

North Fort Worth Alliance  
Minutes, Feb. 16 2013

President Rusty Fuller opened the meeting at 9:15. Rusty introduced our guests – Council member Danny Scarth, District 4; Paul Gardner, running for Council in District 4; Doug Wiersig, City of FW Transportation & Public Works Director; and Sami Roop, representing Council member Dennis Shingleton’s office, who was unable to be with us this morning.

Rusty announced, to loud applause, that the new and improved Golden Triangle Road is now open!

Rusty introduced our featured speaker for this month, Mayor Betsy Price, of the City of Fort Worth.

Following is a summary of Mayor Price’s comments and responses to questions from the membership.

- Mayor’s motto: “you can’t do much sitting behind a desk”. The Mayor has engaged in walking/riding Town Halls, and has been engaged in active interaction with the citizens. They will soon be re-establishing the digital town hall meetings. For schedules of activities and events, visit the city website at <http://fortworthtexas.gov/mayor/>
- After attending many meetings with other Mayors from across the county, Mayor Price has drawn the conclusion that we are doing better than most cities our size. We still have challenges to face, but we are much better off than many other cities.
- The city has worked hard on budget issues. The yave moved 2 ½ cents from Operations to Debt reduction and have committed to getting to 5 cents. There was 300 million in un used bond funds when she took office – all of that has been put into streets and all of the money has been allocated to projects.
- Mayor Price is committed to lowering expenses and raising revenues to get to a more balanced budget, and a more efficient government with better technologies. She says we don’t need bigger government, we need more efficient government.
- Fort Worth is the first large city to exit the recession.
- The city is very pleased with the American Airlines/US Air merger, and the commitment to keep the company hq in Fort Worth. American still has the option on the Alliance facility, and other companies are interested in taking it over. Some of the US Air people will be moving to Ft Worth from Phoenix.

- Crime is down significantly in the City. We have an engaged citizenry, which leads to safer neighborhoods. The Mayor urged everyone to get involved in their communities, and to know their neighbors.
- Job growth in Ft Worth continues, and there are several big companies looking at Ft Worth as a place to relocate. They are attracted by our workforce, our education, and our community health.
- The City is holding an Annexation Workshop this month to take a serious look at annexation plans. The Mayor is a firm believer that annexation should not take place unless the citizens want it, or there is a significant need for services that the city can fill. She stated that we have a hard time delivering services to the citizens we have and we need to be careful about taking on more.
- Police and Fire response is still an issue for north Fort Worth, but they are addressing the need, and have shifted some officers to be permanently assigned to the area north of the Loop. Mayor Price is anxious to have citizen feed back about that.
- Construction on I35 north of the loop up to 287 begins in July, with a finish date of 2018. North of 287 to 114 is not yet funded, but is on the list for next available funds. Funding transportation has become a big challenge because only about 20% of the total now comes from Federal and State sources, putting a much bigger burden on the Cities and Counties.
- The City has decided to raise transportation impact fees from 2000 to 3000, and review again in 2 years. Some people wanted more and the builders wanted less, but they compromised at a 1000 increase.
- There will be a new bond election in May. The city has 300 million in bonding capacity, but will hold some of that in reserve, and will request about \$267 million in the bond election. NOTE: this bond election will NOT increase taxes – it will just shift revenues from one source to another. The overall tax rates will not change as a result of the new bond.
- Staff has put together a “wish list” of projects for the bond funds, totaling 1.7 billion. They will ask for citizen input on how to narrow that down to the \$267 billion that will be available. The list is posted on the city’s website, please look at it, and communicate your priorities. Public hearings and information meetings will be held during the next few months in neighborhoods throughout the city. All of this information will be on the website.
- The Mayor encouraged everyone to get involved in the walking/biding town halls, or to join Java Ft Worth, where you can have coffee with the Mayor and Council Members. Schedules are on the Mayor’s section of the City website.

Councilman Danny Scarth mad the following comments:

- Councilman Sal Espino has done a good job in pushing the needs of far north Fort Worth residents. Projects remain heavily weighted to the north part of the city.
- The completion of No Riverside, Beach and Timberland is now funded and construction will begin soon
- The Bond election list of projects includes specific amenities for North Fort Worth including a north service center base; a Sub City Hall; and possibly a joint City/County service center.
- They are also trying to provide more on line services, so that people can do business with the City from their homes.

Rusty thanked Premier Properties for providing refreshments for our meeting today. He then opened the meeting for questions which had been submitted on cards. Following is a summary of the questions asked, and responses given.

