

December 9, 2019

The City Council of the City of Rocky Mount met this day in regular session at 7:00 p.m. in the George W. Dudley City Council Chamber of the Frederick E. Turnage Municipal Building with Mayor David W. Combs presiding.

Councilmembers present: André D. Knight, Reuben C. Blackwell, IV, Richard Joyner, Lois Watkins, Tom Rogers, W. B. Bullock and Christine Carroll Miller.

Staff Present: Rochelle D. Small-Toney, City Manager; Pamela O. Casey, City Clerk; Natasha Hampton and Elton Daniels, Assistant City Managers; Dorothy Brown Smith, Chief Communications and Marketing Officer Consultant; Archie Jones, Director of Human Relations; Elayne Henderson, Director of Human Resources; George Robinson, Police Chief; Corey Mercer, Fire Chief; Will Deaton, Director of Development Services; Ken Hunter, Budget and Evaluation Manager; Amy Staton, Finance Director; Brad Kerr, Public Works Director; Paula Carbone, Senior Internal Auditor; Michael Shaw, Fleet Maintenance Supervisor; Chase Norwood, Management Analyst; Robin Cox, Communications Specialist; David Griffin, Grant Administrator; Kevin Harris, Business Development Manager; Kim Batts, Deputy City Clerk; Kream Mosley, Administrative Assistant, City Clerk's Office; and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

The following members of the Fire and Police Departments were also in attendance: Fire: Mike Roupp; Darvin Moore; Tracey Drewery; William Hale; Anthony Ladd; Linwood Webb; Wesley Boone; Johnnie Howard and Olen Bass. Police: Charles Williams, Joshua Talley, and Cameron McFadden.

Security Officers: Police Sergeants L. S. Parker, Jr. and Stoney Battle.

Mayor Combs opened the meeting and called on Councilmember Richard Joyner to offer prayer.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of a regular meeting of the City Council held on November 25, 2019 and minutes and recommendations from a special called Committee of the Whole meeting held on November 25, 2019 were approved as submitted to the City Council prior to the meeting.

The Committee of the Whole minutes are as follows:

#### **MINUTES OF A SPECIAL CALLED MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HELD MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2019 AT 2:00 P.M. IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM OF THE FREDERICK E. TURNAGE MUNICIPAL BUILDING:**

##### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Tom Rogers, Mayor Pro Tem  
André D Knight  
Reuben C. Blackwell, IV  
Richard Joyner  
E. Lois Watkins

##### **STAFF PRESENT:**

Rochelle Small-Toney  
Pamela O. Casey  
Natasha Hampton  
Elton Daniels  
Chris Beschler

W. B. Bullock  
Christine Carroll Miller  
Mayor David W. Combs

Kelly Cook  
Dorothy Brown Smith  
Ken Hunter  
Richard J. Rose

#### OPENING OF MEETING

Mayor Pro Tem Tom Rogers called the meeting to order at 2:08 p.m. and welcomed all present. He noted this will be the last time this particular group will be meeting in a Committee of the Whole meeting and added that he had been thinking about Thanksgiving and the hard-working City employees that provide good work. The City Council offered a round of applause for City employees in recognition of the service they provide for the City to the community.

Mayor Pro Tem Rogers explained the guidelines for Committee of the Whole work sessions and that Council would be going into closed session to discuss matters concerning attorney-client privilege and personnel and such other business as may come before the Council.

#### CLOSED SESSION

Motion was made by Councilmember Watkins, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the City Council go into Closed Session at 2:15 p.m. for the purposes stated. The minutes of the Closed Session shall be placed on file as **ESM-543** at the end of Minute Book 36 upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

#### OPEN SESSION

The Mayor Pro Tem convened the meeting in open session at 3:41 p.m. with the following present:

##### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Rogers, Mayor Pro Tem  
André D Knight  
Reuben C. Blackwell, IV  
Richard Joyner  
E. Lois Watkins  
W. B. Bullock  
Christine Carroll Miller  
Mayor David W. Combs

##### STAFF PRESENT:

Rochelle Small-Toney  
Pamela O. Casey  
Natasha Hampton  
Elton Daniels  
Chris Beschler  
Dorothy Brown Smith  
Richard J. Rose

#### PEER REVIEW

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney provided the City Council with an Ordinance to eliminate peer review panel appeals for employees recommended for dismissal and to clarify peer review panel appeals for all employees subject to disciplinary action other than in cases with dismissal recommendations.

