

# CITY OF GASTONIA

## 2019 ADVOCACY AGENDA

### FEDERAL PRIORITY ISSUES:

- The City seeks funding through the US Department of Transportation's BUILD Program for the construction of a new bridge across Interstate 85 in Gastonia that will improve traffic safety and connectivity for the City of Gastonia and the City of Lowell as well as allow for the economic development of a large area that will create new jobs and benefit the entire region.
- The Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina Departments of Transportation are currently preparing a plan to build a high-speed-rail line from Atlanta to Charlotte. The City supports the three options that include a stop in Gastonia.
- The City supports maintaining the tax-exempt status for local government bonds. Proposals to make government bonds taxable would only make local governmental infrastructure projects more costly to local taxpayers and rate payers.
- The City supports full funding for Federal Transit Authority programs and efforts to secure discretionary funding for system needs.
- The City seeks to ensure that projects at the Gastonia Municipal Airport that are included in the Federal Aviation Administration's Work Plan maintain high priority and adequate funding
- The City supports continued funding for infrastructure initiatives in the areas of Transportation, Brownfield grants, Public Water and Sewer system rehabilitations and expansions, as well as the continuation of adequate funding for targeted Economic Development, Public Safety, Community Development Block Grants and HOME Programs.

### STATE PRIORITY ISSUES:

#### **FINANCIAL**

-The City supports the position that the State should not cut or eliminate State-shared revenues to local governments unless other suitable revenues replace them. Given the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *South Dakota v. Wayfair* concerning e-fairness and the collection of sales taxes by online vendors, the City believes all local governments in North Carolina should share in increased distributions from the State's Shared Sales Tax plan.

-The City opposes unfunded mandates that are established through legislation or regulation that require additional local expenditures without corresponding revenues.

-Tax Reform or redistribution of revenues should not adversely affect the City's revenues necessary for local services.

-Seek legislation to provide municipalities with authority for additional locally-controlled revenue options and flexibility in the use of those options, including – but not limited to – city-only sales tax, city occupancy taxes, prepared food and beverage tax, and impact fees for transportation.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

-The City supports legislation that will provide funding for State-level incentive programs necessary to keep North Carolina competitive in its efforts to bring additional jobs and economic development to local communities when competing with projects in other states.

-The City supports legislation that provides additional tools for the City to use in the redevelopment of downtown properties. For example, the City believes Chapter 160A could be amended to provide for more flexibility in the negotiation of economic redevelopment agreements and the sale of city properties when addressing urban blight and downtown revitalization.

-The City supports State Historic Preservation Tax Credits and advocates that they not be curtailed. These credits are important economic development tools for Gastonia and the State of North Carolina. The City supports the re-establishment of the North Carolina Mills Tax Credit or a similar incentive that will stimulate the market place to for restore and reuse large vacant industrial, agricultural, and utilities buildings.

-The City seeks funding for downtown and FUSE District related infrastructure projects.

-Support the removal of state and local economic grants as taxable gross income from the North Carolina State Tax Code, which typically mirrors the Federal Tax Code.

-Support the P&N Rail Line and the current operator, Progressive Rail.

## **LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

-The City supports greater opportunities for local “Home-Rule” decision-making, specifically:

-Amend the Annexation statutes to allow cities to close doughnut holes and restrict all water and sewer expenditures to areas only within public rights-of-way and easements.

-Legislation allowing municipalities to develop and implement procurement and bidding policies which incorporate reasonable “local preference” mechanisms.

-Legislation that will provide sufficient funding at the state level for incentive programs such as a competitive film incentive program, robust state historic preservation tax credits, and the Main Street Solutions funds necessary to grow jobs and the economy.

-The City supports current law which provides that local government elections are best determined by local government authority.

-Seek legislation granting local governments the authority to build broadband infrastructure and to partner with private internet service providers using long-term infrastructure leases.

-Seek legislation that supports adequate, fair school funding between state and county in all school systems across the state by repealing municipal authority to fund schools.

## **UTILITIES**

-The City supports the cooperative interconnection of water and wastewater utilities through partnership and contractual negotiation, and encourages the General Assembly to enact legislation which provides fiscal and regulatory incentives in support of such initiatives. Conversely, the City strongly opposes any State legislation which would compel the transfer or sale of utility systems without local consent. Additionally, the City supports legislation to provide continued low interest and no interest loans and grant funding opportunities for regional water and sewer interconnections. The City supports full funding for the State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) of the NCDEQ.

