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, to make the presentation regarding better utilization and potential expansion of the City's recreation program ball fields.

Mr. Poplawski stated many residents throughout the City had complained that the City needed more athletic fields. He introduced Mr. Mike Barber, Assistant Director, Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism, to make the presentation. (A copy of the presentation, "City of Newport News Athletic Field Overview & Recommendation," is attached to these minutes.)

Mr. Barber stated when putting together and deciding on how to use an athletic field, the City considered the following characterized goals: 1) safe playing conditions; 2) plentiful play and practice areas; 3) aesthetically pleasing; and 4) health and durable turf. He stated the City currently had 87 multi-use outdoor athletic fields (35 lighted and 52 non-lighted) that served over 1 million visitors per year.

Mr. Barber stated the trends in field usage and demands was to work at developing higher quality fields suitable for extended play, increasing use/request by select/travel teams, increasing use by new interest activities such as field hockey/lacrosse, and moving toward year-around play. He explained the issues and concerns of athletic fields, actions taken to address concerns, immediate plans for updating and constructing fields, proposed CIP projects for FY 2008 – FY 2012, proposed CIP spending for FY 2008 – FY 2012, athletic field projects and facility needs beyond FY 2012.

Councilman Whitaker requested that the lights at the baseball field at Heritage High School be turned on daily at 5:00 a.m. for citizens who walked the track during the fall and early spring of the year. He noted the track was in horrible condition, and indicated he was afraid that someone could get hurt due to the deplorable conditions.

Mr. Barber stated he would look into the conditions at the Heritage High School track. He stated he would set the timer for the lights to come on daily at 5:00 a.m. and provide Councilman Whitaker with a key to turn the lights on and off.

III. Presentation by Food Bank

City Manager Hildebrandt introduced Mr. Don Ragland, Capital Campaign Steering Committee Chair, Foodbank of the Virginia Peninsula.

Mr. Ragland thanked the City Manager and each member of City Council for taking a tour of the Foodbank facility. He recognized Mrs. Jane Susan Frank, President, Foodbank of the Virginia Peninsula, Mr. Stephen P. Terveer, Chief Executive Officer, Foodbank of the Virginia Peninsula, Ms. Katie Whitehead, Capital Campaign Coordinator, and Mr. Andy Cowen, Past President and supporter, Foodbank of the Virginia Peninsula. Mr. Ragland shared his love for Newport News, and the plight of the Foodbank of the Virginia Peninsula (Foodbank). He referenced the Share program at the Foodbank that offered \$40 worth of food for \$18 to low income residents of the City. He acknowledged and introduced the members of the Committee and the Foodbank and asked City Council to help them with a facility to better help low income citizens. He introduced Mrs. Frank to continue with the presentation.

Mrs. Frank reiterated the Foodbank and the members of the Capital Campaign Committee were passionate about eliminating hunger on the entire Virginia Peninsula. She stated the Foodbank had 118 agencies that provided services in Newport News. Within the 118 agencies, there were Kid Café facilities that provided after-school care, mentorship, a safe environment to do homework and nutritious meals for school-age students that were on food subsidy and food assistance programs in Newport News. The Foodbank distributed food to 4,400 children and 1,800 families each month through those 118 agencies. She stated in order to continue meeting this requirement the Foodbank needed an adequate facility.

Mrs. Frank reported the Foodbank was built in 1986 with a capacity for storing one million pounds of food. She stated, last year, the Foodbank stored and collected over eight million pounds of food. During storms the facility collected four inches of water on the floor, which forced the Foodbank to store food on pallets, and during extraordinary rain storms, the Foodbank was flooded out. She stated the Foodbank reached 27% of the population in need of food services, which meant that three-out-of-four children were not getting the food they needed. The Foodbank also served a tremendous amount of elderly citizens, 67% of the working poor and 2% of homeless individuals.

Mrs. Frank stated the Foodbank needed a 40,000 square-foot facility at an estimated cost of \$5 - \$7 million. She stated \$1.2 million in pledges had been received from Ferguson Enterprises, Smithfood Foods, Bank of America, etc. The City of Hampton made a pledge for a \$1 million. Mrs. Frank asked City Council to commit to a pledge of \$2 million in support of relocating and building a new facility for the Foodbank.

City Manager Hildebrandt inquired about the timeframe for the \$2 million. Mrs. Frank replied the Foodbank was asking for a commitment over a five year period.

Mayor Frank inquired about the total amount committed to the Foodbank beyond the City of Hampton. Mrs. Frank replied pledges were received totaling \$1 million from Ferguson Enterprises, Smithfood Foods, Sentara and Riverside Hospitals, United Way and Bank of America. Commitments were sought from Northrop Grumman, Towne Bank, Wachovia, Old Point Bank, Virginia Natural Gas, etc.