She explained that the current Ordinance relative to peer review panel appeals is in conflict with the City Charter and Personnel Policy. Ms. Small-Toney told the Council adoption of the Ordinance before them would eliminate the use of the peer review panel for employees who have been recommended for dismissal because the City Manager or his/her designee should have the sole authority to hear and determine the appeal of any employee who has been recommended for termination or subject to disciplinary action.

City Attorney Richard J. Rose explained that the City can continue to have a peer review panel, but the Charter gives the final decision relative to termination of employees to the Manager.

Ms. Small-Toney stated that if the City Council wishes the peer review panel to continue, which she does not recommend, she would recommend the panel be granted authority to make a recommendation to the Manager for termination or reinstatement, but the final decision should lie with the Manager. She stated another option would be for the peer review panel to consider issues unrelated to termination. She stated it is her recommendation to remove the peer review panel.

Council held discussion with the Manager and City Attorney.

Councilmember Knight requested that Council receive information as to how the peer review panel is selected and what training, if any, is required.

City Manager Small-Toney noted use of the peer review panel prohibits an employee from having an attorney and added that the panel should not have authority to terminate an employee.

Following discussion, the City Attorney stated an ordinance will need to be prepared to allow for peer review to continue, but to remove authority for the panel to terminate. The City Manager stated the matter will be brought back to Council for further consideration and explanation of the process for peer review panels.

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION.** *Received information; no formal action.*

#### **INTERNAL AUDITOR**

City Attorney Richard J. Rose told the City Council that it was announced in February 2019 that the internal auditor would report to the City Council through the Mayor and stated that the City Manager would prefer the Internal Auditor to report directory to the City Manager.

Discussion was held.

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION.** *Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the reporting structure relative to the Internal Auditor be amended to provide for the Internal Auditor to report directly to the City Manager but have the ability to report directly to the City Council without fear of reprisal; and that the City Council receive no less than quarterly updates.*

#### **AGENDA - REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney requested that a closed session personnel item be added to the 4 p.m. regular meeting agenda.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the Committee of the Whole adjourned at 3:57 p.m.

#### **ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING**

Mayor Combs explained that the City Council is holding its organizational meeting this evening. The audience was advised that the North Carolina General Statutes require municipal governments to hold organizational meetings each municipal election year after election results are certified. It was noted that during an organizational meeting newly elected officials are administered the oath of office and other organizational matters are acted upon.

#### **COUNCILMEMBER REMARKS**

Mayor Combs recognized outgoing Councilmembers Lois Watkins and Tom Rogers. He thanked them for their service to the City and invited them to make remarks. Both Councilmembers Watkins and Rogers made remarks which included appreciation to their families for their support and to the public for the opportunity to serve the City as Councilmembers.

Mayor David W. Combs offered comments and congratulated the newly elected/re-elected City leaders. He thanked the City's approximately 900 employees for their service and said the City does not run by itself and oftentimes the work done by City employees is taken for granted.

Mayor Combs expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve as Mayor and thanked his wife, Catherine, for her support. He added that public service takes time and effort and said that Rocky Mount is a great place to live.

**OATH OF OFFICE/MAYOR AND WARD 4 COUNCILMEMBER**

Mayor Combs recognized the Honorable Quentin T. Sumner, Senior Resident Superior Court Judge for the Seventh Judicial District, to administer the oath of office to the following City Officials who were elected on October 10, 2017 or in the run-off election on November 5, 2019:

- Mayor - C. Saunders Roberson, Jr.
- Ward 4 - T. J. Walker

Judge Sumner administered the oath of office to incoming Mayor C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr. for a four-year term to expire December 2023. Mayor Roberson was joined for the swearing in by family members, friends and supporters.

Judge Sumner administered the oath of office to incoming Ward 4 Councilmember T. J. Walker for a four-year term to expire December 2023. Councilmember Walker was joined for the swearing in by family members, friends and supporters.

