

CITY OF EDEN, NC

A special meeting (Retreat) of the City Council, City of Eden, was held on Friday, February 11, 2000 at 9:00 a.m. at The Summit Conference Center, 339 Conference Center Drive, Brown Summit, North Carolina.

Those present for the meeting were as follows:

Mayor:		Philip K. Price
Mayor Pro Tem:		John E. Grogan
Council Members:		Ronald H. Reynolds
	(absent)	Ronald L. Janney
		Christine H. Myott
		Garry Tudor
	(absent)	William W. Rorrer
		C. H. Gover
City Manager:		Radford L. Thomas
City Attorney:	(absent)	Charles J. Nooe
City Clerk:		Kim J. Scott
Representative from News Media:		Reid Baer, <u>The Daily News</u> , Alex DeGrand, <u>Greensboro News & Record</u>

Meeting Convened:

Mayor Price welcomed everyone in attendance and introduced Ms. Ginger Booker, Facilitator, from the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments.

During the first portion of the meeting, Ms. Booker asked Council Members to complete the following sentence: "For today to be a success for me, BLANK needs to happen." The BLANK included topics such as economic development, industrial park; customer service, responsiveness; role of receptionist; improving services; performance based budgeting; improvements in infrastructure; increasing revenues, fees, city financing; getting staff working closely together, morale; pay schedule; appearance issues, junked cars, storage; staffing; modifying and enforcement of ordinances; animal control; solid waste and recycling; mobil equipment; public relations; and TIP-four lane Hwy 14.

Due to the large number of topics the Council Members were interested in discussing, Ms. Booker guided the Council through the next step which was to select three or four to further discuss. She explained that she would provide notes to the Council from the retreat for them to review along with the Clerk's minutes from the meeting. She also mentioned the possibility of another work session that would provide another opportunity to discuss those topics they would not have time to cover during the retreat.

The first topic that everyone present agreed to discuss was economic development; industrial park.

Council Member Gover recalled an article in the paper about a number of people leaving the county everyday going to different areas to work and the number of people leaving Eden going to different areas to work. He stated, in his opinion, they needed to look at something that would draw labor in for people to move here and live.

Council Member Tudor stated if he went out looking a job, that was his one shinning moment to put his best foot forward. He mentioned coming come up with a way to put Eden's best foot forward. He added that should include Rockingham Community College, the public system, water and people who have a tradition of getting up everyday and going to work. He added that he did not want to bring in just things that would pollute the air and water or give noise and odor problems. He stated he thought if they could market themselves, then they would have the ability to do (attract) anything out there.

Council Member Gover stated in all due respect to Mr. Don Moss and the Economic Development people, that he (and others) were developing the county so it was hard for them to work for just one (city). He suggested Eden doing something for themselves, also. He suggested meeting and throwing things out on the table to get something going as it was hard for those (Mr.

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Moss and others) to develop Reidsville, Madison, Mayodan, Stoneville and Eden all at the same time.

Mayor Price added that Eden was well blessed with sewage capacity which was equally or more important to an industry and it should be a "star" for Eden.

Council Member Grogan explained that it comes down to location. The big thing with economic development that he hears is, number one, profit when talking about shell buildings or land where they have already done the preparation or studies as far as feasibility. He noted there were things in place. He noted that most of the time an industry would contact the Department of Commerce that they were looking to locate in North Carolina. They say what they are looking for, acres, the type of investment, the kind of people they would need, and then those people bring it down to a regional or local level. He noted that on an initial visit, they may look at five sites in one day. He noted that in nine out of ten times, people are not aware someone was looking. They then come down to a short list. When they get to the short list and the people make a visit, an economic developer from the state, county or even in Eden, get players that are tabled that can add back to that meeting with that prospect. If that prospect is looking for labor that was where the Employment Security Commission comes in and talks about labor, training of the work force where they bring in the Community College and the state where they set up specialized training programs for the new employees. They will send people to wherever the manufacturer is located and train them and let them come back and train others. Someone from the utilities comes along with the city and what they can provide. Those decision makers are at that meeting to answer questions for that particular business or industry. They then get down to two sites and ask what each can do to help in the company's relocation. At that point, they begin to place their "marbles" on the table. He stated that eventually whoever comes up with the most "marbles" at that time is where the company would go.

Council Member Gover asked how they could capitalize and mentioned the South Boston and Martinsville Industrial Park and maybe, going around visiting those places to possibly learn something from them.

Council Member Grogan stated that the study that was being done by the city, the Committee of 100 and the county for the industrial park on the Harrington Highway was approximately 90 percent complete. They were ready to make a recommendation and the next step was probably getting a survey.