-The City supports the full funding of the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund for stormwater and water quality projects.

-The City believes all local governments should be treated equally with regard to utility relocations impacted by NCDOT road projects. In addition, the City supports legislation that would incorporate all utility relocation costs associated with a federally-funded interstate highway project as a DOT project cost.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

-The City supports the Catawba Crossings transportation project. Improving connections from Gastonia to Charlotte-Douglas International Airport and its Intermodal Facility is a key transportation and economic development priority. Bridge crossings of the Catawba and South Fork Rivers should be the highest priority transportation goal in our region.

-The City supports the extension of light rail, commuter rail, and rapid transit from Charlotte to Gastonia, including daily passenger rail service that will extend from Charlotte to Gastonia and on to Kings Mountain, NC.

-The City believes the current DOT ranking system does not rank projects that provide direct connectivity to major economic generators such as the Intermodal Freight Transfer Facility at Charlotte Douglas Airport high enough and that the ranking system should be amended to score these needs at a higher priority.

-The City believes all local governments should be treated equally with regard to utility relocations impacted by NCDOT road projects. In addition, the City supports legislation that would incorporate all utility relocation costs associated with a federally-funded interstate highway project as a DOT project cost.

-The City supports legislation that would allow (for all non-federally funded interstate highway projects) for the reimbursement of utility relocation projects to be phased over a period of five years. NCDOT should allow municipal utilities with adequate, functioning, and existing underground lines within State road rights-of-ways to remain in place for NCDOT road-widening projects.

-The City seeks State funding and plan approval for traffic calming initiatives along the Franklin Boulevard Corridor including pedestrian enhancements.

-The City supports the NCDOT-funded project to widen Interstate 85 and partner with NCDOT to ensure that the City has input in the planning and construction of improvements.

-The City seeks legislative and administrative changes to the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) process that give local priorities increased weight in the allocation of transportation funds.

-The City seeks to partner with NCDOT to fund a dedicated turning lane on South New Hope Road, heading west, at the Franklin Boulevard intersection. The City seeks legislation to ensure that the amount of Powell Bill funds appropriated by the state are sustained and distributions to municipalities are increased and grow over time.

-The City supports legislation to boost funding availability for public transit and transportation programs.

## **PARKS & RECREATION**

-The City supports the continued funding of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant Program (PARTF Grants).

-The City seeks ownership transfer of the State owned mitigation property that was formerly the Linwood Golf Course for park facilities and seeks approval and funding to fully utilize the property for regional parks and recreation opportunities.

-The City supports the continuation of allocations for the Recreational Trails Grant Program (RTP Grant).

-Support Crowder's Mountain State Park.

-Support Mountain Island Educational State Forest.

## **MUSEUM**

-The City supports full funding and inclusion in the Governor's Budget for the NC Science Museum's Competitive Grant Program, an important program that allows the City's Schiele Museum to provide high quality science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education programs to students in Gastonia, Gaston County and throughout our region.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

-The City opposes any legislation that would undermine Gastonia's Residential Rental Property Remedial Action Program.

-The City seeks additional funding for the continued improvement of the Charlotte Area Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) communications system in partnership with regional and federal partners.

-Only support legislation providing additional post-employment benefits to public employees that includes a funding mechanism to fully support the cost and liability of the benefit and support the study of existing post-employment benefits, such as special separation allowance programs, to ensure that the liability of providing the benefit is not solely borne by the last employer.

-Seek legislation to provide additional grant funding to municipalities for equipment and facility needs for public safety (fire, police, EMS).

## **COUNTY PRIORITY ISSUES:**

- The City seeks to partner with Gaston County on the acquisition and development of additional property for Industrial use and job creation.

-The City seeks to work with Gaston County on mutually beneficial studies that include economic development, transportation, and other items of interest.

-The City seeks to continue to work with Gaston County in the operation of our joint communication systems and radio shop.

-The City seeks County financial support for the Franklin Urban Sports and Entertainment (FUSE) District project.

-The City seeks to continue to partner with Gaston County to fund and construct strategic utility extensions.