Photographs of Councilmembers, family members, friends and supporters were taken.

**OATH OF OFFICE/WARD ONE AND WARD THREE COUNCILMEMBERS**

Mayor Combs recognized the Honorable Lamont Wiggins, Resident Superior Court Judge for Judicial District 7B, to administer the oath of office to the following City Officials who were elected/re-elected on October 8, 2019:

- Ward 1 - André D. Knight
- Ward 3 - Richard Joyner

Judge Wiggins administered the oath of office to Ward 1 incumbent Councilmember André D. Knight for a four-year term to expire December 2023. Councilmember Knight was joined for the swearing in by family members, friends and supporters.

Judge Sumner administered the oath of office to Ward 3 incumbent Councilmember Richard Joyner. Councilmember Richard Joyner was appointed to the Ward 3 Council seat by the City Council on June 6, 2018, when former Ward 3 Councilmember Lamont Wiggins was appointed by Governor Roy Cooper to serve as Superior Court Judge in District 7B serving Edgecombe and Wilson Counties. Councilmember Joyner will serve a two-year term to expire December 2021.

Councilmember Joyner was joined for the swearing in by family members, friends and supporters.

Photographs of Councilmembers, family members, friends and supporters were taken.

#### **OATH OF OFFICE/WARD FIVE COUNCILMEMBER**

Mayor Combs recognized the Honorable Pell Cooper, District Court Judge, Judicial District 7, to administer the oath of office to incoming Councilmember for Ward 5 Elijah "Lige" Daughtride.

Judge Cooper administered the oath of office to Councilmember Daughtride for a four-year term to expire December 2023. Councilmember Daughtride was joined for the swearing in by family members and friends.

Photographs of Councilmember Daughtride, family members, friends and supporters were taken.

#### **SEATING OF MAYOR/COUNCILMEMBERS**

The newly sworn Mayor and Councilmembers took their seats on the dais.

Mayor David W. Combs passed the gavel to newly sworn Mayor C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr.

#### **ROLL CALL**

The City Clerk called the roll for the newly seated City Council.

Members present: C. Saunders Roberson, Jr., Mayor; André D. Knight; Richard Joyner; T. J. Walker and Elijah "Lige" Daughtride.

#### **RECOGNITION/OUTGOING MAYOR**

Mayor Sandy Roberson thanked Mayor David W. Combs on behalf of the City Council for his service to the City of Rocky Mount and presented the City Council with the following resolution honoring Mayor David W. Combs for twelve (12) years of faithful and dedicated service:

#### **RESOLUTION EXPRESSING APPRECIATION TO MAYOR DAVID W. COMBS FOR FAITHFUL AND DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT**

WHEREAS, David W. Combs, a Rocky Mount native, was first elected to a four-year term as Mayor of the City of Rocky Mount and took his oath of office on December 10, 2007; and

WHEREAS, David W. Combs was re-elected to two additional four-year terms as Mayor, serving a total of three four-year terms and collectively for twelve years; and

WHEREAS, prior to serving as Mayor, David W. Combs served the City of Rocky Mount as a member of the City Council representing Ward 5 from December 15, 2003 until December 10, 2007; and

WHEREAS, David W. Combs provided distinguished service bringing honor and recognition to the City on a local, state and regional level and served as Vice-Chairman of the Carolinas Gateway Partnership, Chairman of the Rocky Mount Business Development Authority, as a member of the Board of Directors of the North Carolina League of Municipalities; and as a member of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of the North Carolina Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, also serving as treasurer; and

WHEREAS, David W. Combs has provided outstanding leadership to the City of Rocky Mount leading the City with a calm demeanor and with patience and integrity, often serving to facilitate a consensus among parties with opposing views in such a way that all parties felt heard; and

WHEREAS David W. Combs did not seek re-election in 2019 and the City of Rocky Mount is desirous of expressing its sincere appreciation and respect for his years of distinguished service and faithful commitment to this community.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Rocky Mount hereby commend and honor David W. Combs for his tireless dedication and faithful commitment and express heartfelt thanks and appreciation for his leadership.

