

**ROCKY MOUNT TOWN COUNCIL  
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING  
APRIL 2, 2012**

The April 2, 2012 special meeting of the Rocky Mount Town Council was held at the Rocky Mount Municipal Building located at 345 Donald Avenue, Rocky Mount, Virginia at 4:30 p.m. with Mayor Steven C. Angle presiding.

On behalf of the Rocky Mount Town Council, the meeting was called to order by Mayor Angle, with the following members of Council being present:

Vice Mayor Gregory B. Walker and Council Members Jerry W. Greer, Sr., Bobby M. Cundiff, P. Ann Love, Robert L. Moyer and Robert W. Strickler

For the record, the following were present: All members of Town Council as noted, Town Manager C. James Ervin, Assistant Town Manager/Community Development Director Matthew C. Hankins, and Town Clerk Patricia H. Keatts

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Prior to the meeting, Council had received the agenda for review and consideration of approval.

- Motion was Council Member Strickler to approve the agenda as presented, with motion on the floor being seconded by Council Member Love. Discussion ensued. Council Member Moyer stated that he is not against the music venue but instead, he is against the way the Council is going about. The Mayor stated that his concerns could be discussed under the agenda section "Council Concerns". There being no further discussion, let the record show that the motion on the floor passed unanimously by those present.

**UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE CENTER**

The Assistant Town Manager came before Council, stating the following:

*Introduction by Staff:*

- Council has appointed a Performance Center Committee that has been advertised and met with those interested firms in doing the architectural services for the potential music venue going into the Lynch Hardware Building, with these design services being critical to how the music venue will be constructed and perceived by the musicians that will play there and the visitors and businesses it will likely attract.

- These professionals are considered for this work because they will create spaces that will come to define the Performance Center, along with the Town of Rocky Mount and the arts and cultural district in which the Performance Center is located.
- Attracting those audiences to come to the Town of Rocky Mount is big part of that design. Without professionally designed spaces and equipment, the Town's Performance Center will struggle to find its audience and to work towards profitability.
- The Performance Center Committee is made up of Mayor Steve Angle, Vice Mayor Gregory Walker and Council Member Ann Love, who have met several times over the past month and a-half. They met first to narrow down the architects that they wished to interview, and then interviewed three highly qualified architect firms who had extensive experience in designing this type of facility.
- Based on those interviews, the recommendation from Performance Center Committee was to engage Hill Studio out of Roanoke, Virginia to serve as architect for this project, which is based on a variety of factors: most notably, experience in working with similar venues and the strength of the team they have put together to design the interior, exterior, equipment, mechanical and electrical systems required to operate a music venue like this.
- Over the past month, Town staff has worked with Hill Studio to negotiate a contract that encompasses all of the appropriate architectural contracts. There are a number of contracts that are standard for this type of work that apply in this situation. The additional agreements are beyond basic services. There are historic structure work and tax credit work that will pay for a lot of the work for the music venue. For purposes of this contract, staff has used a projected construction budget of \$1.4 million dollars, which may be more or less, depending on Council recommendation on ways they want the music center to be outfitted, designed, number of people it will hold, along with a whole host of factors that will drive what that cost is. Based on the Town's contract, the designer's final payment will be based on 8.3% of that final construction cost.
- The Council now has a taste of what services will be provided before they considers the contract,
- Has asked the lead architect for Hill Studio to come and offer presentation on the firm, the services that will be offered, and type of vision that they have for the venue; therefore, introducing Mr. Hunter Greene with Hill Studio.

*Presentation by Performance Center:*

Hunter Greene, RA, LEED AP, Project Manager, Architect for Hill Studio, presented to Council the following:

- The Performance Hall Project Team: giving Council an overview of the staff involved in the project. Engineering involved:
  - o MEP: Obenchain, Linkous, Daniels & Sowick (mechanical electrical, plumbing, fire, protection and information technology engineering).
  - o Civil: Thompson & Litton (civil engineering and surveying)

- Environment: EEE Engineers (environmental assessments).
- Structural: Day & Kinder Consulting Engineers (structure engineers).
- Project Experience: Over 20 years in the small towns and communities. Empowering rural communities in economic restructuring. Creating cultural heritage and recreation venues: downtown revitalization master plans; façade programs; Farmer’s markets; public squares; and music venues. In designing for the Crooked Road: fundamental program for the successful venues: (1) authenticity; (2) unique place-based assets; and (3) make your neglected place your prized place. Conducted interviews with musicians. Explained how historic credits make a project happen. Has experience in working with performers. Explained the Hill Studio project mission test: (1) will enhance the quality of life of local residents; (2) revitalizes areas of disrepair (blighted areas); (3) will result in a unique asset-based solution; (4) is cost-effective; (5) will employ creative people on a full-time basis; (6) will leverage other economic development activity; (7) will boost the esteem of municipality and participants; and (8) will not detract from other economic development efforts.
- The Building and Your Project: Went over the history of the former Lynch Hardware Building. Explained the historic tax credit process.
- Approach to Your Project-Making the Magic Happen: Did a recap of the building and funding sources-historic tax credits.
  - Scope of work:
    - Major Music Venue at the Eastern Gateway to the Virginia’s Crooked Road Heritage Trail
    - Welcoming performance space for diverse music genres on the main floor
    - Utilize area stakeholder’s input
    - Develop building perimeter
    - Strengthen connection to Farmer’s Market and downtown
    - Bid documents and construction administration
  - Facility Program:
    - Pre-design and programming
      - The desired characteristics of the venue
      - How does it feel at show time
      - Visual character
      - Musicians’ experience
      - Audiences’ experience
      - Management (Town’s) experience, operations
      - Spatial requirements and character
      - Technical requirements
      - Goal is to make it happen
    - Performance Hall Design (how it looks and feels) (The “Harvester”)
      - Entrance and lobby
      - Audience area (will seat approximately 300)
      - Back of house and stage