Council Member Gover mentioned taking the connector off on Highway 29, coming across the Berry Hill Bridge and hitting Highway 58 to capitalize on some of the land to the east (of Eden). He noted there was approximately 1600 acres on the east side where they have water, rail, highway and the connector from Highway 29 to Highway 58.

Council Member Grogan replied that the answer was "location" as they would be getting further away from the airport and the interstate. He also mentioned the topography of the land.

Council Members Gover and Grogan continued their location discussion. Mayor Price mentioned that the people from the state were going to come back and talk to the Council, but several years ago they came and had a conversation about where they (Eden) was in the world and how they could compete. The biggest thing Eden has is a very well trained labor force and a lot of them leave town everyday. He noted that in planning for the future, the present road system, the Transportation Improvement Plan, which is a long term plan, said they need to think about Highways 73 and 220. The second thing was the value of the airport/transportation. He went on to explain that Eden had to have a park that would be above average in comparison to others as they were all sharing the same thing, labor.

After further discussion, Council Member Tudor asked what would be the first step in doing something for this year. Mayor Price explained that the Council had previously agreed to do a study and the second step would be the additional parts to that study. There had been a lot of leg work for the past year and a half to two years, then they would have to have ownership, land owners involved and agreements with them. He again reiterated that they needed to build something premier to be different.

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Council Members further discussed locations of the city for possible industries to locate on both the east end of town and the Harrington Highway site. Council Member Gover asked if at this moment, the city only had 68 acres that they could offer someone in the City of Eden to which Council Member Grogan replied there was approximately 12 to 17 left in the Eden Industrial Park, but in all probability when someone buys the shell building, the first thing they would ask for would be more land and if it is a big enough investment then they would let them have the additional land.

Council Member Gover stated it looked as though the city could capitalize on some land, as it was not getting any cheaper, but it may pay them to take on another 100 to 200 acres somewhere close by and offer something different than just that 68 acres. Once they fill that, then they would not have anything else as a tax base in Eden.

Council Member Grogan stated that one thing he did not mention was that there was other land that is in this industrial zone where the park is that is owned by Fieldcrest Cannon on New Street. The things was getting the maps and topography, how big the sites are, as he understood they had 500-700 acres. He then referred to his earlier remark of location.

Council Member Tudor stated that there was an assumption that Eden has lots of water so what was the problem. He noted that Greensboro did not have lots of water but continued to grow. He questioned why a company would locate where there was no water. Then the people who do not have any water come to Eden and say they want to do inner basin transfers of water.

Mr. Thomas noted that in looking at the types of industries located in Greensboro, not all of them have been large water users. They were not getting large water users.

Council Member Gover asked if they would be increasing the population of Stoneville, Madison and Mayodan by having a (industrial) park west (of Eden) and would Eden's population decrease. He stated he knew they would have to annex, but asked if the houses would be built to the west or in the city.

Council Member Grogan stated that was something that would be on this month's agenda, extending the extraterritorial district. He stated to answer Council Member Gover's question, he did not know. It was like the people who work at Rexam or Miller, 80% of those people who work at Miller do not live in Eden.

After further discussion, Mayor Price added that they needed to make Eden pleasing to the young people. He explained that he pushed for the park because it would be something good for the young people and to draw them. He stated he felt good about Eden. He added that there were a lot of good things happening in the community and if they would just get over the hill, that they would have a little more latitude and freedom to have conversations about exactly which way they were going to go. He stated they had been hit hard in the community with the loss of 2000 jobs that result in revenue problems.

Council Member Grogan added that they could not limit a work force just to the city limits.

Increasing Revenues (second Topic):

After further discussion, Council Members continued with the next topic which was increasing revenues.

Council Members began by discussing the sources of revenues which include: taxes, fees, utilities – water and sewer, waste collection; reimbursement of sales taxes, inventory taxes, and financial fees.

Council Member Myott pointed out that the largest share of property taxes come from industries to which Mr. Thomas mentioned the payment in lieu of agreements.

Council Member Grogan asked for the real property tax base which Mr. Thomas replied it was approximately \$650,000,000. He noted that it had been increasing a couple of percent per year. Council Member Grogan noted that re-evaluation had done some of it along with the annexations.

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Council Member Grogan expressed a concern over internet sales which were three and four billion dollars this year and they were talking about ten billion next year. He also mentioned the possibility of Bethany incorporating like Wentworth which will take more away from the municipalities. In addition, with re-evaluation some increased; however, a lot go down due to older properties and manufacturers whose equipment is depreciated.

