

**CITY OF BUENA VISTA  
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING  
(VIRTUAL MEETING)  
APRIL 1, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.**

**ADG #1 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND PRAYER:**

Councilman Coffey delivered the opening prayer.

**ADG #2 APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:**

Motion was made by Councilman Coffey to approve the Agenda, seconded by Councilman Cooper, carried by Council.

**ADG #3 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING (VIRTUAL) HELD ON MARCH 18, 2021:**

Motion was made by Councilman Cooper to approve the above mentioned minutes, seconded by Councilman Coffey, carried by Council.

**ADG #4 RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS:**

**Citizens who desire to speak on matters not listed on the agenda below will be heard at this time. Citizens who desire to speak on a specific item listed on the agenda, open for public comment, will be heard when that item is considered:**

No one spoke.

**ADG #5 REPORTS:**

**1.) Mayor:**

None.

**2.) City Manager :**

Mr. Jason Tyree opened his report by saying that he is sure everyone has heard about Munter's leaving. Mr. Tyree said that he, Tom and Kristina met with the property owner and they have a meeting with Munter's next week. He said they are talking through this process to make sure we understand and how we can market the property in the future for other businesses. Mr. Tyree said he met with Mayor Fitzgerald, Brian Kearney and Charles Clemmer to discuss the new American Rescue Plan funds. It is a new batch of CARES ACT funds and there is still more information coming down the pipe about that. We are hoping by the end of April that VML will have some guide lines and some language about it. Today he met with Hunter Young and RTK at the WWTP and did a tour with them and discussed some

options. He also met with the Fiddler's Convention folks today. He said the Tom Roberts will speak with Council shortly on the parking grant. The grant is through the PDC so there will be no funds for the City to supply. It will only cost the City some staff time to complete some of the projects.

### **3.)City Attorney:**

None.

### **4.)Council Committee/Representative:**

Councilman Henson opened the discussion by telling everyone that there will be Easter at the Park on Saturday beginning at noon. The Park Committee has come up with a few new rules for GMP. He said for Council to ride up to 29<sup>th</sup> Street and take a right on Aspen Avenue to see the good job that Public Works did with the curb and guttering and the asphalt.

Vice-Mayor Hickman said she wanted to add in on the Parks/Rec Committee meeting. She said a couple of citizens came to the meeting and that she wished more would attend. They talked about speed-bumps in the circle where people come down to where there are people camping. There have been reports of excessive speed in that area and there are kids playing in that area so this is a safety concern. Mitch Harris is going to find out the cost for speed-bumps and report back.

Councilman Staton said he has had several citizens contact him about the intersection at ARCET where you can go straight through or turn. It has been several near misses where people will get in the left hand lane to turn and then just drive straight through the light. He said it has happened to him a couple of times recently.

Mayor Fitzgerald suggested he talk to Chief Hartman to see if he has any information on this problem.

Councilman Coffey said the intersection has a turning arrow on it.

Mayor Fitzgerald suggested that the City make sure that the lights and lines are bright and clear. He suggested that Councilman Staton talk to Mr. Tyree and he can talk to the Chief.

Vice-Mayor Hickman said she has had a complaint about the parking at the beauty shop. There is one parking space there from Hardee's down to Beech but numerous people are parking there and making it difficult to see.

Councilman Henson said there is one space to park there. It was used for Public Works and the Fire Department to get their water from the fire hydrant that is there.

**ADG #5 CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO VARIOUS BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES:**

**THE MAURY SERVICE AUTHORITY:**

**MR. JIMMY CARTER'S TERM WILL EXPIRE ON MAY 31, 2021. THIS IS A FOUR-YEAR TERM AND THE SECOND TIME IT HAS APPEARED ON THE AGENDA. MR. CARTER HAS MOVED FROM BUENA VISTA AND CANNOT SERVE AGAIN. ADVERTISED ON MARCH 17, 2021 THE NEWS GAZETTE: SOCIAL MEDIA MARCH 11, 2021:**

**NO APPLICANTS**

This item will be carried over to the next scheduled Council meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**NB #1 CONSIDERATION OF A REGIONAL SOCIAL SERVICES**

**AGREEMENT:**

Mayor Fitzgerald explained that this is an agreement of the 3 localities to hire someone to study the options of building a new building or remodeling an old building for Social Services. He said all 3 localities are on board to proceed at this point.