*Council Consideration of Proposed Contract:*

There was much discussion between Council, the Assistant Town Manager, Mr. Greene regarding the project. Specific concerns by Council were:

- Mr. Greene confirmed to the Mayor that if the engineers get the design and Council decides not to go with the one proposed, it can be tweaked, with three schematics brought before Council for consideration.
- Mr. Greene confirmed to Vice Mayor Walker: (1) regarding the tax credits that if they are incorrectly submitted, the tax credit consultant is held accountable; (2) if the public does not support the proposed design, the cost to the Town would be the work done so far; and (3) projects of this nature can be cost-effective.
- Answering a question Vice Mayor Walker had about how much revenue the Town may have missed by not taking advantage of the Town being the eastern gateway for the Crooked Road, the Assistant Town Manager stated that it was hard to tell, but it was reported a couple of years ago that approximately \$23 million dollars had been generated in revenue across the entire Crooked Road, and that the Town could have had a slice of that revenue. He also confirmed having a music venue in the Town could possibly draw in hotels, sit-down restaurants, and other amenities.
- The Assistant Town Manager relayed to the Mayor that Hill Studio wants to work with local contractors and have them involved in the project as much as possible. Mr. Greene confirmed that this will be in the bid step and will be included in the bidding process. The Town Manager stated that as long as the Town does this project itself, it is not constrained like the Uptown Project was through the Community Development Block Grant. The Assistant Town Manager also relayed to Council that every potential funding source he will be contacting will not be targeted to drive cost up or have any strings attached in any way.
- The Assistant Town Manager indicated to Council Member Cundiff that the type of musicians that can be targeted for a 300 seat capacity depends on the acts and promoters. He further stated that the band costs should be covered, but a lot of the cost can be covered with the 300 seats. The Mayor commented that some of the local musicians may be able to fill up the seats also, and the music venue will be opened to any genre of music, community theater, and not pigeon-holed for just music pertaining to the Crooked Road. The Assistant Town Manager stated that from what staff has heard, Council does want to use local musicians and he believes that the Town will be able to do this.
- Council Member Moyer stated that he believes the economy being what it is right now and everyone struggling to get by, he does not see the need to spend that amount of money, and that he hopes he is wrong, but he believes any money the Town will invest in this project will not be returned to the Town. He further stated that he believes the public should vote on whether or not the Town should have a music venue.
- Council Member Strickler stated that he has heard positive comments from the public about building a music venue at the former Lynch Hardware Building.

- Council Member Cundiff read his statement for the record, being: "We need to get our priorities in order. We have employees who haven't received a raise in nearly four years, several water lines need to be replaced, and the ever increasing costs of running our Town. We are facing declining revenues and making decisions to create more financial pressures on our citizens. These questions deserve an answer: (1) How much for a manager? (2) How much for advertising? (3) How much for utilities and cleaning? (4) How much revenue will it produce? (5) What kind of support will you have? Our focus as Town Council should be to provide the five basic services of: police protection, fire protection, public water, public sewer, and street maintenance. Most music venues are private endeavors and I do not think this town should be in the entertainment business and subsidizing it with taxpayer dollars."
- The Mayor stated that it is his belief that the music venue over time will be a positive thing for the Town and that he has received positive comments on it being located in the former Lynch Hardware Building.

There being no further comments, the Mayor entertained a motion.

- Motion was Council Member Strickler to proceed with the contract and allow the Town Manager or Assistant Town Manager to sign the contract to allow Hill Studio to get underway, with motion on the floor being seconded by Council Member Greer. A roll call vote was taken. Voting in favor of the motion on the floor were Vice Mayor Walker and Council Members Greer, Strickler and Love. Voting in opposition to the motion on the floor were Council Members Cundiff and Moyer. Let the record show that the motion on the floor passed four to two.

Vice Mayor Walker stated that what the Town just did was not to spend \$1.4 million dollars, but that the Town agreed for the architect to proceed to see what the Town can have at the former Lynch Hardware Building. The Assistant Town Manager confirmed this statement, further stating that the architect will earn a fee on the \$1.4 million dollars, which would be \$116,000; and this is what they will earn, but they would earn it if the project is completed and that is what Council, the public, and the musicians say should be built down there. He further confirmed to Vice Mayor Walker that until Council approves that, there is no part to spend anything other than Mr. Greene's time.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At 5:25 p.m., motion was made by Council Member Strickler to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Love and carried unanimously.

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Steven C. Angle, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Patricia H. Keatts, Town Clerk