Question: Would the city consider establishing a Volunteer Coordinator position to help schedule and coordinate the activities of the many folks who are volunteering to help.

Response: Mayor Price said she has learned that other cities are doing exactly that, and the City of Ft Worth is looking into it. The current Citizens on Patrol program has been very effective, and the Code Ranger enforcement program is available to help train citizens on code enforcement.

Question: When will we see more police patrols and/or a police station in far north Ft Worth?

Response: The Deputy Chief of Police responded that immediately – there are a number of officers being permanently assigned to north of the loop. Short term – they are looking at moving officers geographic assignments and schedules to provide better response times throughout the city. Long term – they are looking at how they recruit and putting a heavier emphasis on recruitment. They are creating relationships, testing more frequently and offering more frequent academy classes to help meet the staffing needs they have. They are also increasing training staff. Traffic enforcement has been expanded, and they are hiring civilians and traffic control technicians to work traffic accidents so that officers are not occupied with that.

Question: What are the plans for Keller Haslet Road, Alta Vista to 377? There is a need for turning lanes.

Response: Doug Wiersig said that some money has been included in the new bond package for intersection improvements. Someone also asked about Park Vista

continuance, and Mr. Wiersig said that there is a new development on Golden Triangle that they are working with to help fund the continuation of Park Vista all the way from Keller Haslet down to Western Center. The goal is to connect all the missing links in the road system. This includes the extension of Timberland and the eventual extension of No Beach all the way to 170.

Question: What are the plans for improvements to 170?

Response: Danny Scarth reported that improvements to 170 is not currently a high priority with the Regional Transportation Commission. It's on the list but there is currently no funding for it. Doug Wiersig said that as the northern part of I35 gets finished, it will include an improvement to the 170/I35 intersection. The volume is not yet sufficient to turn 170 into a freeway or a toll road.

Question: When will the 170/114 intersection be completed? Progress seems to have stopped.

Response: Per Rusty Fuller, the latest word from TXDOT is that it will be completed Sept. 2013. (cross your fingers!)

Question: Why do we pay so much more for trash services in Ft Worth, and have a lower level of service than neighboring communities?

Response: Councilman Scarth said he recently did a comparison between Ft Worth and Arlington and found that while Arlington and other similar cities provide more frequent and less restrictive pick up, they do not offer things like streamlined recycling, lawn trash pick up every week at no additional cost, and once a month pick up of large unusual items. The City of Ft Worth has also recently opened drop off stations for large items, so we don't have to go to the City Dump and pay for deposits. Mr. Scarth reminded us that trash revenue also pays for code enforcement. He also pointed out that the average home value in Ft Worth is much lower than surrounding cities due to the age of the city, and the diverse population. Our tax rate is 85cents, but our average home value is only about \$120,000. In Southlake, for example, the rate is 35cents, but their average home value is around \$300,000.

The Mayor pointed out that older cities throughout the nation face the same problems of lower average home values, and aging infrastructure that has to be maintained. She pointed out that Ft Worth taxes have been lowered 4 times in the past 10 years.

Question: What about the extension of No Riverside from Alliance Gateway to Heritage Trace?

Response: Doug Wiersig told us that construction will start next month on improving it from Golden Triangle to Heritage Trace, and the section south of Kroger to Shiver will start the month after that. The next available funding will include improvement of No

Riverside from Shriver to Basswood. They will also work to rename the entire No Riverside/Olde Denton roads to one continuous name.

Question: What is being done about expansion of regional rail

Response: The Mayor is very committed to regional rail services in Ft Worth, and sees it as critical to the economic development of the city. They have recently replaced the entire Board of the T, and they are having a workshop soon to look seriously at plans for regional rail services. The DART will be at DFW airport in 2013, but the T won't be there until 2018. This is a serious detriment to attracting tourism and convention business to Ft Worth.

Question: Regarding natural gas drilling, the City does not seem to be taking the lead in the health and safety surrounding the drill sites.

Response: Councilman Scarth reported that Ft Worth standards are tougher than the Rail Road Commission on this issue. Ft Worth conducted a comprehensive study on air quality and natural gas drilling, and found that 600-700 feet from the drill site there is no significant impact to air quality. He also pointed out that air quality in Ft Worth has improved every year for the past 10 years. The Mayor said that Ft Worth has been the leader in gas drilling and air quality, and that other cities come to Ft Worth to learn about it.

Time did not allow for more questions, but cards were collected, and the Mayor will provide responses to all the questions, and the NFWA will post them on our website.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Fran Rhodes, Secretary