Adopted this 9<sup>th</sup> day of December 2019.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried that **Resolution R-2019-47 entitled RESOLUTION EXPRESSING APPRECIATION TO MAYOR DAVID W. COMBS FOR FAITHFUL AND DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT** be adopted.

Mayor Roberson presented Mayor David W. Combs with a framed copy of the resolution and a plaque containing a gavel representing his twelve (12) years as Mayor of Rocky Mount.

**RECOGNITION/OUTGOING COUNCILMEMBERS**

Mayor Sandy Roberson presented the City Council with the following resolutions honoring Councilmember E. Lois Watkins and Councilmember Tom Rogers for faithful and dedicated service as members of the City Council:

**RESOLUTION EXPRESSING APPRECIATION TO E. LOIS WATKINS FOR FAITHFUL AND DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT**

WHEREAS, E. Lois Watkins served the City of Rocky Mount as a member of the City Council representing Ward 4 from March 8, 2007 until December 9, 2019; and

WHEREAS, during her tenure, E. Lois Watkins discharged the responsibilities of her office dutifully, thoughtfully and faithfully and with dignity and courage; and

WHEREAS, E. Lois Watkins conscientiously studied and deliberated all issues that came before her as a member of the City Council and made decisions that contributed significantly to the economic, social and planned growth of the City of Rocky Mount; and

WHEREAS, E. Lois Watkins although a strong and devoted advocate for the citizens of Ward 4, fully understood that decisions made as a member of the City Council would impact the entire citizenry of the City and cast her votes according to what she deemed to be in the best interest of all citizens; and

WHEREAS, during her tenure E. Lois Watkins served two one-year terms as Mayor Pro Tem in 2010 and 2018; two two-year terms as Treasurer 2011-2013 and 2013-2015; as a member of the Tar River Transit Governing Board from 2017-2019; as an alternate member of the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments from 2009 to 2019; and as a member of the STEP Board for a one-year term in 2015.

WHEREAS E. Lois Watkins did not seek re-election in 2019 and the City of Rocky Mount is desirous of expressing its sincere appreciation and respect for her loyal, conscientious and dedicated service as a member of the Rocky Mount City Council.

BE IT RESOLVED that this resolution shall be spread upon the pages of this proceeding and a copy shall be presented to E. Lois Watkins in grateful appreciation of her service to the City of Rocky Mount.

Adopted this 9<sup>th</sup> day of December 2019.

and;

**RESOLUTION EXPRESSING APPRECIATION TO TOM ROGERS FOR  
FAITHFUL AND DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT**

WHEREAS, Tom Rogers served the City of Rocky Mount as a member of the City Council representing Ward 5 from December 10, 2007 until December 9, 2019; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure, Tom Rogers discharged the responsibilities of his office dutifully, thoughtfully and faithfully and with dignity and courage; and

WHEREAS, Tom Rogers conscientiously studied and deliberated all issues that came before him as a member of the City Council and made decisions that contributed significantly to the economic, social and planned growth of the City of Rocky Mount; and

WHEREAS, Tom Rogers although a strong and devoted advocate for the citizens of Ward 5, fully understood that decisions made as a member of the City Council would impact the entire citizenry of the City and cast his votes according to what he deemed to be in the best interest of all citizens; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure Tom Rogers served three one-year terms as Mayor Pro Tem in 2009, 2015 and 2019; as a member of the Upper Coastal Plain Brownfields Coalition Steering Committee from 2013-2019; and as a member of the Transportation Advisory Committee 2018-2019.

WHEREAS Tom Rogers did not seek re-election in 2019 and the City of Rocky Mount is desirous of expressing its sincere appreciation and respect for his loyal, conscientious and dedicated service as a member of the Rocky Mount City Council.

BE IT RESOLVED that this resolution shall be spread upon the pages of this proceeding and a copy shall be presented to Tom Rogers in grateful appreciation of his service to the City of Rocky Mount.

Adopted this 9<sup>th</sup> day of December 2019.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried that **Resolution R-2019-48** entitled **RESOLUTION EXPRESSING APPRECIATION TO E. LOIS WATKINS FOR FAITHFUL AND DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT** and **Resolution R-2019-49** entitled **RESOLUTION EXPRESSING APPRECIATION TO TOM ROGERS FOR FAITHFUL AND DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT** be adopted.

