

Council Studies Proposed Arts, Community Initiative

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South Boston Town Manager Ted Daniel and Community Development Coordinator Tamyra Vest stand next to a Bob Cage sculpture in the lower end of downtown South Boston. South Boston Town Council is studying a preliminary pre-application seeking a HUD/VDOT grant for a South Boston Creative Arts and Community Development/Housing Initiative. (*Doug Ford/Gazette-Virginian*)

South Boston Town Council studied a preliminary pre-application outline for a \$235,000 creative arts and community development/housing initiative at its monthly work session Monday evening. The project is designed to use monies from a unique combination HUD/VDOT planning grant to emphasize economic development through the arts and culture, with a focus on downtown development and redevelopment, according to Town Manager Ted Daniel.

A Consolidated Appropriations Act was signed last year by President Obama that provided \$40 million for HUD's Community Challenge Planning Grants and up to \$35 million for DOT's transportation planning grants to be awarded as part of the National Infrastructure Investments program.

DOT and HUD issued this NOFA (Notice of Funding Availability) jointly to better align

transportation, housing, economic development and land use planning and to improve linkages between DOT and HUD's programs.

The project will implement the 2010 South Boston Comprehensive Plan by providing updated zoning/subdivision ordinances, development of a downtown arts/economic development master plan, downtown revitalization traffic pattern study and development opportunities for downtown mixed-use, affordable housing.

According to a preliminary pre-application outline, the project will provide a downtown South Boston transportation pattern study, develop zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance updates that implement goals and objectives of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, define and designate a downtown arts district and economic development plan, and identify affordable housing opportunities in the immediate downtown area.

The total cost of the project is \$235,000, Daniel said in his outline, with \$50,000 going toward a downtown arts district planning study, \$35,000 going toward a downtown traffic pattern study and plan, \$100,000 for zoning ordinance updates and \$50,000 for subdivision ordinance updates.

The grant includes a \$47,000 local match (cash in kind), with those monies having already been sourced in the 2010-2011 budget if the grant comes to fruition, Daniel said Monday.

Planning Retreat Agenda Items

Town council discussed possible agenda items for its bi-annual planning retreat planned for Sept. 10-11 at Berry Hill.

Daniel suggested council use as a guideline the list of strategic goals and objectives adopted at its last planning retreat in Sept. 2008.

Town Finance Director Erle Scott is scheduled to give an overview of the town's finances and what he thinks the local and national economy will do over the next two years and what the town should be prepared for, Daniel told council.

Public Works Director Alan Auld will discuss issues pertinent to his department, with cemetery issues at the forefront, along with post-closure landfill operations.

Enterprise Zone and IDA development issues are on the agenda, as well as police issues, including communications system upgrades, as well as an update on drug task force operations.

Daniel, in his role as zoning administrator for the town, will focus on zoning ordinances and subdivision rewrites and also will discuss progress in plans to renovate the former Washington-Coleman Elementary School into a multi-use community and recreation center.

Year-End Financial Report

General Fund revenues ended the 2009-2010 fiscal year at 104 percent of goal, Scott reported Monday night.

Year-end revenues were \$9,018,912 compared to a budget of \$8,597,328, while year-end expenditures were \$8,442,246, or 98.1 percent of budget (\$8,597,328), said Scott.

"We ended the year in pretty good shape at 104 percent of our goal," said Scott.

The Landfill Closure Fund, which is merged into the Public Works Fund for fiscal year 2010-2011, finished the last fiscal year with revenues of \$118,112 out of a projected budget of \$323,881 (58 percent), while expenditures were \$341,870 out of a budget of \$323,881 (105.5 percent).

The cash on hand report reflected a balance of \$3,145,039 in the general fund as of June 30, and a balance of \$67,600 in the landfill fund as of June 30, Scott said.

The majority of selected general fund revenues reflected amounts greater than the amounts budgeted at the end of June, Scott told council.

Categorical aid revenues as of June 30 reflected a year-to-date total of \$2,247,104, 100.2 percent of a budget of \$2,242,426, while current real estate tax collections were \$874,485 as of June 30, 102.9 percent of a budget of \$850,000.

Personal property tax relief collections reflected a balance of \$295,432, 100 percent of its budget.

Local taxes reflected a balance of \$395,436 out of a budget of \$340,000 (116.3 percent), meals tax collections were \$754,946 compared to a budget of \$600,000 (125.8 percent), and business license tax collections were \$542,398 as of June 30, compared to a budget of \$450,000 (120.5 percent).

Only two selected general fund revenue categories came in under budget, according to Scott's report, current personal property tax collections (\$425,000 budgeted, \$407,434 collected) and occupancy tax collections (\$155,000 budgeted, \$138,572 collected).

All told, year-to-date collections in selected general fund revenues were a total of \$5,655,807, 103.6

percent of a budget of \$5,457,858.

Personal property tax collections were a “little disappointing,” according to Scott, who added local tax collections were a “real surprise.”

“It’s a boost in a bad economy when you get that type of return,” said Scott.