

Walterboro City Council
Work Session
Proposed Plans for 300 Hampton Street (Old First Federal Building)
September 20, 2016
6:00 P.M.

Present were:

Mayor Bill Young, Council Members Jimmy Syfrett, Paul Siegel, Tom Lohr, Bobby Bonds, James Broderick and Judy Bridge. City Manager Jeff Molinari, City Clerk Betty Hudson and City Attorney George Cone were also present. Present from staff were: Angelo Pacilio, Bonnie Ross and Amy Risher. Guest: Scott Cook.

Mayor Young called the meeting to order and entered into the Work Session and recognized City Manager Molinari.

Mr. Molinari reminded Council that last year the City purchased the old First Federal Building at 300 Hampton Street. In this year's budget, we have put some money aside to renovate that building. We have been working with a local architect, Mr. Scott Cook, who is present at the meeting tonight. In a few minutes, he will go over the plans with you. We have sat and discussed this both with the City Finance Director, Amy Risher, and our Building Official, Angelo Pacilio, to come up with a design to renovate that structure, particularly the top floor, that will meet our needs, and also make it more customer-friendly. The whole idea here is to put the departments together that interact with the public the most. The departments are municipal court, planning and codes, water and sewer billing, business license, finance, and human resources. The goal is to get everybody under one roof. The building that we purchased is in very good condition. It is structurally sound, but definitely reflects early 1990 decor, and it's time to update that. That's all part of this process. What is it going to do for us? It will not only allow us to make it much easier for our citizens who do business with the City, but it will also address some of our storage needs. As you are aware, City Hall and the building next door are over crowded. This will allow us to take some of that pressure off and allow us in the long run to be more organized. That's my goal.

Mr. Molinari summarized that his goal tonight is to present the proposed renovation plans to Council, and if Council is comfortable with it, then staff can go ahead and bid the project out with the hopes of getting a recommendation to do the actual construction work by the end of the year. He then turned the floor over to Mr. Scott Cook to go over the conceptual plans for the building.

Mr. Scott Cook, owner of Cook Design Studios in Walterboro, then addressed Council. He invited Council members to view the proposed plans on the table in front of them. He said, what we have done is basically document the existing conditions of the building. He then briefly identified the exiting areas on the proposed plans, as well as the restrooms, storage, office spaces, lobby area, basement and conference areas. He pointed out that the areas were labeled as far as who would be in which offices, and it's very minimal construction. We will be adding some office wall spacing here for a little corridor to protect these offices. Then, of course, what we are proposing to do is add an ADA compliant restroom here and another one over here with this side entrance over here that comes into an elevator. That way, we will be ADA compliant downstairs. What that allows us to do is to have more office space, a large conference room, break room, keeping mechanical in this area here and then of course have plenty of storage. In the downstairs, we are really not changing anything, other than adding this elevator so that we can make it ADA compliant. So, it's very minimal construction and I think it will help the City as far as spacing and keeping everybody together, especially on the first floor, and give everyone an ample amount of room to work.

City Manager Molinari then added a comment about the elevator. He said, what we were envisioning was that this would be done in two phases. With the renovations that we have budgeted this year being phase one, and then phase two would be the lifter elevator. The good news is that there is USDA money out there available that we can apply for, which would defray an 80/20 split. So, for 80% of that cost we could get assistance from USDA. That's how we are looking at handling it.

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Mayor Young then addressed a question to Ms. Bonnie Ross of the Planning and Codes Department. He asked, as we start transferring files to digital storage, how would that be handled? Do we have shelves or compartments or will we buy filing cabinets? What will we do as we get all of those files together? I think that is the goal to get it all stored digitally? Bonnie Ross answered eventually, but we will still need to have paper copies available somewhere, because if the computer is down or anything is going on, they will still need to have the paper copy available. Mayor Young then asked, we did make allowance for that in shelves or is that still something that will need to be worked out? Building and Codes Director Angelo Pacilio answered, that will be dealt with when we start the room downstairs, where we will put shelves up to keep the old plans in.

City Manager Molinari then said, what we would like to do in the short term is have things arranged as you enter the building from Hampton Street, Bonnie would be over to the left and would have some more open space. As you will recall, she's got all of her files along the wall, and those don't need to be in her working space. Those can all go down to the second floor. I mean, all she needs to do if she has to pull a file is to go downstairs and do that. I am sure many of those files in there haven't been touched in years.

Building and Codes Director Angelo Pacilio then said, if you look in my office, you will see the cabinets that I work on to do my plan reviews. With two more of them, we will be able to store all the files that we have up here. So, they will probably be located downstairs where I do my planning review, and if we need it, I'll have to bring it up.

