

You Spoke. We listened.

Let's partner to preserve our values!

Organization: Willow Oaks Recreation Association

Meeting Date: 3/17/11

in Attendance: 13

- Wasn't there an article in paper about tax rate increase? (Article was premature)
- I don't see anything wrong with raising tax a little.
- Although sometimes for an elected official raising taxes is a "kiss of death"
- People in other places (New York) they really pay high taxes.
- Assessments being lower, you are already getting more of our money. 5 years ago assessments lower than what most houses selling for, now it is about the same as sales price.
- Law requires assessment to be based on market values. (Localities are supposed to be as close to 100 percent of marketing value.)
- Are they sending out assessments alphabetically? (All assessments are out -- If you have not received one it means it has not changed.)
- My neighbor has not had a change in 3 years, I get one every year. We both have not done anything to our homes so why would one change? (Mary agreed to research it.)
- Why are we building this new court house that cost so much money but cutting so much in schools? The newspaper makes it sound like they just want something new and modern. You can increase security in the building. (Newspapers are not getting the full complete story. Answer is everybody agrees the courthouse needs to be replaced for two reasons, structurally it is not conducive for court room operations – we do not have separate places for jurors and witness and defendants and attorneys, so we get mistrials because things are overheard or jurors feel threatened. We have had a lot of complaints from jurors that feel they are very uncomfortable. We are managing security with more manpower so they are not out in the streets and the community.)
- Who planned the building? (It is a very old building dealing with historic construction and historical preservation does not allow us to change walls, etc, If you are going to have to build it, by delaying it we are driving up the cost, why not take advantage of low interest construction cost now. Debt Services is how we manage our buildings.)
- I work at Langley and a lot of the historic preservation is on the outside, some can be done on inside to fit what we need. (The walls are the structural support for the building which is why we can't do that.)
- Did they outgrow the new building? (No, one is Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court and one is the General District Courthouse and they are fully used.)
- Virginia Beach Court system is the best, one building for one court and one jail with an underground tunnel.
- If you build a new building need the garage. Parking is an issue. We almost need the parking more than the court.
- How many different subsidies does the city pay for things like the Radisson and Convention Center? (Not paying anything for Radisson. The way we pay for the convention center is a 2 percent lodging and 2 percent meals tax)
- Embassy Suites is doing a great job catering for the convention center

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- Peninsula Town Center is a great asset for the city. Good restaurants are there. Great competition for City Center in Newport News.
- The city has a lot of debt for Peninsula Town Center (The City does not have any debt. The debt is the responsibility of an independent entity.)
- We pay ½ percent of one penny at the stores and restaurants at the Peninsula Towne Center
- I know for parking the money in the meters goes to charity, how long will that be? This could be a possible revenue source for the city. (It is not our money it is theirs.)
- Who paid for the dredging on Elizabeth Lakes? (The City Council agreed to do it because waterways are an asset and not having navigable waterways may impact housing values.)
- I was told that the city was not paying for the dredging at Jones Budget Session (I must have misunderstood the question)
- The newspaper reported that people that live there demanded it because they pay higher property taxes and that's why it was done.
- Forest Park and also next to the Post Office (Riverdale) is in bad condition, does the city try to address it?
- Does the city try to attract business to shopping centers? For 22 years the building sat empty -- Couldn't the city have torn it down? (Blight, we can't tear it down just because it doesn't look pretty, it has to be unsafe)
- Present this one to the paper so we can understand how things work.
- Who controls the right to rent rooms in a house? Is that a city problem or a neighborhood problem? Willow Oaks zoned single-family but people are renting out rooms. (I will research it.)
- Do they still have the Neighborhood College Program? (Yes, Angelique will send out information)
- Do we still have an ombudsman program? I used this in the past and I was satisfied and they got things done. (We do not have the position but we still have responses, i.e. 311)
- Chemical collection programs and garbage collection program are good.
- I miss the good old days where the community was involved in the budget hearings. It irritates me that citizens only have 3 minutes to talk and council will not respond. This is not democracy. (That is feedback that I will share with Council.)
- We walk our dog at Gosnolds Hope Park and the teens are going in their trucks doing donuts etc in the park, creating ruts in the ground, this happens every time it rains, can Police review on checks?

The City Manager's responses are noted in parenthesis. All questions asked were answered.

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