Council Member Myott added that the tax rate was also dropped two cents.

Council Members discussed the Enterprise Fund for solid waste and water and sewer. Mayor Price noted that he was not happy with the solid waste being broken down as he wished they would take the solid waste fee out of the General Fund and charge everyone for their actual costs. He stated he proposed to reduce the tax rate down and let solid waste stand on its own. Council Member Grogan added that water and sewer rates were the same way.

Council Member Gover stated that maybe they were not doing enough in communications.

Mr. Thomas gave an example to explain the "pay as you throw" program whereby if someone were generating a full container (of garbage) while he was generating only half of a container every other week, then they other person would pay more because they would be generating more and contributing more to the waste stream.

Mayor Price noted there were some very good things going on in the community, but they have discovered that they do not communicate. He noted that he had people in the last few days to talk with him about why didn't they do something about the industrial park and police matters.

Mayor Pro Tem Grogan explained that (in the pay as you throw program) information was distributed to every person involved as well as information was placed in the newspaper. He noted it was like everything else, people get the information and put it in the trash and get upset because someone had not explained it to them.

Council Member Myott mentioned that Mr. Jerome Adams has a column in the paper every two weeks. She noted that his information tells the citizens everything they need to know about trash.

Council Member Gover mentioned coloring the lids of the garbage containers which would indicate a certain amount of garbage. He gave as an example: a green lid would have their trash picked up every week whereby those with a blue lid would be picked up every three weeks. That would cut the time on going around picking up trash and people would not put it out as often.

Council Member Grogan mentioned another method such as bags that could be purchased from the city. He noted there were a lot of ways of doing this, but it was just a City Council willing to bite the bullet. He further mentioned that an Enterprise Fund was started ten to fifteen years ago and they did (increase it by) a dollar every other year when there was not an election. Then, some things happened and it all fell apart.

Council Member Grogan also mentioned the fact that the new city hall was purchased with cash. He noted that when he purchased his house, he paid a lot of interest. If the city had borrowed the money and paid it over a period of time, it would have helped the cash position, then they would not have heard all the talk about the city being broke, etc. He noted that the city was not broke, it just did not have the cash as it was spent on the property. He noted that Eden has to make some decisions about those things and the time is here.

Council Member Gover questioned going up on water and sewer or taxes every time they "stump their toe" as they need to look at why they stumped their toe.

Council Member Grogan stated when they first set up the water and sewer rates, the people who set it up said that they needed to review them.

Mayor Price noted that those rates were set up to go in a Sinking Fund and every year there was supposed to be an increase to supplement until the bonds were paid off. He mentioned that the water and sewer rates have been subsidized by borrowing from the bond money and that has run

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out. They did not increase the rates over the years like the people who set it up said to do. This has put the city in a position where the borrowed money is gone. That money was supposed to have gone on until the bonds were paid off and then the city was to increase the rates to go along with the increase in cost of production. It just was not done.

Council Member Grogan noted that he had been on the City Council for sixteen years and most of the budget work sessions began with a direction to the City Manager that there would be no increase in fees, and taxes, and to work the budget out.

Council Member Gover mentioned that there was industry in the city at that time to help offset some of it.

Mr. Thomas added there were other changes in the economy outside of things under the control of the City Council. He noted that they were susceptible to inflation and changes in the economy. When Wentworth incorporated, the city lost approximately \$60,000 per year in state shared revenue. That was a penny less on the tax rate of revenue that they were earning. He explained that in order for them to continue to provide the same service and realize the same kind of revenue, technically, they should have gone up on the tax rate by a penny. He later added that with the "pay as you throw" concept, one thing they have to remember is was where one may pay less than the other for the solid waste, there was still going to be a flat line revenue requirement that they were going to have to meet. He stated if one was paying less then that meant that another would have to pay more so that it all works out to be revenue neutral and they can still pay bills.

Council Member Gover mentioned that he was sitting in at a Council meeting whereby the auditor dropped a two million dollar bomb on them (being short two million). He explained that he later asked the Finance Officer and the auditor why they waited until then to drop the bomb as surely they saw they were getting in trouble before now. He questioned Mr. Sharp as an officer, why he did not flag something before and his reply was that he was telling them what he was supposed to tell them.