Mayor Young responded, I was thinking about all those files we have in the attic over here. Mr. Pacilio responded, those would be stored in the back of one of the rooms here. We will have to build shelving for that.

City Manager Molinari told Council that Amy and her staff have been chipping away at the old files as they have time. He said that there are a lot of boxes.

Council Member Bridge then asked how long do the files have to be secured. City Manager Molinari replied that we have to comply with the State Archives and History requirements for records retention. There are a lot of documents that you don't have to keep and they can be destroyed after three years or after five years. It's just a matter of just going through all those, and purging, eliminating, retaining and organizing files that we need.

Ms. Bridge then clarified that she meant secured files, like personnel files. Would they not be in a place where no one would have access to them? Mr. Cook responded that the personnel files would be kept in a secure locked area. So, we will have three offices that would have the capability to be secured. Mayor Young then asked if all the personnel files were kept in the HR department right now? Finance Director Amy Risher responded that all the personnel files are actually in a safe and locked up in the vault. She added that the HR person (Angela) also has health plans and other documents that are locked up in her office as well.

Council Member Broderick then asked if the staircase would be removed for the lift. Mr. Cook responded, that is correct. Mr. Broderick then asked, does that leave us enough egress in the basement? Mr. Cook responded, yes. Mr. Pacilio pointed out that there are three steps going up to a platform, then you turn and go another three or four steps and it puts you out the side door. At the first platform, the stairs are going to be removed and it's going to be a doorway there. That's dug down below the grade to fit the platform lift. The platform lift will take you up to street level. They will have to build that out to meet that lift. There are two bathrooms there, and one will need to be a handicapped restroom on the basement floor, where you need access to it. The platform lift will accomplish both of those. A new door will be installed on the side to meet handicap regulations.

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Then, you can have meetings downstairs with the general public because now you have barrier free access to it. Yes, that will be dug down, the stairs will be gone and the platform will take you up to this level here.

Council Member Bridge asked if the elevator will be in place when the building opens? City Manager Molinari responded, no. That will happen after this. From both a financial standpoint and in talking to Angelo, as far as ADA is concerned, just as long as we have plans to provide that handicapped accessibility, we are good. Certainly, since we have an opportunity to get some assistance from USDA, we much rather do that than to bear the cost all at once.

Mayor Young then asked if taking the stairs out would harm anything as far as emergency exits go, or do we have plenty of exits? Building Director Angelo Pacilio assured that the plans were set up pretty well to provide for the needed exits. He added, as the building stands right now, you have access in the front for handicapped personnel. But that's all we need is a front for handicapped access and the stairs, so we are good to go for now.

City Manager Molinari then stated, what we are looking at for now is that Angelo will be in one of those two offices (in the basement) and we will have the capacity for another office if needed.

Council Member Broderick then raised a concern about the basement. He said, I know when we were in the basement before, it was really damp down there. When we store records down there, have we looked at the heating and air capacity to dry that out down there? Mr. Pacilio responded, I think that once you get that unit running and use it all the time, it's going to pull that moisture out of the air. Even if it needs a little bit extra, you can put a portable unit in the back room where the storage is for paper goods.

Council Member Bridge asked about the main floor. She asked is all that open space on the main floor? Mr. Molinari responded, that's correct. He then displayed a diagram showing what the first floor spacing would look like as you walk into the front door of the building, as well as other areas of the building. In conclusion, he said, I think this spacing will provide a more open setting which will be beneficial to our employees, as well as the people who do business with the City.

Mayor Young asked the City Manager where would the walk-in people go to pay their water bills? City Manager Molinari then pointed out the area on the diagram where people would go to pay their water bills as they come into the building from Hampton Street.

Council Member Bridge asked about the location for the Clerk of Court windows. She asked if counter space would be provided for that office also. Finance Director Amy Risher pointed out that the Clerk of Court's office will be in the right as you walk in the door off Hampton Street. So, that way, they will be able to operate the drive thru, as well.

Council Member Broderick asked if there were enough parking available for the building, or will parking need to overflow into the City Parking Lot? City Manager Molinari answered, that's the good thing that now that we own all three properties that we will have good parking over there, and also have other parking. We have the parking lot across the street, so there is more than ample parking.

Mayor Young asked, do you think for the long term that the proposed plans for this building will give those offices enough room? Further discussion was held.

Council Member Syfrett then asked the City Manager, what do you need from us? What are you looking for tonight? City Manager Molinari then said, if Council is comfortable with this, then we will start putting the package together to get it out. We'll bid it out for 30 days and then

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hopefully, bring it back to you at our November or December meeting. Mayor Young then asked the City Manager if he had gotten the input from all his employees on their offices as to what they think will work. Mr. Molinari responded yes.

