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## Board approves budget cuts, approves trail plans

Posted By David Boraks

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The Town Board Tuesday night approved \$276,140 in budget cuts that will help the town pay its share of a budget shortfall at the MI-Connection cable system. The board also approved a 2010 contract for its Washington lobbyist and endorsed a pair of regional trail projects – the Carolina Thread Trail and Lake Norman Regional Bicycle Plan. And it put off a vote on a proposed lease for offices at South Main Square that would be part of the town's participation in a new "green business" incubator. Also Tuesday, the board:

- Allowed the developer of the Little Gate project on Jetton Street to build a duplex on a remaining parcel, instead of a previously approved retail and residential building. (See a report in Real Estate, ["Town Board OKs plan for Jetton St. duplex."](#) <sup>[1]</sup>)
- Authorized the town manager to sell surplus property (a 1986 Ford F 150 pickup).
- Approved amendments to its Vision, Mission, and Values Statement.
- Approved amendments to its Rules of Procedure to update mayoral and board appointments.
- Approved an agreement and certification for a FIT Community grant application
- Also, Mayor John Woods proclaimed this week, Feb. 7-13, as Scouting Anniversary Week. He noted that it's the 100th anniversary of the Boy Scouts and the 75th anniversary in Davidson.

### BUDGET AMENDMENTS

The board voted 5-0 to adopt the consent agenda, which includes a list of items voted on at one time. Among the items were a series of amendments to this year's budget, including cuts totaling \$276,140 that Town Manager Leamon Brice identified last month.

The budget cuts will help Davidson pay its share of additional funding that the town-owned cable TV system, MI-Connection, needs to balance its budget this year. Davidson and Mooresville have spent a total of \$92.5 million since December 2007 to buy and upgrade the system once owned by Adelphia Communications, which went bankrupt.

On Jan. 28, MI-Connection's board, which included representatives from the two towns, approved a revised 2009-10 budget that incorporates lower than expected revenue projections. The revised budget includes a projected shortfall of \$576,604, and the cable board designated members to contact the towns and request additional funding to make up the shortfall.

The two towns share the ownership of MI-Connection proportionally, according to the number of customers in each town: 68.75 percent for Mooresville and 31.25 percent for Davidson. That means Davidson's share of the cash required is about \$180,000, and Mooresville's about \$396,000.

Tuesday night's budget reductions will help Davidson cover its contribution. Mooresville officials have said they will use a combination of budget cuts and cash reserves to fund their portion.

Davidson's budget cuts and savings include:

- \$20,650 on insurance premiums
- \$86,855 by not filling vacancies (1 police officer and 1 police records clerk)
- \$25,285 by suspending D.C. lobbying contract last fall
- \$15,000 by delaying economic development strategic plan
- \$50,000 by delaying design of downtown parking deck
- \$24,000 by delaying optional debt service on N. Meck Business Park
- \$45,275 for supplies & miscellaneous
- \$9,075 delaying a planned public art project

For more in the MI-Connection financial situation, see our Jan. 28, 2010 report, ["Cable board revises budget, asks towns for cash."](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

*UPDATE:* In a related move on Tuesday, the town laid off a part-time event planner. See [our Feb. 11 story.](#) <sup>[3]</sup>

### **LOBBYING CONTRACT APPROVED**

The board on Tuesday also approved, 5-0, a contract with its Washington lobbying firm, McAllister & Quinn. The contract will pay the firm a \$3,000 monthly retainer through February 2011.

(Details in separate story, ["Town board approves contract with DC lobbyist"](#) <sup>[4]</sup>)

### **BUSINESS INCUBATOR LEASE**

The board declined to vote on a proposed lease for office space in the South Main Square Business Center, at 442 S. Main St. The "master lease" that was on the table Tuesday night would have been part of the Project for Innovation, Energy & Sustainability, or PIES, a "green business" incubator that the town has agreed to participate in.

Several board members expressed reservations about incurring the financial liability for offices that might go unused. They asked Mr. Brice to go resume negotiations with Kathleen Rose, the South Main Square property owner and economic development expert who is promoting the business incubator project. The project [was announced in December](#) <sup>[5]</sup>, and board members agreed to participate through a vote at their [Jan. 12 meeting.](#) <sup>[6]</sup>

The agreement under consideration Tuesday night calls for the town to sign a master lease for office space at South Main Square Business Center. The incubator is recruiting start-ups, and plans to provide office space and business advice to help them grow here in Davidson.

### **VOTES ON TWO TRAILS**

The board heard presentations from planners about two regional trail projects, the N.C. Department of Transportation's proposed **Lake Norman Regional Bicycle Plan** and the **Carolina Thread Trail**. Later in the meeting, commissioners voted unanimously to endorse both plans.

The backing is a show of support for the plans, but does not commit the town to spending any money.

The regional bicycle plan is the first of its kind in North Carolina, and is envisioned to encircle Lake Norman.

Regional town boards are being asked to endorse the recommended routes this month and the state DOT is expected to give its final OK this spring.

See more about the plan on the [Lake Norman RPO website](#).<sup>[7]</sup>

The [Carolina Thread Trail](#)<sup>[8]</sup> is a network of greenways and trails that would run through 15 counties.

<http://davidsonnews.net/2010/02/09/board-approves-budget-cuts-approves-trail-plans/>