

**Special Joint Meeting of the Lebanon Town Council
and Lebanon Planning Commission
Town Hall, Lebanon, VA
Monday, October 5, 2015
6:00 P.M.**

Council Members Present: Nelson A. "Tony" Dodi, Mayor
J. C. Boyd, Vice Mayor
A. G. Griffith, Jr., Council Member
DeAnna C. Jackson, Council Member
Hassel Kegley, Council Member
A. Doyle Fields, Council Member
Scott J. Gilmer, Council Member

Staff Members Present: Michael L. Duty, Town Manager
Jackie L. Hubbard, Controller
Stephanie Burke, Clerk of Council
Kevin Tiller, Town Attorney

Staff Members Absent: Mark Mitchell, Chief of Police


Planning Commission Members Present: Ralph Snead, Chairman
Michael L. Duty, Vice Chairman
J. S. Easterly, Jr., Clerk
Donald Ramey, Member
Tim Coleman, Member
Stephen Quillen, Member

- I. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Dodi.
- II. Prayer: Mr. Scott Gilmer
- III. Pledge of Allegiance
- IV. Downtown Revitalization Discussion:
 - A. Mayor Dodi informed those present that Shane Farmer of the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission had been assisting him in gaining information regarding funding to assist with downtown revitalization and that a group from Richmond would be traveling to Lebanon to further discuss the available grants.
 - B. Mayor Dodi distributed a list of downtown vacant properties to those present.
 - C. Mayor Dodi also informed that he had been in contact with the Town of Abingdon regarding their current ordinances on the upkeep/maintenance of property.
 - D. Mr. Easterly, Mr. Coleman and Mr. Ramey expressed their agreement that the Town of Lebanon should develop a more stringent, enforceable ordinance for the upkeep/maintenance of property in order to attract new businesses to the town. Mr. Coleman and Mr. Quillen recommended to begin updating the current ordinance to deal with the most obvious and most severe property issues first.

- E. At Mr. Ramey's request, Mr. Tiller described the current property ordinances for the Town of Abingdon and the Town of Lebanon.
- F. Vice Mayor Boyd informed those present that Mr. Shane Farmer had notified him that the Town of Lebanon was eligible for a \$25,000 planning grant. Vice Mayor Boyd recommended that part of this planning grant be used for hiring a professional to assist with the zoning ordinance development.
- G. Ms. Jackson recommended that Mr. Tiller prepare a basic ordinance that would allow for the enforcement of stricter property maintenance laws until the professional zoning ordinance developer completed their analysis, after which the basic ordinance could be modified. Mayor Dodi agreed.
- H. Mr. Easterly and Vice Mayor Boyd recommended that the ordinance include the requirement that buildings must be kept in a state of repair and must be able to pass a certificate of occupancy inspection. Vice Mayor Boyd also recommended that, once completed, the ordinance be advertised and a public hearing held to inform the public of why the ordinance is being updated, with those property owners directly affected being notified of the hearing by letter. Mr. Snead recommended that the Town Council and not the Planning Commission be the ones to enforce the ordinance.
- I. Mayor Dodi told of the nearby towns of Marion, St. Paul, Honaker, Haysi and Dungannon that had received funding for downtown revitalization projects, with Haysi purchasing and renovating a downtown theater with the funding. He also advised that he and Shane Farmer are exploring the availability of start-up/small business loans with grants of up to 50% of the loan value.
- J. Mr. Ramey and Mr. Snead advised that, in order for new businesses to succeed, they must be a good fit for the area.
- K. Mayor Dodi inquired as to what types of businesses would be a good fit for Lebanon. Mayor Dodi mentioned the idea of downtown lofts. Ms. Jackson mentioned the need for shoe stores and clothing shops that offer items that supermarkets like Walmart do not.
- L. Ms. Jackson also advised that Buchanan County offers occupational programs in their schools that could allow students to open a business in town once trained. Mr. Ramey and Mayor Dodi advised that Russell County also offers programs like these and suggested that the marketing of these available programs be increased.
- M. Mayor Dodi asked if a meeting should be held with the owners of the vacant downtown properties. Mr. Coleman recommended that the Town should discuss with the property owners what their plans are for the property i.e., if they plan to rent or sell the property.
- N. Mr. Dodi inquired if those present thought that rent was one issue keeping businesses from operating downtown. Mr. Tiller advised that he felt that rent was reasonable; however, businesses were not generating enough income to continue operating downtown.
- O. Mr. Coleman advised that businesses could succeed more if they received assistance with developing a business plan, advertising and understanding business concepts.

- P. Mr. Dodi advised that part of the planning grant process was to take an analysis of the needs of the town residents and recommended that, in order to gain an objective opinion, an outside professional perform the business analysis.
- Q. Mr. Coleman advised that he has an advertising contact that has previously expressed their willingness to review and make recommendations on promoting the Town of Lebanon and that could also assist with the business analysis.
- R. Mr. Gilmer stressed the importance of developing a cornerstone property in the Town of Lebanon.
- S. Vice Mayor Boyd recommended the renovation of the theater as a possible venue for shows and musical performances. Mr. Snead approved this idea and Mayor Dodi agreed that the theater could become a great hub for town residents.
- T. Mr. Quillen also advised that town events need to be coordinated to attract people to the area. Mr. Coleman recommended a block party or car show that could highlight local downtown businesses.
- U. Mayor Dodi informed those present that the goal for the Council and the Planning Commission would be to establish a more stringent property ordinance and to revitalize the downtown area with successful businesses in time for the Town's bicentennial celebration in 3 years.
- V. Upon motion made by Vice Mayor Boyd, seconded by Mr. Fields, the Council unanimously voted to adjourn. The vote was as follows: Vice Mayor Boyd, Aye; Mr. Kegley, Aye; Ms. Jackson, Aye; Mr. Fields, Aye; Mr. Gilmer, Aye; Mr. Griffith, Aye.

Adjourn special joint meeting: 7:24 P.M.



Nelson A. "Tony" Dodi, Mayor



Stephanie L. Burke, Clerk of Council

Minutes recorded by: Stephanie L. Burke, Clerk of Council

Minutes prepared by: Stephanie L. Burke, Clerk of Council

Minutes approved by: Michael L. Duty, Town Manager