MINUTES
City Council Public Safety Committee

Tuesday, May 28, 2024 – 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Aaron Baker, Chair, Council Member Mac Morrow, Vice-Chair, Council Member Kevin Gallo, Citizen Member Mayor Mauren Copelof, Ex-Officio Member
Staff Present	Wilson Hooper, City Manager Tom Jordan, Police Chief Bobby Cooper, Fire Chief Denise Hodsdon, City Clerk
Guests:	Linda Gallo, Monica Driscoll, Phil Stewart, Peggy Bogardus, Victor Zona, Susan Azar, Janice Castevens, Ron Nida, Nora Jane Montgomery, Don and Marcia O'Dell, Billy Parrish

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Committee Chair Aaron Baker welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM.

B. Certification of Quorum

City Clerk Denise Hodsdon certified that a quorum was present.

C. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Baker requested to add a Review of the White Squirrel Festival. Motion by Mr. Morrow, seconded by Mr. Gallo to approve the agenda as revised. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes

1. April 22, 2024

Motion by Mr. Gallo, seconded by Mr. Morrow to approve the minutes from April 22, 2024 as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

E. Update on Transportation Working Group

Mr. Hooper said that now that the Probart St. traffic calming measures have been approved, we will be measuring exactly where the speed cushions should go. At our last Transportation Working Group Meeting, we received advice from our engineer that the speed cushions should be installed at least 50 feet from intersections and 20 feet from driveways. We have not ordered the speed cushions yet but are waiting on a new quote, and I do not have a delivery time for when they should arrive.

Mr. Hooper also mentioned that NCDOT has approved the downtown circulation study. This study will examine whether converting Caldwell St. and Broad St. to a one-way pair will improve circulation for pedestrians and motorists. The Land of Sky RPO will be conducting the study, which will likely take 2 or 3 years to complete.

Mr. Baker asked if they are going to study more than one configuration.

Mr. Hooper said he is not sure but imagines they will study multiple configurations, including pedestrian and car traffic.

Mr. Gallo asked if this will also include the evaluation of the streets that intersect Caldwell St. He mentioned that sometimes, in downtown areas, one-way streets are implemented on streets that intersect major arteries that are converted to one-way.

Mr. Morrow agreed, noting that this was the case with Jordan St. and Gaston St.

Mr. Hooper said there are several projects that our team wants to approach the State for help with, including the Main St./Wilson St./Greenville Hwy intersection, improvements along the trail, and others. He noted that if we want the State's help, we need to pick one project and focus on it. In the coming months, staff and I will evaluate the pros and cons and bring our recommendations back to this committee. He expressed his preference for improvements to the Ecusta/Morris Rd intersection near the County EMS base because, when Wilson Rd. is completed, that entire stretch will serve as a bypass.

F. Railroad Ave – Lighting, Parking, Crosswalk, and Traffic Schedule

Mr. Hooper said King St. has been freshly paved and striped. He also mentioned that the portion of Railroad Ave that turns onto Whitmire St. has had its lines refreshed. However, we have not addressed parking there yet because it requires us to change the code. We did receive a quote for the lighting at the Depot, similar to the way Mary C. Jenkins is lit.

Mr. Baker asked what the next steps for the parking on Railroad Ave. are.

Mr. Hooper said we will have to add this to the traffic schedule to permit on-street parking.

Mayor Copelof asked if we are going to do an analysis after the speed cushions are installed. She said citizens are requesting them in other places.

Mr. Jordan said we would conduct a similar process to the one used for speed signs, placing them in different locations and taking readings.

Mr. Hooper added that we will also install curbing on the other side of Railroad Ave to discourage parking on the trail.

G. Police Accreditation

Mr. Jordan informed the committee about the benefits of accreditation, which include improving transparency, accountability, and compliance with best practices. He said the requirements for accreditation involve a two-year process that started in February 2024, giving us until February 2026 to complete it. The financial cost of accreditation through the NCDOJ is minimal, with the largest cost being staff time. There are grants available through the NC Department of Justice that can help offset these costs, particularly for the necessary changes to the evidence and property room. He said that Detective Sergeant Wilson Bunn would be the accreditation manager. Our goal is to complete accreditation by September 2025.

Mayor Copelof asked how many departments in North Carolina are accredited.

Mr. Jordan said they just started the accreditation process, so while there are a number of agencies in the process, we aren't sure how many have completed it.

Mr. Baker asked if there was an estimated time of completion for the Police Department's move to their new offices on Commerce St.

Mr. Jordan said we have a couple of officers there now. The move should hopefully start progressing quickly once we complete the lease and construction.

H. Review of the White Squirrel Festival

Mr. Jordan said we did not have many incidents; it was a very peaceful event overall.

Mr. Cooper said we did not have any issues, but it was hard to find staffing.

Mr. Hooper mentioned an incident where vendors participating in the social district misunderstood the rule requiring them to use wristbands during the festival.

Mr. Baker asked if there were any issues with the boundaries of the social district.

Mr. Jordan said the beer garden area was technically outside the social district, but we had applied for a permit with the State to include this area.

Mr. Baker noted that having the social district really helps businesses downtown because people can eat, drink, and enjoy the festival without feeling tied down to one location.

I. Public Comment

Ms. Azar mentioned that there is a very aggressive dog on her street. She said the dog has attacked a person and multiple dogs. The representative from animal control stated that the dog does not meet the definition of a dangerous dog despite its history. She said she had spoken to the City Attorney, who researched the issue and found that two counties and one city have created a statute that overrides the State statute.

Mr. Jordan said he would research this topic.

Ms. Gallo asked about the speed cushion dimensions.

Mr. Hooper said yes, the speed cushions come with diagrams to help install them.

Mr. Parrish thanked the City and public safety for their outstanding job over White Squirrel Weekend.

Ms. Driscoll said she appreciated the forward thinking of the police department.

Mr. Baker asked about the parking enforcement equipment being operational.

Mr. Jordan said we are operational this week.

J. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Public Safety Committee will be on Monday, June 24, 2024 at 3:30 pm at City Hall.

K. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:29 PM.

Minutes Approved: June 24, 2024

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X _____

Alex Shepherd,
Assistant to the City Manager