City Manager Jason Tyree said the agreement is split between all 3 localities. He opined the main reason to get the agreement is to get Social Services to build out towards Buena Vista. He understands it has been talked about before to build beside of the 911 building. They basically want to look at Route 60 from Buena Vista to Lexington. They want to make sure it is in the best location and the best financial feasible option.

Mr. Kearney said the study is limited just to the Route 60 corridor. This is for a new or existing building for a permanent relocation for Social Services. We need to get them out of the old building in down town Lexington.

Mayor Fitzgerald advised they are also looking a section on Route 11.

Mr. Kearney said this study does not include Route 11, only Route 60. He said they were looking at Route 11 at one time but they are no longer looking there.

Mayor Fitzgerald said that he is sure it includes another location and ask Mr. Kearney to clarify. He said we may have to go back and adjust but there is another location on the study.

## **NB #2 PRESENTATION ON PROPOSED AG-TECH CENTER IN FORMER MUNDET-HERMETITE FACILITY:**

Mr. Tom Roberts said they have been working with the Advancement Foundation on a proposed project in the former Mundet factory. Annette Patterson is the director of the Advancement Foundation and she will make a presentation shortly. The Advancement Foundation is the Entrepreneur Development Business Organization that is running the Gauntlet Business location that we are working on now.

Ms. Annette Patterson gave a presentation on the Mundet factory (See presentation in the minute book). Ms. Patterson started the discussion by giving some background information as to how this program evolved and a little more about the Advancement Foundation. She advised that the Advancement Foundation was started in 2017. It is a non-profit organization. They have worked in central -southwest Virginia. She stated some of the cities and counties they have worked in. Their work release has started focusing on engineering opportunities for community development. They really try to take action and work with communities and Economic Developers, especially in those communities that have talent as we have in Buena Vista. They try to fill in the gaps and they have done that in 3 ways: they create programs that help ignite excitement around entrepreneurship and business development and innovation. The Gauntlet is one example of the program they have developed over the last 8 years. That program started out with 15 entrepreneurs to the BATA test. Throughout the program they have gone after a business launch like they have done in Buena Vista and from there they just kept growing the program. It has now become Virginia's largest business program and competition. Last year before COVID they had 170 entrepreneurs come through the program and this year they have about 150 that come from throughout the region. It is an amazing program because it helps to build that network of entrepreneurs. They have also been building a mentor network. They challenge business leaders from across the communities to help mentor and advise some of the entrepreneurs who are looking to start or grow their business. Also, under the programming umbrella they have a program called the Innovation Mill that covered the GOVA program in region 2. This project has really peaked their interest in what is being proposed in Buena Vista. There are about 650 Gauntlet alumni who have gone through the program. The Innovation Mill is much more focused and tailored to the potential high growth companies. They have evaluated 100 potential companies and they have actually worked with 50 of those companies over the last 2 years that the project has been going on. They also work in the area of resources bringing resources into the communities. They have been able to execute several VIDA programs which is low to moderate income individuals who want to start businesses. They provide an 8 to 1 match which really helps someone who wants to have a business. The last thing is place making which is important. This has really helped impact changes for communities.

Ms. Patterson said they started working with Tom and Kristina last year so this is their second year in Rockbridge. They have been a long time partner of Dabney S. Lancaster Community College. Last year they were working with the Gauntlet

group and Gavin Fox was potentially working on this project. This project did not happen. They have been doing a lot of work through the Innovation Mill on ads for different kinds of products. They became very interested in potentially building an ad tech center. (Ms. Patterson presented her report – copy in the minute book)