Mayor Roberson presented Councilmembers Watkins and Rogers with framed copies of the resolutions.

**CITY TREASURER**

Mayor Roberson called for nominations for the office of City Treasurer.

Councilmember Blackwell nominated Councilmember Christine Carroll Miller for City Treasurer for an additional a two-year term to expire December 2021. The nomination was seconded by Councilmember Joyner and Councilmember Miller was unanimously elected City Treasurer

**MAYOR PRO TEMPORE**

Mayor Roberson called for nominations for the office of Mayor Pro Tempore.

Councilmember Blackwell nominated Councilmember André D. Knight for Mayor Pro Tempore for a one-year term to expire December 2020. The nomination was seconded by Councilmember Joyner and Councilmember Knight was unanimously appointed Mayor Pro Tempore.

The Honorable Quentin T. Sumner, Senior Resident Superior Court Judge for the Seventh Judicial District, administered the oath of office of Mayor Pro Tempore to Councilmember Knight.

**INSTALLATION OF NAME PLATES**

Family members of the newly sworn Mayor and Councilmembers came forward to install name plates on the dais for the new Mayor and Councilmembers.

**COMMUNITY UPDATE BY CITY MANAGER**

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney noted that tonight's meeting is the last official meeting of the Council for 2019. She added that the second meeting of the month has been canceled and wished all in attendance a happy and safe holiday season adding that she is looking forward to a new year.

The Manager:

- invited residents of Ward One to attend a Community Day on Saturday, December 14, 2019 from 6 to 9 p.m. to meet and greet Ward One Councilmember André Knight. She added that Councilmember Knight will respond to inquiries relative to projects and initiatives and added that the event will be the third of its kind for 2019;
- invited all to attend Langston Hughes', Black Nativity, featuring an all local cast to be held on December 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. and on December 15<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m. at the Imperial Centre. She added that tickets may be purchased online or by visiting the Imperial Centre;
- advised that City Offices will be closed Tuesday, December 24 through Thursday, December 26, 2019 and also on Wednesday, January 1, 2020. She outlined the schedule for the collection of garbage, recyclables and yard waste and stated that Transit will not operate on December 25, 2019 or January 1, 2020; and

- stated that the South Rocky Mount Community Center, the Booker T. Washington Community Center, the Rocky Mount Wilson Gym, the Rocky Mount Senior Center and the Imperial Centre for the Arts and Sciences will be closed Christmas Eve through December 26, 2019 and New Year's Day.

#### **PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Mayor Roberson outlined the guidelines for petitions from the public and opened the meeting for public petitions.

The Mayor recognized the following individuals and a summary of comments is outlined below:

- ***Bronson Williams:***
  - Said the momentum that exists in the City today is something that we all should be proud of and something we all should share; however, sometimes the shameful conditions of America will not allow us to appreciate minorities in leadership and sometimes minorities in leadership are not welcomed;
  - Said oftentimes you hear about self-serving interests and it seems to only apply to those who are disliked;
  - Said folks will use you and, when they're done, will throw you away;
  - Said each member elected has a fiduciary responsibility to all residents of Rocky Mount but the reality is our electoral process is sick; he asked all members of our community to work together to make the process well;
  - Said Rocky Mount is not as bad as some would have you believe and we must overcome conservative versus liberal views and seek to solve, citing a recent article in the *Telegram* relative to the mayoral election and adding that we must recognize biases and not subscribe to the angry black man narrative;
  - Said the recent statement took him back to the Dred Scott case in which Mr. Scott was told that he had no right to sue in federal court; he added that some blacks and other minorities feel they have limited rights or reduced value; and
  - Asked the Mayor and Council to show value to all members of our community and build up all residents of the City
- ***Nehemiah Smith:***
  - Said this past week he was afforded the opportunity to be a part of two important events in our City - the 2019 NC Food Council Gathering and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of OIC and said both were transformative events;
  - Said this evening a new Council and Mayor have been seated and inevitability change has come;
  - Said he prays we are careful and will not allow the change to disrupt the phenomenal progress of the previous administration;
  - Said conversation must start with what is best for all residents and it is a reality that the black community, which is a majority of the community and more than 67%, and the poor, have most often been left out when initiating and holding discussions about what is best for the City;
  - Said it is his sincere prayer that no one gets caught up in "chasing the bag" adding that our progress must continue;
  - Said much of the City is a food desert and food deserts need to be changed to food oases and the causes of poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing and violence in our City must be addressed without insulting the sensibilities of the people served;
  - Said more police on the street is not the answer to quelling violence;
  - Said he is baffled as to how we are going to divert City dollars to fund the public-school system and added we must never allow charity to become an addiction for those who are receiving and must never employ the language of oppression to pass it off as good intentions, saying that good intentions oftentimes lead to failed initiatives;
  - Said we must help people to use and define their power;
  - Said our communities are not underserved – they are too often under resourced