Councilwoman Scott inquired whether a location for the new facility had been determined. Mrs. Frank replied the Foodbank had found a few interesting locations throughout the City, one in the Northern district.

Councilman Haskins suggested that the Foodbank advertise on City-wide television programs with meaningful statistics.

Councilwoman Scott stated she was aware of how great the need was and indicated that was the reason she held her annual December food drive. She gave the Foodbank her full support.

Councilman Bateman stated the facility would meet basic needs for citizens of Newport News and the entire Virginia Peninsula, which would also play into long-term emergency preparedness.

Councilman Whitaker stated he was aware of the need and recognized the need in his community daily.

Mayor Frank inquired whether there was consensus among City Council to support a \$2 million pledge to the Foodbank of the Virginia Peninsula. There was a consensus among City Council for a \$2 million pledge to the Foodbank of the Virginia Peninsula.

Mrs. Frank thanked City Council for their support and concern.

VI. HRT Youth Ride Program

City Manager Hildebrandt introduced Mr. Michael Poplawski, Director, Department of Parks, Recreation, & Tourism, to head the presentation. Mr. Poplawski introduced Dr. Rosanne Walters, Director, Office of Children, Youth and Families, who introduced Mr. Cleon Long, Co-Chairperson, Commission on Youth, to give the presentation. (A copy of the presentation, "Ride On Bus Program," is attached to these minutes.)

Mr. Long referenced the Newport News Youth Transportation Survey taken in the fall and winter of 2004 and 2005, where 61.4% of respondents stated they had ridden a city bus at least once, and 53.4% stated they would increase their use of bus services if the ride was free or at a reduced fare.

Councilman Haskins inquired about the age of the youth respondents that were included in the survey. Mr. Long replied it involved 13 – 18 year-old students that had access to a car.

Mr. Long noted the following recommendations as a result of the survey: 1) Expand the Rec-Ride program to include anytime when school was not in session (school holidays, breaks and after-school operating hours); 2) Encourage neighborhood-based youth programs; and 3) Encourage programs to budget bus fare and other forms of transportation to meet the needs of participants when neighborhood programming was not possible. Mr. Long introduced Mr. Poplawski to continue the presentation.

Mr. Poplawski explained particulars of the Summer Rec-Ride Program as compared to the proposed Year Around Youth Ride Program. He stated the Summer Rec-Ride Program was started in 1994 for Newport News residents, ages 6 – 16. He stated the Year Around Youth Ride Program included youth ages 6 -17 and allowed Newport News youth to board buses in Newport News and Hampton.

Mayor Frank inquired about the risk associated with encouraging and promoting six-year old children to ride a bus, and whether they had to be accompanied by a parent. Mr. Poplawski replied parents were required to register their children for the program and assume responsibility for any risk associated with riding the bus. Since 1994, he was not aware of any incidents that occurred with children riding the buses in the Rec-Ride Program.

Councilman Haskins inquired about liability should something happen to a child.

Ms. Cathy Young, Revenue Manager, Hampton Roads Transit (HRT), stated the parent or guardian would advise the driver what bus stop to let off the child.

The bus driver would then keep an eye on the child and make sure he/she got off at the correct bus stop.

Mayor Frank inquired about who would be responsible for the child once he/she got off the bus, and indicated City Council needed to be mindful of what they were doing. He felt a parent or guardian should be required to accompany a six-to-nine year old child on the bus. He felt the City needed to look into the matter further.

Councilman Haskins inquired about HRT's liability should something happen to a child. Mr. Clayton Ashby, Chief Planning Officer, Hampton Roads Planning, replied he would get the answer to Mr. Haskins at a later date.

Mayor Frank felt the City needed to address the issue of allowing six-year old children on the bus alone. Mr. Poplawski indicated he would look at the liability and age restriction issues and provide City Council with an assessment.

Councilman Scott inquired whether the bus card could be offered at the Boys & Girls Clubs and places where youth frequent. Mr. Poplawski replied that would be possible if numbered swipe cards were issued, rather than personalized identification cards.

Mr. Poplawski noted if the Year Around Youth Ride Program were adopted by City Council, it would begin in July 2007.

There was a consensus among City Council to move forward with the Year Around Youth Ride Program once the age and liability issues were addressed.

V. "Framework for the Future" Survey Team Report

Mayor Frank indicated this item would be deferred until the November 28, 2006 Work Session of City Council at the request of City Manager Hildebrandt.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS,
ON MOTION, COUNCIL ADJOURNED AT 5:24 P.M.

Jennifer D. Walker, CMC
Chief Deputy City Clerk

Joe S. Frank
Mayor
Presiding Officer

A true copy, teste:

City Clerk