

**City Council of the City of Greenville  
Special Work Session  
RETREAT, PART II – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Monday, May 17, 2022  
2:00 p.m.**

**Meeting Location:  
Greenville ONE, 2 West Washington Street, Room 341**

**MINUTES**

CITY COUNCIL: Mayor Knox White, Councilmember John M. DeWorken, Councilmember Lillian B. Flemming, Councilmember Kenneth C. Gibson, Councilmember Wil Brasington, Councilmember Russell H. Stall, and Councilmember Dorothy H. Dowe

CITY STAFF: City Manager John F. McDonough; Interim City Attorney Leigh Paoletti;  
City Clerk Camilla G. Pitman

Mayor White called the meeting to order for the purpose of discussing the following matters.

**Economic Development Strategic Plan: Introduction and Discussion**

Resonance Consultant Vice President of Economic Development Steve Pedigo introduced President and CEO Chris Fair and Research Director Omneya Fahmy and facilitated discussions involving the development of an Economic Development Strategic Plan. Mr. Pedigo referred to community meetings that were conducted earlier in the morning and responses they received regarding the future of cities, trends impacting Greenville, and evaluating goals, values and visions for the future.

Councilmember DeWorken reminded everyone of the reason for pursuing consultants for a plan after working through the Greenville2040 Plan and determining a need to further evaluate and focus on economic development. Mr. Faris provided a list of trends based on their work with other cities including a rapid rise in entrepreneurship, nearshoring and onshoring, rise of remote working, and rise of the rest whereby smaller municipalities are being selected. Mr. Faris commented on the trend to implement quality of place, referencing to: (1) living in a 15 minute city which allows individuals to live, work and play within a 15 minute walk, bike or drive; (2) leisure boom; (3) labor shortage; (4) diversity equity and inclusion; (5) decarbonization; and (6) climate change. City Council members shared their input regarding trends impacting Greenville including labor trends, diversity and inclusion, downtown energy and activity, retain young people in Greenville, and remote working locations, among other trends.

Ms. Fahmy provided research information, assessments, and analysis using Greenville and Spartanburg County regional area. Ms. Fahmy stated the reports showed that Greenville is fast growing, attracting talent, has a robust economy and is a major exporter. Councilmember Dowe and Councilmember Flemming both commented on recognizing the displacement of residents, poverty in Greenville County, and the difficulty of rising out of poverty in the community. Councilmember Gibson commented that the City must come up with a plan as quickly as possible to address diversity and inclusivity for minorities and requested Resonance representatives determine strategies and present them to Council for their consideration.

Ms. Fahmy referred to considering trade clusters with the top five being (1) automotive, (2) production technology and heavy machinery, (3) advanced materials, (4) textile manufacturing and (5) life sciences. Ms. Fahmy provided statistics on employment including working sector, service sector and knowledge sector.

Mr. Pedigo referred to sessions with community stakeholders and shared the following key takeaways: (1) good place to call home; (2) community desire for change; (3) location advantage; (4) networking; (5) foreign investments; (6) affordable housing; (7) uniformity in direction between the City and the County; (8) university collaboration; (9) equity and inclusion; and (10) connectivity. Ms. Fahmy also referred to responses received to a community survey and business owners survey and the top responses received from both.

Regarding economic development goals, Mr. Pedigo referred to their community sessions and asked for priority strategies from City Council members. Councilmember Dowe suggested finding a way to address economic opportunity for high school graduates and finding a pipeline for that group. Councilmember Gibson suggested identification of strategy for what type of industries would work best or certain companies to encourage to come to Greenville. Mayor White referenced to work with GADC, the need to better align the different economic development organizations, and concern with losing industries to other areas. Mr. Pedigo responded it is about scale and he is not surprised that certain industries are going to Charlotte or Atlanta.

Councilmember Brasington left the meeting.

Councilmember DeWorken stated the road map being created by Resonance will help create the plan for Council to follow. Councilmember DeWorken shared that he believes Greenville can be an innovative city and this is an opportunity for Greenville to be a pillar for entrepreneurship. Councilmember Gibson recommended Resonance representatives consider the suggestions provided and share with Council the obstacles and challenges they see. Councilmember Stall suggested stepping back and having a better understanding of what economic development actually is in order to better define what economic development means for the City and its future. Councilmember Stall agreed with Mayor White's comments regarding better alignment of the economic development organizations and stated he would be interested in reviewing the benchmarking information and the municipalities included.

### **Innovation and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Update**

John Moore, principle with Momenteum Strategies, introduced Eric Weissman, Executive Director with NEXT, and Anthony Herrera, Chief Innovation Officer with Furman University, who provided an update and discussion regarding innovation and entrepreneurship in the area. Mr. Moore referred to the strategy and stated job creation, diversification, industry competitiveness, retain/attract talent and wealth is important to innovation and entrepreneurship.

Mr. Weissman referred to building his board and team and to his interest in widening the aperture on who NEXT serves and broadening the definition to include leaders, not only founders. Mr. Weissman provided the impact report and commented on LaunchPad which was recently held giving away financial support to beginning entrepreneurs. Mr. Weissman stated the event was used to create STARTUPGVL Ecosystem collaborating the efforts.

Mr. Herrera shared that it is important to have civic, academic, and corporate needs on the agenda in becoming an innovative and entrepreneur community. Mr. Herrera introduced GVLStarts which

Minutes – Work Session

May 17, 2022

Page 3

is an 8-week program that trains, mentors, and provides resources for ideas to start and to grow locally, in the state and in the region.

Mayor White left the meeting.

Mr. Weissman discussed ways to move forward and provided additional steps to pursue and encourage entrepreneurs to network and connect within the ecosystem.

Councilmember Stall asked about consideration of an Innovation District, and Mr. Herrera responded he believes the hub is not in one location but is organically throughout downtown. Mr. Moore recommended determining where the action is and then package and promote it.

With no further discussions, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Camilla G. Pitman, MMC, Certified PLS  
City Clerk

Meeting notice posted on May 13, 2022