- Said Mobile, Alabama is 796 miles and three states away and we should deal with issues using intellectual capital;
  - Said there have been veiled agendas and attacks on Councilmembers, the City Manager and some staff members by the media;
  - Said social media should be marshaled; and
  - Said the die is cast, but the work must continue and said he wears his blue denim overalls this evening because they are worn by civil rights activists to dramatize how little has been accomplished since reconstruction and he wears them to recognize how much work is yet to be done
- ***Darlene Spencer-Harris:***
    - Expressed gratitude to the outgoing Council and welcomed the new Council;
    - Expressed hope that things citizens have on their agenda will be done and that citizens will be included in decisions, strategies and planning and not be excluded; said Council cannot come into neighborhoods and tell citizens what they need or want, but have to hear from the people;
    - Said citizens are not looking for charity and do not need a handout but need resources that are available to them and that they are entitled to;
    - Said another concern is that citizens are dissatisfied with mass incarceration and the idea of building more jails is not the solution to the problem in Rocky Mount; said part of the solution is to get the young people engaged, educated, have programs for them and things to keep them engaged so they know what's going on so they're not looking to go rob somebody;
    - Said transportation here is terrible and if you don't have a car, you don't have a way to work unless you're paying somebody an astronomical amount of money to get you to your place of employment; said we need to look at expanding transportation;
    - Said if Council will listen to her, she will listen to them and together this City can be made great
- ***Tom Harris:***
    - Said he appreciates the prayer that this session opened with and use of the word unity; said that is something we all need to strive for;
    - Said he is a retired banker and for the last 30 years has worked outside Rocky Mount, but maintained his residence in Rocky Mount because he loves the City;
    - Said he is here to talk about the big investment that we have in this community (the Event Center) and said he hopes it is for everybody;
    - Said citizens want the Event Center to be successful and want it to really be the spark plug that can bring new light to shine on Rocky Mount, but citizens also need to know how it's doing;
    - Said as an ex-banker he helped a lot of businesses in the area as well as in Raleigh and other parts of the state start their operations and they had a business plan; he added that a lot of times they had to meet and revise the business plans because either the operations were not going well or were going better than the original plan;
    - Said citizens are the taxpayers and are going to be paying for the debt service of the Event Center;
    - Asked that the results of Event Center operations be shared with the community and if the operations are not what Council desires that they show citizens how they are going to get better
- ***Gloria Davis:***
    - Expressed appreciation to the Councilmembers whose terms are ending and to those who have been newly elected/re-elected;
    - Said she is here, because she wants to reiterate that there were a lot of agendas before then the new Councilmembers came, and she would like to see those agendas continue;
    - Said citizens would like to work with Council and want Council to work with citizens;
    - Said citizens would like to be informed and be able to offer input in decisions that are being made because there are a lot of needs in the community;