Mr. Roberts said he wanted to highlight some of the things for this project. He opined this project is incredible exciting for Buena Vista because the real success and the real vibrancy as well as lifestyle is when you have people with new ideas. This center will draw people here who are working on new ideas who are inventing things and starting new companies. We could potentially have a company like Munters in this facility that are testing out their first models as well as other businesses. The people in those kinds of start-ups bring a certain energy. We also want to bring together and cultivate the people that are already here and let them take their ideas to the next level. Mr. Roberts opined that this is not good for Buena Vista only, this is a regional project. This is the Rockbridge region and the Shenandoah Valley region at the south end. We are in the position that we could have the Roanoke Valley market, the Alleghany market as well as the Shenandoah Valley market. We could have ties with companies, educational institutions and what not in both markets. He said that multiple State agencies are excited about Buena Vista. They are all rooting for Buena Vista. Councilman Webb wanted to know where the closest building that the Advancement Foundation is working with.

Ms. Patterson advised they have a building at 301 South Pollard in Vinton. She said if Council would like to talk to the town manager about the impact that this has had on their community she would be glad to link everybody up.

Councilman Webb wanted to know how many businesses in Vinton are in the building.

Ms. Patterson said in the incubator space there are 6 and in the accelerator space they have worked with about 30 high growth companies.

Vice-Mayor Hickman wanted to know if the area is mixed use.

Mr. Patterson said it is mixed use and this is a much bigger scale. It also has a lot more opportunity. They are limited there because it is a small space. They are also limited there because the apartments in that building are above the commercial space. She opined that they cannot hit the levels that this building will do because of the size of the building.

Councilman Webb wanted to know if most of the funds used are grant money.

Ms. Patterson said they are very balanced. They have the income from the apartments in the building. When everything comes together it provides them a very stable income. She said it has been amazing to her the response from everyone about the ideas for the project but also the willingness to introduce them to other individuals. Through the course of about 60 conversations they have now been meeting with the Secretary of Agriculture who is super supportive and who loves rural Virginia. She said this could be a model that could be duplicated across the State. She loves the idea of Buena Vista being the one that sets that standard.

Councilman Coffey wanted to know if there are any limitations on what can be put in the building.

Mr. Roberts wanted to know if Councilman Coffey meant programming diagrams like the Advancement that would have zoning or building codes.

Councilman Coffey said he wanted to know if there would be restrictions on what can be put in the building.

Ms. Patterson said we should be open to a lot of different things. It is one of the reasons the program like the Guanlet has been successful. She said with business incubation they can work with any kind of business. She said they would like to have some technical or technology aspects in the ad. Ms. Patterson said they work with all sorts of businesses. Part of their success is because they have a network of 250 mentors and industries. They have people that love what they are doing.

Mayor Fitzgerald opined it is a great idea.

Vice-Mayor Hickman wanted to know if the City would be responsible for any funding.

Mr. Roberts said we are working with the Advancement Foundation and some of the grants that they are pursuing are grants where the locality is the applicant. In each of those cases if there is a match, The Advancement Foundation is funding it. In the next week or two we are applying for an Environmental Study Site Assessment Grant that will do a Phase I and Phase II study of the site to make sure there are no horrible chemicals. That is a situation where one of the other grants that we already have will cover the cost of the study. They are not requesting any funds from the City for this.

Vice-Mayor Hickman opined the program is a great idea. She just wanted to make sure it would not be of any cost for the City.

Ms. Patterson said their goal is to stack funding. Some of the things they are able to do is count in-kind. Because of their great relationship with DSLCC they have a \$90,000.00 grant that is split between the Rockbridge area and the Alleghany area. They could use that money as a match and there are a couple of companies that want to work with them on this project. Ms. Patterson said they are in pretty decent shape with the match for some of these grants that they are going after. They recognize that all of the communities are suffering right now. They try to leverage around all of that and leverage what they can when there is a one to one match. VDHA will supply the long term financing. There will be other grants that will help with the renovation of the building. Both of the renovations will be housing since there has never been housing there. They will get the numbers on the renovations next week.

Councilman Henson wanted to know when they will start working on the renovations and move in to start producing.