Mr. Thomas noted that it was conveyed to the Council that the \$900,000 that they came up short was because of the Debt Service Fund being paid out. They had been talking about that for a year or more whereby they were coming up to a point where they were running out of that money. He also mentioned that when he came to work there that those were the things that the Finance Committee was talking about and keeping in front of them. Then, they did away with the Finance Committee and the opportunity was not there to examine those things and to make sure that it was getting the attention that was needed. That \$900,000 problem that he requested a rate increase in the budget would not address half of that because he had cut four hundred and some thousand dollars out of the budget to start with. Then he was told that there would not be a rate increase, go find the rest of it, and some things could suffer because of doing that. Contributions are not being made to the Construction Funds so that they can keep the programs in place in replacing two inch water lines and repairing sewer lines and building new lines so something has to be sacrificed. There are only "x" number of dollars in the pot. There are only one or two ways of putting more dollars into the pot. One is trying to find a means of selling more of the product which they are always trying to do with industrial recruitment. The other way is to increase the rates. He noted that they could not cut costs but so far. They have to have people running the plants and they have to do maintenance.

Council Member Gover stated that Mr. Thomas told him the other day that all of a sudden that he and his department head found out they were overloaded with crew leaders and operators and he did not know how it got that way. He asked if they were slipping through the cracks with everything else like that.

Mr. Thomas noted that the issue about the money did not slip through the crack. It had been talked about. What they were not able to plan for was Pluma's bankruptcy.

Council Member Grogan stated that most everything they were talking about started with the City Council. He stated that if they went and talked to a department head, he guaranteed that they would moan, groan and cry. When the City Council has their discussion and turns around and says they need to cut and everyone questions if they were going to get their job cut. He gave for example, with water and sewer, four years ago they had an outside company to come in and

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do a study about outsourcing. The whole purpose of the study was to get people's attention so they could cut positions. He added that they could not cut but so much from a department, but expenses continue to go on.

Lunch:

Council Members took a break from noon until 1:00 p.m. for lunch.

Council Member Reynolds left the meeting:

Council Member Reynolds left the meeting after lunch (approximately 1:00 p.m.).

Meeting Continued:

Council Members briefly discussed the next steps for the industrial park.

Ms. Booker asked Council Members in wrapping up the topic if there was anything they could like to add to the list to which Mayor Price mentioned reviewing fees whereby there was a policy on burned houses of \$100 and the city cleaning this up. The actual cost is more than the fee.

Mr. Thomas explained that the \$100 fee was low; however, if they could entice someone for a minimal fee to burn it and haul it off, where they are saving some money was by not having to continuously send inspectors out and writing letters of enforcement, ending up in court, etc.

After further discussion, the Council moved on to the next topic.

Ordinances:

Council Member Gover mentioned the rotation system with the wreckers. There are ordinances that frown on parking the vehicles after the police department calls them, and they have no where to go with the vehicles. So, they have an ordinance reading that they were going to have a rotating system with the wreckers and those people have nowhere to go with the cars, but the city will fine them and tell them to move the vehicles when they have nowhere to go with them. He added it was the domino effect when they get tough with the ordinance (enforcement) in one area, it ripples down to the next. They are facing now an ordinance that is going to be detrimental to the rotation system.

Mayor Price noted that he agreed with Council Member Gover and mentioned that the city would probably have to have some storage space to put those things. It would have to be fenced, in a safe environment, but they cannot implement the policy when people in the community are crying for this to be done and justifiably so. He stated there were places where they could put those things out of the way.

Mr. Thomas agreed but added if they could find other solutions to this rather than the city creating an impoundment lot. . .

Council Member Gover stated that they need to modify some of the restrictions they have in the ordinances such as giving a little more than 30 day to fit the needs. He explained that all of the rotating people were up in the air. He added he thought something could be worked out.

After further discussion, it was the consensus of the Council to instruct the City Manager to work with the attorney and the planning and zoning people to come up with a recommendation.

Mayor Price noted that the ordinance was implemented, but they did not put the operating plan into effect.

Council Member Tudor stated he agreed as he wanted the junked cars off of the streets and out of the yards. He wanted them away from businesses where they do not belong. He wanted the buildings (mentioned earlier) torn down, he did not want people to pile junk on their front porches and work on cars in their front yards. He stated they had to find a way to be proactive and a way to quite being told "we can't do that".

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Mayor Price noted that they had talked about building this community up, and economic development, and things they need to do to build this community up. He stated he could not understand why they could not get some kind of reasonable and legal guidelines.

Other Council Members present voiced their concerns as well.

Later, Council Members instructed the City Manager to meet with the City Attorney in order to find out what they need to do to have those things updated. Mayor Price then suggested 30 days.

Council Member Grogan stated that the city had not turned their backs because they have listened to the legal opinion of people who say it cannot be done or how it can be done and it was always supported. He added that he knew of other cities that seemed to get things done and why Eden cannot, he did not know.

Council Member Grogan left the meeting:

At this time Council Member Grogan left the meeting as he was not feeling well.

