



**March 18, 2014**

## **MINUTES**

The Holly Springs Town Council met in special called session on Tuesday, March 18, 2014 in the Council Chambers of Holly Springs Town Hall, 128 S. Main Street. Mayor Sears presided, calling the meeting to order at 6 p.m. A quorum was established as the mayor and five council members were present as the meeting opened.

**Council Members Present:** Mayor Sears and Councilmen James Cobb, Hank Dickson and Tim Sack and Councilwomen Linda Hunt-Williams and Cheri Lee.

**Council Members Absent:** None.

**Staff Members Present:** Chuck Simmons, town manager; John Schifano, town attorney; Joni Powell, town clerk, (recording the minutes); Jenny Mizelle, economic development director and Irena Krstanovic, economic development coordinator.

**6a. Community Branding Study** - Ms. Powell said last year, the Council directed staff to get an idea of how much it would cost to hire a consulting firm who could take inventory of our unique and positive assets and help us develop the story of who we are and where we are going as a community. Funding for such a study was to be included in this year's fiscal budget, and this was done.

Branding isn't a new concept, and local governments around the globe are embracing branding strategies to increase tourism, to provide residents and businesses with a sense of place and to attract new businesses.

The Town of Holly Springs has many faces. It leads us to ask ourselves, "Who are we? What are our assets and how do we promote them? Do we continue to create a logo for each separate event, department, initiative and program or do we stop. ... and create one endearing image and powerful campaign to be used throughout the community that more readily would identify the Town of Holly Springs?"

As the 36<sup>th</sup> largest municipality in the state Holly Springs continues to be presented with opportunities for growth in the areas of population, industry, amenities, infrastructure, and retail and residential development. With a horizon that is bright with the possibilities to be brought about by Holly Springs Towne Center Phase II, North Main Athletic Complex and a local economy that is on the rebound, the time may be particularly ripe for commissioning a community-wide branding study that would result in a formal shared vision adopted by the town council and staff and endorsed by the community.

After last year's retreat, we contacted two firms that help Town's discover their identities, and we found a ballpark figure to place in this fiscal year's budget to begin the process, should the Council decide to move forward, Ms. Powell said. One of the firms we contacted is local. New Kind is located in Raleigh, and its managing partners are Chris Grams and Tom Rabon.

Mr. Rabon is a longtime Holly Springs resident who has more than 25 years of experience working in government and the private sector. He has an extensive business and political background.

Mr. Grams is a resident of Raleigh, and he literally wrote the book on branding. He is the author of the recently published book, *The Ad-Free Brand: Secrets to Building Successful Brands in a Digital World*.

Ms. Mizelle introduced the New Kind guests, who explained how a community's identity comes from its history, its culture, the geography and the people of our place. A brand is not, therefore, created; it is *discovered*. They shared with the Council New Kind's methodology, explaining how the people of the community should provide their insights, which can then be articulated as the community's "brand."

In agenda packets, Ms. Powell and Ms. Mizelle had noted for Council that, as the Town enters these discussions, it is important to understand that:

- A brand is not a slogan or a logo or an ad campaign. These are the marketing tools that help convey the brand, but they are not the brand itself.
- A brand must be relevant, highly regarded, believable, and have emotional value that speaks to the people of the community it represents.
- Multiple messages in a community and within our own organization have created fragmentation and potential confusion about who or what Holly Springs is.
- Is this a brand that will apply to the "Town of Holly Springs" or to the "place of Holly Springs?"
- If the brand is to apply to the entire community – the place of Holly Springs – then this project should enhance and not duplicate the marketing efforts of participating organizations like the Chamber of Commerce.
- If the brand is to apply to the place of Holly Springs, then we should market the "place brand," but not try to figure out how to homogenize the organizational brands of the participating organizations like the Chamber of Commerce.

#### **What Would Be the Benefits of Branding to Holly Springs?**

- *Increased tourism*, which encourages outside dollars to our community, and, as a result, creates and sustains additional jobs.
- *Recruitment and retention of talent*, making our community an even better place to live for the next generation.
- *Attractiveness to new businesses*, which spurs economic development.
- *Fostering a sense of pride and satisfaction* for current residents.

#### **What Are Some of the Challenges of Place or Location Branding?**

- Location branding faces unique challenges in that it must cover multiple target groups... the business community, the Town organization, the Chamber of Commerce, the Town's parks and recreation programs, etc.
- Because the brand is for a place and not a specific product, service or entity, there is no single guardian or owner of the brand.

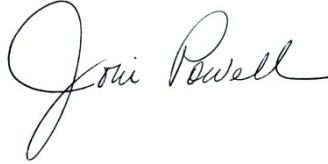
Ms. Mizelle said that, in the end, we hope to reveal or discover what it is that makes Holly Springs so attractive and special, and then communicate it to the rest of the world.

Companies like New Kind can help the Town with some or all of that objective, providing as much in the form of "deliverables" as we desire. Deliverables and marketing strategies will be further explained during the presentation. The cost of such a project can range from \$50,000 to \$100,000, depending on what the Town hopes to gain in the form of marketing materials. There are adequate funds in this year's fiscal budget that can be used for a Phase 1 branding study to begin. The completion of the study and marketing could be included in the budget year beginning July 1.

**Consensus:** The Council consensus was to direct staff to secure proposals from firms with experience in branding studies for municipalities.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business for the evening, the March 18, 2014 special meeting of the Holly Springs Town Council was adjourned following a motion by Councilman Sack, a second by Councilman Cobb and a unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted on Tuesday, April 15, 2014.

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MC

..... these minutes follow and are a part of the official record.

