

**City of New Bern
Board of Aldermen Work Session
July 19, 2011
City Hall Courtroom – 6:00 P.M.
300 Pollock Street**

Board Members in Attendance: Mayor Lee W. Bettis, Jr.; Aldermen Sabrina Bengel; Denny Bucher; Johnnie Ray Kinsey; and Dana Outlaw. Aldermen Bernard White arrived at 6:30 p.m.; and Victor Taylor arrived at 6:50 p.m. Alderman White and Taylor were late due to a typographical error on the agenda; it stated the start time being 7:00 p.m.

Also in Attendance: Mike Epperson, City Manager, and Scott Davis, City Attorney.

1. Discuss Fiber Optic Easement.

Mark Trail, Information Technology Manager, stated the city received a letter from MCNC requesting for right of way easements. MCNC is an independent, non-profit organization based in Research Triangle Park, NC. This non-profit organization provides networked technology services to public education students. MCNC operates the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN) which allows students to connect to each other. A grant was awarded to MCNC for the expansion of educational network. The grant is to fund the engineering and construction of approximately 500 miles of new fiber in rural southeastern and western North Carolina. MCNC proposes to build a 39 million mile network of terrestrial fiber optic cable, mostly buried, lit and amplified with industry-standard dense wave, which includes New Bern. They are requesting to locate a portion of the new fiber optic cable through the park so it may bore under and across the Trent River. It is anticipated the work would be completed within 4-6 weeks. It has a cost savings of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) for the city.

2. Train Depot Restoration Project Update.

Alderman Bengel gave an update on the restoration of the train depot. There is a joint working group made up of the New Bern Preservation Foundation representatives: Dallas Blackiston, Buzz Mead, Joe Mansfield; and Nancy Hollows along with Alderman Bengel and Bobby Aster, Fire Chief. The North Carolina Railroad representatives are Scott Saylor and Chuck Burnell. North Carolina Department of Transportation District Rep. Hugh Overholt and Dominic Brown, Norfolk Southern Corporation are also a part of the group. The community leaders are Bob Mattocks, Lonnie Pridgen, and Joe Thomas. The joint working group entered into a memorandum of agreement to pursue avenues to get the train station rehabilitated. The group has been meeting for months and now has approved the architectural drawing for the reconstruction/rehabilitation of the one story roof section of the building. The building will be restored in the same location.

Alderman Bucher wanted to know what year the train depot was built. It was built in the year of 1910, stated Alderman Bengel.

Mayor Bettis wanted to know if the debris around the train depot would be cleaned up. The group is working on this problem, but it is an ongoing issue. Hopefully, it will be resolved eventually.

Attorney Davis stated the city would enter into a license/lease agreement with the North Carolina Railroad and Norfolk Southern Corporation. This project has been in the making for over twenty years.

3. **Presentation on Redistricting.**

Alice Wilson, GIS Coordinator, presented a power point presentation on the current ward boundaries based on new population estimates from the 2010 census. It is required by law that adjustments be made to balance population evenly throughout each ward. Four separate plans were used as starting points for the final plan. All the wards are based on the 10% rule. The Equal Protection Clause of the US Constitution requires that where wards are used, they must be substantially equal in population so that each person's vote counts the same.

Plan 1:

This plan expands and adjusts the ward boundaries based on the existing boundaries to reach as close as possible equal population. This has the most equal population per ward of the four plans. It also adjusts Township 2 area Taberna/Carolina Colours entirely into Ward 3.

Plan 1A:

This is somewhat similar to Plan 1, but slightly different. This plan expands the ward boundaries from their existing location and leaves a portion of Ward 5 in its current location in the Township 7 area near Carolina Colours.

Plan 2:

This plan groups the proposed wards based on topography and neighborhoods based on their primary location, and drive time or ease of access from current residence. All of Township 7 is entirely in Ward 3. This plan has the largest difference from the optimal population but still falls just under the 10% rule.

Plan 4:

This plan looks most at placing predominantly African American Blocks into the existing predominant African American Wards of 1, 2, and 5. Also, it places the least population into the fastest growing ward areas now and proposed in the near future.

The 10% rule does not apply for Ward 1 and Ward 4. Looking at the new population of the most populous ward and determine the percentage, it exceeds the ideal population. Ward 4 is 23.34% over. Looking at the new population of the least populous ward and determining the percentage, it is short of the ideal population. Ward 1 is 18.71% short. Therefore, Ward 1 has the least population and Ward 4 has the most population.

Alderman Bucher stated all of Township 7 should be in one ward. A portion of Township 7 is in Ward 2 and Ward 4. Alderman Taylor was in agreement that his portion of Township 7 should be in Ward 3. Alderman Kinsey stated he would be willing to work with the board to reducing some his voting number so the 10% rule can be applied.

Alderman White expressed that if blacks voters remain in the wards this would enable blacks to be elected. He felt if the ward boundaries are altered blacks will not get elected. He referred to the term gerrymandering.

Alderman Bucher made a motion to go into closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3) to discuss legal matters, seconded by Alderman Bengel. The motion carried unanimously, time being 7:35 p.m.

Alderman Taylor made a motion to come out of closed session, seconded by Alderman Bengel. The motion carried unanimously.

4. **Adjourn.**

Alderman Taylor made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. The motion carried unanimously, time being 8:10 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk