

# Town Manager's Weekly Report: (# 151)

For the Week-Ended: Friday, January 15, 2016

- As was mentioned under Town Manager's Report at the Tuesday Board Meeting, The Police Department received a check in the amount of \$2,500 on Monday, which represented the receipt of a Grant from the Walmart Foundation which will be utilized to defray some of the costs of the planned installation of in-car computers. This follows on the heels of a similar receipt by the Dallas Fire Department of \$2,500 from the same Foundation Grant program for fire prevention materials.
- Contractors, Engineers, and Town staff all met on Thursday to establish schedules and coordination for the Trade Street intersections project. Between the complete change-out of the traffic signalization at the Holland and Gaston Street intersections, as well as the total reconstruction of the sidewalk-bump-outs, storm-water systems, cross-walks, and ornamental hard-surface areas, along with repaving, this project is very complex and requires an incredible amount of planning and coordination –particularly given it is being constructed on an NCDOT highway with 16,000 cars per day moving through. However, our local contractors, Tarpon Construction and BERNCO, will be working very closely together, and with Town Electric and Public Works staff, as well as in close coordination with NCDOT to assure as smooth a construction process as possible. Remember, this is an NCDOT project which must meet all NCDOT requirements for traffic control, safety, and construction specifications, so while Town money is paying for it, we have no say in the manner that it ultimately is pursued. To that end, the plan is to begin on February 1<sup>st</sup>, which will involve the closure of the East-bound lane from Oakland to Gaston, and thereafter, for approximately the 3-4-month duration of the project, one lane will be closed to traffic at any given time. There will be traffic disruption and inconvenience, but the Town can't impact the process – that will remain the authority of NCDOT. We will work to get the word out, including placing notice on the Electronic sign, of pending lane closures. We will also provide updates as soon as we hear them from Contractors, engineers, or NCDOT representatives.
- Associated with the intersection project, we have also authorized the demolition project on the 8-foot-wide building on West Trade to prepare for the bump-out/walkway portion of the Parking lot project so that a seamless re-location of the street clock can occur as work on the Holland intersection progresses. That "bump-out" portion of the parking lot project is being split out and added to the Tarpon contract so that efficiencies and coordination can be assured. This way the same contractor will wind up doing all the work on Trade Street and not have to rely on another contractor to coordinate efforts. There will be economic savings as a result of this as well.
- The preliminary negotiations with Duke Energy over how to treat their expenses related to Coal Ash Mitigation going forward are continuing behind the scenes. Unfortunately, most of our

colleague municipalities who are also Wholesale Purchase Power customers have, in effect, broken away from our collective negotiating group, because they have Contracts roughly half the duration (10 years versus our 20 year-agreement) as we do and, as a result their interests tend to diverge from ours on this matter. As a result, we are now aligned mostly with Lockhart Power, a mid-sized, South Carolina provider and will have far less leverage and/or influence in final results of any agreement negotiated or imposed. Having said that, however, there are a number of factors that would appear to make this issue not nearly as economically negatively impactful to us in future years. The bottom line is that while we will continue to negotiate assertively on this matter, I do believe we will be able to reach ultimate agreement with Duke, Short of Litigation before FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) that will leave the community in a position where there will remain a very limited upward pressure on Electric rates from this issue alone. We will update you all as we hear anything further.

- Today we issued a Request for Quotes to every firm that we were aware held interest for the upcoming Coverage Year for the provision of Comprehensive Employee health care Coverage. We have asked that the Quotes be returned by no later than 5:00 p.m. February 26<sup>th</sup>, so that the Board can evaluate the results and make a Decision at its March Board Meeting –then allowing for implementation with the coverage year beginning April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.
- Adam Ragan, the Gaston County Elections Director will be here this afternoon (Friday) at 2:00 p.m. to tour and re-evaluate the Civic Building for possible use again as one of the Town's two Election polling places. He was very receptive to our letter and the Board's recommendation and was quick to set up a meeting to come out and take a second look. We will see what occurs as a result.
- Todd Michaels, of ZT Builders signed his contract today for the construction of the new Gazebo in Town Square and expects to begin construction by sometime near the middle of next week. Thereafter, he expects construction to last approximately two (2) months.
- Don't forget that Monday morning (Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>) the Board of Aldermen will be meeting at the front entrance of the Building at 130 West trade Street to get a tour of this city-owned building.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**James M. Palenick, Town Manager**