

August 28, 2023  
6:00pm  
Lowell City Hall

Attendees: Heather Seay, Michelle Sebastian, Jessica Holbrook, Joe Gates, Bill Knox, Anne Massey, Cristy Cummings, and Scott Attaway.

Heather called the meeting to order and determination of quorum occurred at 6:00pm.

A motion was made by Bill to approve the minutes from the June 26<sup>th</sup> meeting and it was seconded by Jessica. Minutes were approved unanimously.

### **Unfinished Business**

#### Façade Grant Update

The application for the Façade Grant is now available online. It is located in the “News” section of the Lowell website. Applications may be submitted digitally. In addition, City Council asked for information about the availability of the grant to be included in a direct mailing. There is also work being done to establish an email list. The Lowell Fire Chief has been working on gathering this information.

#### Citizen of the Year Update

Applications for the Lowell Citizen of the year is now available online. It is located in the “News” section of the Lowell website. Information about the program is also being shared on social media and in the next Lowell Community Newsletter.

### **New Business**

Scott shared that the postcard size utility bill currently mailed, will be replaced with a full-size piece of paper. This change will allow for easier handling/processing by staff, and will allow for the dissemination of additional Storm Water news. There is a consideration that this mailing may be used to share other information to provide more timely community news.

Julie Watkins, Lowell’s new Storm Water Administrator, introduced herself to the LCC. Julie has an extensive background in environmental science. Some of her goals will include Outreach and Education, and starting a Citizen Science Initiative. LCC members completed a sample activity, *Benthic Macroinvertebrate Water Quality Bio-Indicators*, and this was followed by a discussion of how this and similar activities could be unitized by our community. Julie will be posting activities on the Lowell website. Jessica also shared how she thought the library staff may be able to use some of the discussed activities.

Other Storm Water news shared by Joe, was that the city purchased a Water Quality Instrument called an Aquatroll. This device has the capability of obtaining real time measurements of turbidity, temperature, total dissolved solids, dissolved oxygen levels, and pH. The Aquatroll will collect data of the water quality of the South Fork River. The hope is that someday there may be a network along the entire Catawba basin to monitor

water quality. A network such as this could provide vital early detection of changes in the quality of the water. An important example, for Lowell specifically, will be monitoring the South Fork as construction projects (residential developments and the new River Park) occur in the future.

The LCC also discussed possible names for the Lowell portion of the Aquatroll program, and the most popular name was “We Are the South Fork”.

### Social District Presentation

Joe explained that Social Districts are defined areas where a drink poured from one business may be carried to different places within a prescribed area. The way this type of district works is that a local municipality, in conjunction with local business, would establish rules and boundaries for the Social District. Business in the area would also have the ability to opt in or choose to not participate. Lowell staff members have attended several meetings to gather information and to establish contacts with others who have started Social Districts in their communities. It is worthy to note that many of these meetings have included police chiefs who report on what they have experienced with Social Districts. Joe also shared some of the goals of havin a Social District.

- Economic boost for local businesses.
- Attracting new investment.
- Revitalizing downtown atmosphere.
- Safe and Controlled Environment.
- Expanding community activities.

Scott has been tasked with the job of gathering more information, and he will be presenting his findings to City Council.

Tory Denlinger will be the new Parks and Recreation Director. The LCC looks forward to meeting and working with Tory.

### Staff Updates

Cristy reported:

- Spring soccer practice is currently underway and the league will include playing with Cramerton youths.
- The Community Center renovation of the kitchen near complete. More interior renovations that are in the plans include new ceiling tiles and light fixtures.
- The event “Kids Bike Rodeo” will include a helmet give away and a bike obstacle course.
- Look for “Trucks in the Park” on Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Music in the Park is scheduled for Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup>. There will also be a Shred It Truck for folks who would like to use it.
- Registration for the Fall Festival has opened.
- Registration for River Sweep has opened.
- Registration for Treat Walk has opened.

Joe reported:

- Lowell has hired its first city planner. Welcome Tyler Cobb.
- Construction for Lowell Woods residential development (spur off of Preston Place), has

been in preconstruction meetings with Gaston County. There has already been some grading of the area and the engineering plans have been approved.

- The new townhouse development near Choice USA Beverage will likely start construction by the end of the year.

Scott reported:

- Scott took a personal trip to Boston and met up with the City Manager of Lowell, Massachusetts. While there he met many other city employees and toured the area. There was also a discussion of setting up a "Sister City" alliance between the two "Lowells". Scott enjoyed, and was impressed, with those whom which he spent the day learning more about Lowell, MA. and the workings of their city government. The LCC also enjoyed hearing about some of the history behind how our city changed names from "Right Stop" to "Lowell", after a resident (Linberger) visited the Massachusetts city.
- Demolition of the dye plant was discussed and there was a lot of excitement around the event. The much-anticipated start, of changing the abandoned plant to a community park, is something residents' welcome. Even City Council will be part of the "Big Boom" as they replace a traditional ground breaking shovel with that of a detonator! There will many good changes ahead for this piece of property and for the residents of the area.

### **Member Comments**

Bill welcomed Julia Watkins.

Motion to adjourn was made by Michelle and seconded by Bill. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned.

The next LCC meeting will be on Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> at City Hall.