Council Member Gover stated that they needed to get on and make Eden a beautiful place to be and attract people and industry. He added they could not do that if there is a junk car sitting in every yard. They needed to be attractive when getting the young people to move in as they did not need to be fearful of where they were living.

Council Member Tudor later added that when his parents were young, they built a nice little house; and as they became better off, they added to the house. He noted that there were houses in neighborhoods worth \$100,000 and some of the other old houses after people pass away, become rental properties and are not kept up. Then those people cannot get any money out of their place and cannot relocate. He added the city was not protecting those people and their property values if Council accepts a legal opinion without questioning it, without saying "quit telling us we can't, tell us what we have to do so that we can". He concluded by adding that they need to be more proactive.

Council Member Gover mentioned that he and Mrs. Stultz visited the northern part of the city and saw old buildings and mess all over the road. He added it was totally neglect. It was embarrassing.

Mr. Thomas noted there were definitely some changes that they need to find some way to address and be able to do the kind of enforcement that they want to do. He added that they may be able to do it with the resources available with a little better coordination, a little better use of time, but if they really want to step it up, then there may be some additional resources that have to go along with that. In order to get certain levels of service or enforcement, it may take more resources.

Ms. Booker asked Mr. Thomas if he would like to have the city staff come back and talk about increasing the level of service and give some options as to how this may be done.

Council Member Gover mentioned the Appearance Commission to which Mayor Price explained that they were an appointed group of citizens. He added if they were given the charge to have a more direct roll in reporting then they would (do so). He added that they were definitely interested in the city.

Mr. Alex DeGrand of the News and Record was present and mentioned that in Kentucky they allow municipalities to change a building code violation from criminal to a civil offense and handle it through a city appointed code enforcement board which speeds up the process with (civil) fines.

Mayor Price asked that Mr. Thomas find out from the League of Municipalities (if this type of enforcement) is allowed in North Carolina.

Mayor Price also mentioned commercial buildings and downtown areas to which Council Member Gover mentioned a problem in his ward (downtown area) with a leaking roof, leaking over to another building and preventing them from getting fire insurance.

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After mentioning other areas and problems, the Council Members present continued with the next topic which was animal control.

Animal Control:

Council Member Tudor mentioned someone telling him about the County's animal ordinance. For example, the Price lady's son who was attacked by the dog, the dog was back where it was on the same the chain. With the County's ordinance, the dog would have to still be chained, but now it would have to be inside the fence because it attacked someone.

He stated he would like to for the Council to take a look at the County's ordinance. He was told that the County's ordinance did not necessarily specify particular animals. He was told that their ordinance still did a better job of addressing how animals should be dealt with. He added he thought the city could have an ordinance that people would say "thank you" for straightening that out instead of them having to endure the cat jokes since the topic came up.

Other topics briefly discussed were:

The police and four-wheelers. Council Member Gover mentioned receiving calls concerning four-wheelers. He explained that he was (lived) on open land and he knew that the city put up gates and fences on the outfalls, but they (four wheelers) were running on city streets. He stated that he would like to see the police officers stand by where this is happening and get those four-wheelers off of the city streets. Council Member Gover added that the neighbors and the city need not to have to put up fences to keep them out when the police can stop them from running on the road. He added he received approximately five calls on four-wheelers behind Mill Avenue. He stated if they were illegally running on the city streets then someone was needed to be observant.

Council Member Member Gover stated that if the police can set on Meadow Road and catch speeders, then they can set on Fieldcrest Road. He noted that there were seventeen merchants telling him of speeding through town. They asked if the police officer that was to be patrolling (that area) would move his police car over where it could be noticed to make people think he was checking the speed anyway. He also reported that the officer was staying to long in the stores.

Mayor Price asked if the merchants ever said anything about having a full-time person in the area down there. Council Member Gover stated that they mentioned the officer down there now, but he dwells to long in one business.

Mayor Price noted when this was implemented that the officer was to be checking downtown areas on a regular basis and also patrolling the downtown community area.

Council Members also mentioned wanting to continue this type of meeting some afternoons at 4:00 p.m. in order to address other topics in which they did not have time to discuss.

Council Members also mentioned the possibility of having two Council meetings per month due the large volume of material.

Adjournment:

A motion was made by Council Member Gover seconded by Council Member Tudor to adjourn the meeting. All Council Members voted in favor of this motion.

(Notes from the retreat taken by Ms. Ginger Booker, Facilitator, are attached to the minutes.)

Respectfully submitted,

Kim J. Scott
City Clerk

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ATTEST:

Philip K. Price
Mayor