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June 22, 1987

Mayor Hubert Brodell
City of Jonesboro
314 West Washington
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Dear Hubert:

On behalf of the Metropolitan Area Planning commission, we wish to thank you for the time we spent last week discussing the many issues associated with the current round of annexation proposals. The MAPC has been faced with the same questions as the City Council as to what would be the best course of action on these annexations. The purpose of this letter is to summarize the thoughts and recommendations that have been discussed by the MAPC.

The main problem as we see it is the present inability to control development activity in the areas near the city but outside the existing city limits. In many instances this results in annexation requests by semi-developed areas that do not have adequate street or other improvements, particularly street improvements and right-of-way dedication. Also, in many cases planned right-of-way for future arterials and other major roads has already been encroached upon by the development.

Given the current inability to enforce any type of ordinances in the perimeter area, it is in the best interest of the city to annex these territories so that we can control future development activity. However, we feel that a much preferable approach would be to confer extraterritorial jurisdiction on the MAPC whereby we could enforce development ordinances beyond the city limits. From the point of view of city planning, the ability to enforce development ordinances in the adjoining territory would be just as good as annexation. If extraterritorial jurisdiction were in force, all annexation requests could be judged based on an economic analysis by the appropriate city departments regarding the revenue to be derived from the annexed areas compared to the cost of providing city services, and on the contribution that the area could make to future city growth.

The MAPC does not have information regarding the amount of additional revenues that the city will derive from annexed areas through real estate taxes, state and federal funding based on population, recommendations on the financial wisdom or advisability of particular annexations. As stated previously, our motivation in favor of these annexations is based principally on the need to enforce development ordinances on future developments in these territories.

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Though the implementation of extraterritorial jurisdiction for development ordinances is the best long range policy, and should be achieved as soon as possible, we are faced with a surge of annexation requests on which some action must be taken. In order to deal with these requests we can only suggest a list of items which the Council should consider for each annexation request, and offer some general thoughts on the annexation process. A list of items for your consideration is attached.

By way of general discussion it seems that the basic question which we face in most annexation requests is, "How will the needed street improvements be accomplished and who will pay for them?". One proposal presently under review by MAPC member Richard Lusby is the possibility of using special improvement district taxes for annexed areas. Based upon a preliminary review he feels that it would be possible on these annexations to set up a special improvement district thereby allowing the residents of the annexed area to be subjected to a special improvement district tax to pay for the required improvements. These districts could issue bonds to pay for the street and other improvements with the taxes being utilized to repay the bonds over a period of years. This possibility certainly has a lot of merit since it would allow the property owners being annexed to forego any immediate out-of-pocket expense for these improvements while at the same time eliminating the possibility that the remainder of the city will wind up bearing the cost of the needed improvements. Problems are most evident on large tracts for annexation. However, a lot of small tracts can add up to the same or even greater problems.

On a related issue, at this month's meeting the MAPC voted to recommend to the City Council that an ordinance be passed which would require street right-of-way and improvements on all building permits being issued for new construction projects. Presently, the MAPC requires right-of-way and street improvements on all projects coming before it. However, small projects, particularly those involving only one structure being built on one lot, are not subject to MAPC review. The building inspector presently has no means of requiring right-of-way and street improvements on the small projects. Therefore, we feel it vital that the city adopt an ordinance authorizing the building inspector to require property owners to grant right-of-way and street improvements on all requests for building permits for new construction. This will be of benefit in some recently annexed territories since it will insure the needed street improvements are made when new development occurs.

Given the complexity of these and other planning issues, we feel the need for a full time professional planner to work with the MAPC, the Council, and the various city departments on these matters of crucial importance to the future growth of our city.

In closing, we want to repeat that all of the MAPC is aware of the significant issues involved in these annexation requests. Should you decide it necessary to form some type of special committee to review the annexation issues, the MAPC is certainly ready to assist in any way possible.

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Sincerely,

Lloyd McCracken, Jr. /bed

Lloyd McCracken, Jr.
Chairman

John Sloan
Vice Chairman

LM, JS/bd

Enclosure

ITEMS THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR EACH ANNEXATION

A. MAPC recommendations to Council:

1. Zoning recommendation.
2. Street right-of-way according to plan.
3. Other right-of-way requested by MAPC.

B. MAPC impact statement to include:

1. City engineer's statement on needed street and drainage improvements prior to annexation.
2. Fire department statement on plans to serve area including eventual need for additional facilities, hydrants, substations, equipment, manpower, etc. Will annexing this area negatively impact the city's fire rating?
3. Police department statement on plans and ability to provide protection to area including eventual need for additional facilities, equipment, or manpower. Will annexing this area negatively impact the level of police protection in the rest of the city?
4. City Water & Light statement:
 - a. Statement of plans to serve area.
 - b. Time table for implementation of service.
5. Area of potential floodway and floodplain, and number and assessed value of structures in potential floodway.
6. In case of small annexations, evaluate nearby areas as potential annexations in the near future, the effect of additional annexations in the area should be considered in the impact statement.