Council Member Broderick asked the City Manager if he planned to get new furniture? Mr. Molinari responded that one of the benefits when we purchased the property was that First Federal did not have a need to keep any of their furniture. So, we essentially went through and marked every piece of furniture that we could utilize. There were only a few pieces that were not in good condition. We were able to retain most of the furniture. There is a good sized conference room downstairs. The table is in good shape, but I think we will have to get some new chairs for that. Other than that from a furniture standpoint, we are going to be in good shape.

Council Member Bridge then asked, when you go to bid, do you ask for a contractor who can handle every component of this project? Mr. Molinari responded, that's correct, it will be a general contractor. We will specifically delineate and outline every facet of this project. Mayor Young asked if the advertising for this project would be placed in our local newspapers? Mr. Molinari responded yes. He added, we will place it on our website, advertise in both local newspapers, and probably put it in the SCBO, which is a free publication.

Council Member Syfrett asked if the City is obligated to accept the lowest bid? Mr. Molinari responded, that's a good question. There is not going to be any federal money associated with this particular phase. When we get to USDA money for doing the elevator, the City's procurement code gives you the ability if there were contractors that Council did not want to work with, you will have the ability to reject the low bid and choose the next bid.

City Attorney Cone then reminded Council about the use of a performance bond. Council Member Syfrett then asked if the bid would be opened up for anyone who is a general contractor? Mayor Young also asked if local preference would also apply to the bids? Mr. Molinari responded yes, if local bidders were within 5% of the low bid, they would have the ability to match the bid.

Attorney Cone then asked, who would supervise the construction work of the contractor? Will this be the building inspector? Mayor Young suggested maybe we could get Scott Cook to make sure they are building according to the plans, if Angelo is not going to be the building inspector. Building Director Angelo Pacilio pointed out that he felt it would not be ethical for him to perform the inspections. He added, I fussed at the County for wanting to do their inspections, so the same rules would have to apply to me. I will be there when they are doing it, and if I see anything, I will point it out.

Mayor Young told Mr. Cook that the plans look good. He pointed out that we will have a really big lobby and visually it will make the building pretty. Mr. Molinari responded, we will do some things to dress up the entryways. I am sure we will put a red rocker in there. Mayor Young added, I think we were really lucky to be able to buy that building and have it right here on our campus.

Council Member Broderick then asked about the time limit for starting the project. Mr. Molinari noted that to award the contract would be toward the end of the year, and as far as construction, it should take three or four more months. Once the work is done, then the tricky part will be coordinating the move, and what Amy and I have already discussed is we will probably dedicate a Saturday to do the move. There will not be any interruption in service.

Council Member Bridge then asked, is there going to be a lot of movement back and forth from that building to City Hall? Just wondering if we would need a pedestrian crossing sign just to make sure people are cautious in driving in that area. City Manager Molinari responded, that certainly something that we can look at. Right now, we will have from this building (City Hall),

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myself, Betty, Michael Crosby and Wayne Crosby, then everybody from next door will be in the building on Hampton Street.

When asked about carpeting in the new building by the Mayor, City Manager Molinari responded that there will be carpeting in the reception areas and the entry ways will be tiled. Mayor Young added, that some places just put in relatively cheap carpet and than every couple of years, they take it out and put in more. That ends up being cheaper then hardwood or tile sometimes.

Council Member Bridge then raised a question on what was put in the budget for the renovation. Mr. Molinari noted that he and Amy already had that discussion. Amy and Angelo have already talked with a few different contractors just to get an idea. Amy and I talked about it, we are in a position where if we do have an overage, I am very comfortable that we can cover it with our revenues in the general fund. We were very conservative in budgeting those. Both our property tax and local option sales tax will be more than we budgeted. We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. Hopefully, we will get enough bids in that we will have a good competitive price for our project.

At this point, City Manager Molinari announced that Dr. Jeffrey Kramer has volunteered to take our Council/staff photo. He has agreed that the November 1 meeting will work for him. I will have Betty to send something out so you can put it on your calendars. We will meet here at 5:00 for those pictures. It has been over five years, since we had Council/staff photos taken.

No further input was received and a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Council Member Bridge, seconded by Council Member Broderick and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 P.M. Notice of this meeting was distributed to all local media and posted on the City's website and the City Hall bulletin board at least twenty-four hours prior to meeting time.

Submitted by,

Betty J. Hudson
City Clerk

APPROVED: January 3, 2017