Ms. Patterson said they are waiting for VHDA. They already have a contract on the building with a closing date at the end of April. She does not know if VHDA will be able to move that quickly because they have eight hundred million dollars they have to distribute. They love this project and they want this project to move forward. They have been at the building twice. Chris Thompson was the one who said this will be a regional project. Ms. Patterson said we could actually

begin even before we close because Mundet does have tenants in the building and Skip Ramsey has rewritten leases for a drone company that needs space immediately. The drone company already has four (4) 1.4 million dollar contracts that are renewable for 4 years. They are moving ahead and getting this company a lease so he can get in the building and start. Mundet is willing to work with us even before we close.

Councilman Coffey asked Mr. Roberts what kind of revenue the City would receive from the drone company.

Mr. Roberts said he is not 100% sure right now but he feels there will be business taxes, personal property, machine and tools tax. He will find out and advise.

Ms. Patterson said she has been working with Jay Langston at the Shenandoah Valley Partnership is helping with the ROY, the job and revenue projections. She gave him all of that data. If this project is going to involve the entire region we want to show that this is an incredible opportunity for everyone. Everyone wants to know how this project will impact jobs.

Mr. Tyree said every locality around here would love to have something like this. In talking with other city managers and other leaders to have something like this is going to be huge. It will be a great opportunity for existing businesses to take their business to the next level, if they so chose to do that.

Councilman Coffey asked Ms. Patterson if she would send her information to him because he knows someone that might be interested in the coffee shop.

Councilman Henson wanted to know if there is anyway this project could be tied into the park.

Ms. Patterson said absolutely. She has been looking at our revitalization strategies. She feels they would be open to anything.

Mayor Fitzgerald thanked Ms. Patterson for her presentation and wished her the best of luck.

Councilman Coffey wanted to know if Council was going to discuss the parking issue that Mr. Roberts sent to them.

Mr. Roberts said he did not make it an agenda item. He just wanted to get any feedback from Council so they can know how to move forward.

Councilman Coffey wanted to know if we were doing this for SVU or the City of Buena Vista.

Mayor Fitzgerald the City still owns the roads at SVU and they are the City's responsibility.

Mr. Roberts said he sees it for our City and our residents just to establish where the parking spaces are and keeping it safe so cars are not parked haphazardly. The way it might benefit SVU is if we identify a place where there is not parking now but there is no reason to not have parking.

Councilman Coffey wanted to know if that is just up on the hill or all over the City.

Mr. Roberts said this setting would be Seminary Hill at this point and we could absolutely go elsewhere.

Councilman Henson opined the main concern up on the hill is that people cannot get into their houses because of students parking.

Councilman Coffey said that happens all over the City. That was his question. He understands we own the road and he understands they need parking. Is it primarily on the hill or is it all over town? There are several many residents in the City that are overwhelmed with vehicles day in and day out. He brought that to Jay's attention because people came to him to approach the situation. He has also brought it to Jason's attention. He opined that he is not against but we need to determine where it really needs to be done.

Mr. Roberts said there are other locations within the City with parking problems. What he is aware of is there are individual locations where you might have one house or a couple of houses where you might have problems with parking. Up in the neighborhood of SVU there is a more generalized problem with the whole top of the hill. SVU is growing and we anticipate more parking pressure in the future as there are more students. The important thing is the City is not responsible for providing parking for all of SVU. We are not responsible for providing off street parking for SVU. He just wants the City to have our ducks in a row for the parking that the City owns at SVU so it is clear where there are spaces for parking.

Councilman Webb said he lives in the middle of the parking situation. He said he has lived there for 30 years and he has never had a problem with parking. He opined that parking is SVU's responsibility. He works at VMI and has worked at W&L and every student has their car registered with the schools and they are issued parking permits that tells that student where the car can be parked. He opined that most of the parking problems can be solved through the police department and SVU.

Vice-Mayor Hickman opined that Council should address the problem now so we can figure out what we need to do. As SVU continues to grow the parking is going to become more and more of a problem.

Mayor Fitzgerald said he thinks Mr. Roberts is not trying to protect the students but the home owners. He told Mr. Roberts to put this item on an agenda for further discussion.

**ADJOURN:**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

---

William H. Fitzgerald, Mayor

ATTEST:

---

Dawn Wheeler, Clerk of Council

DATE:

---