C. Economic analysis to include:

1. Population of area to be annexed.
2. Property tax valuation.
3. Estimated additional annual revenue to city by source and when it will be received.
4. Estimated annual cost to city of providing services.
5. Estimated potential for future growth in the area to be annexed.
6. If areas of potential floodway and floodplain are present, an estimate of costs associated with administering the flood insurance program. Also an estimate of the assessed value of structures potentially in the floodway area.

Blueprint For Future, City Planner Discussed

By LARRY FUGATE

Jonesboro's rapid growth mandates a comprehensive master plan and a qualified municipal planner, three city officials indicated recently, to avoid some of the pitfalls of the past.

Mayor Hubert Brodell and two aldermen want the City Council to consider hiring a municipal planner to coordinate activities and

planning between the municipality, Craighead County, the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission, City Water and Light and other agencies.

"We've been discussing it for several months, but I've wanted to exercise caution," Brodell said in a recent interview. "There is a real need for a qualified city planner."

Fourth Ward Aldermen Jim Hannah and Robin Nix said in separate interviews last week that failure to adopt a master plan to aid in regulating growth and development has posed problems for the municipality.

The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville developed a master plan for the city in the late 1940s. It was never adopted by the City Council. The plan was updated in the early 1950s, but again aldermen took no formal action on the proposal.

Aldermen in the early 1970s contracted with a nationally recognized planning company to develop a master plan for the city. It was completed, but never adopted.

Several years ago the Greater Jonesboro Chamber of Commerce sponsored work on "Jonesboro 2000," which called for a master plan to aid in regulating the city's growth through the year 2000. It was never adopted, although at least one portion of the project has been unofficially

used in street and highway planning for years.

A chamber committee recently asked that preliminary work on "Jonesboro 2000" be updated and adopted.

"I see excellent growth for Jonesboro in the near future, especially with the four-laning of U.S. 63 from here to Memphis and the good possibility that U.S. 67 will be four-laned from Newport and will pass near here," Brodell said.

"That means we have got to plan today for tomorrow, for industry, for every facet of growth that we can anticipate," Brodell added. "There is not a week that goes by that someone does not mention an annexation petition."

"We've got 500 to 600 acres on the drawing board for annexation right now," he stated. "In each and every case these are people who have come to us seeking annexation."

The city's current and projected growth poses problems for municipal officials, ranging from

traffic flow to drainage to providing fire and police protection, Brodell said.

"Planning alone will not do it," he emphasized. "It will take the cooperation of the whole community, Craighead County, the MAPC and City Water and Light to provide streets, utilities, sanitation services.

"Jonesboro is at a major crossroads and it's vital to our future that we make some major decisions in the near future."

Paying for growth is expensive, Hannah noted, and a major question facing city fathers involves who will pay for certain improvements. He said the city will not be able to afford to continue to annex property and pay for improvements.

A planner could help city officials make decisions about annexations, Hannah added. "We have got to decide if the city of the owners of property that is annexed will pay for improvements.

"It has been a hit or miss situation," Hannah said.

The "hit or miss" attitude angers Nix, who is a developer.

It is not uncommon for owners of an area to petition for annexation, Nix explained, and aldermen learn the area in question has substandard streets, little or no drainage and two-inch water mains.

"They may tell us that they don't expect improvements immediately, but when that property changes hands, the new owner comes to City Hall and wants to know why he does not have streets, curbs and gutters," Nix said. "He is a resident of the city and he expects to have all the services."

There is simply no firm policy on annexations, Nix explained, noting aldermen spent more than 30 minutes Monday evening discussing who would pay for the cost of installing a fire hydrant.

Heavy turnover on the planning commission has caused problems, Nix said. "It depends who (commissioners) is at the meeting. One may want you to do one thing, while another wants something else."

Lack of consistency by the planning commission has been "a major problem," Nix said. He said the problems stem, in part, from the lack of a master plan to serve as a firm guideline and the turnover among the appointed commissioners.

Nix said he is concerned about adding personnel to the municipal payroll when the city can not afford enough firemen and policemen. "We can't afford to hire a planner, yet we can't afford not to."

"I would anticipate some opposition to a master plan," Hannah said, adding he is sure "politics played a part" in the failure of the council to adopt any of the earlier plans.

A planner could eliminate some of the resistance, Hannah said.

"I once thought a personnel director could be the most valuable city employe, but now I believe a planner is the most important," Hannah added.

"Our annexation situation is critical," he concluded. "We need some solid direction on annexation and growth."

Hannah said he believes aldermen will decide by fall if a planner will be hired and will approve the position in the 1988 municipal budget.