- Said she would like to see more promotion for mental and physical health adding there is great need for mental health services; said she is a mental health therapist; and
- Said she would like to see the financial wealth spread over the City and over the Counties in which we live
- **Angela Bryant:**
  - Expressed appreciation to Councilmember Lois Watkins and for her courage, love of community and self determination to step out on faith and replace her [as a Councilmember] in 2007 and to the citizens of Ward 4 for supporting her as the third black woman to serve on the City Council;
  - Said that support enabled her (Ms. Bryant) to go to the General Assembly as the first woman from Rocky Mount and be the first from this county to serve there;
  - Said sometimes we make history ourselves and empower others to make history as well;
  - Thanked Councilwoman Watkins for her friendship, service and leadership and for supporting housing development in the community that had been neglected for a generation; for support of park improvements, empowerment of neighborhood organizations and for her support in working to save the Nash-Rocky Mount schools;
  - Said neighborhood development, downtown development and economic development will always be a part of her (Ms. Bryant's) legacy and she is proud of her service;
  - Congratulated Councilmember Watkins and appreciated her family for the sacrifice and Ms. Watkins for a job well done;
  - Thanked Councilman Tom Rogers and his wife, Bridget, for their leadership;
  - Thanked Mayor Combs, her classmate, and his wife, Catherine for their outstanding service to the community;
  - Thanked all those stepping down for their commitment to fairness and equity across our community and said she hopes God richly blesses all of them as they retire from this particular position of service adding she is sure they will go on to do many other good things in the community
- **Susan Perry Cole:**
  - Said, as a resident of the City, she would like to express deep appreciation and respect to each member of Council whose term is ending and said she personally views public service as a privilege and honor; however, she can imagine serving on a municipal governing body and providing leadership to that body can sometimes seem very lonely and it may seem members of Council are not appreciated and have a thankless job;
  - Said she speaks for many of the residents present tonight in saying they are deeply grateful for what the Council has accomplished to advance the common interests of the City and its residents and thanked them for their service;
  - Congratulated the members of Council who are beginning their tenure on the City Council and wished them best wishes for a very successful term of office;
  - Said speaking as a 35-year resident of one of the City's underserved, disinvested neighborhoods, she encourages members of this newly constituted Council to remain engaged with neighborhood residents as they consider strategies and policies to improve our communities and to create a more equitable City;
  - Said she is assuming that this is what they are going to do;
  - Said residents are interested in Council's ideas and thoughts on how neighborhoods can be improved;
  - Stressed the importance of seeking input from residents before Council moves forward on concepts and ideas;
  - Said she looks forward to working in partnership with each member of the Council and to continuing a partnership with the City and its staff
- **Linwood Gallop:**
  - Stated he is a new resident of Ward 7 having moved to the City about 9 months ago;

- Said he has been looking for employment and has learned there are a lot of spam jobs on the internet and he has had difficulty in finding a job even though he is an electrician by trade skill and is a martial arts instructor;
  - Said his skills are needed in the City;
  - Recited percentages relative to ethnicity, gender and poverty in the City and asked for a task force to be appointed to look into the issue of employment/unemployment
- ***Samuel Battle:***
    - Stated his concern is about Edgecombe County and the Roses' parking lot and said it looks terrible; he added that the Kerr Drug building is falling apart, and people are sleeping in front of the store ;
    - Said the City does not enforce laws relative to panhandling; he noted many panhandlers are at the 64 exit near the hospital and voiced concern for them being injured;
    - Added that Jenkins furniture store on Raleigh Boulevard has broken windows and there is glass all over the ground and there needs to be code enforcement; and
    - Said there are potholes that need repair and rental property that looks bad on the Edgecombe side of the City
- ***Johnny Cunningham:***
    - Congratulated Councilmembers Knight, Blackwell and Joyner for the progress made in the City's impoverished communities;
    - Reported the glass at Jenkins Furniture has been replaced and the building has been rehabbed;
    - Said he has advocated on behalf of black poverty for years and the previous Council heard that cry;
    - Thanked the Council for initiating job opportunities that are currently being worked on and said the City is working on affordable housing and decent rental properties and on healthy eating and gardens in the community as well as beautification;
    - Said nobody wants to be pitied and no one is asking for or wants a handout or things that are no longer being used by others and added that they are taxpaying citizens;
    - Said "we" don't need to be united to rebuild – we need capital and this Council sought and addressed the needs and initiated a solution to the problem; and
    - Apologized to the City Manager saying she has dedicated her soul and spirit to the citizens of Rocky Mount and for the way she had been drug through the coals, through the social media, and these websites and said even in the midst of losing her parents the attacks on her continued
- ***Elaine B. Williams:***
    - Asked the Security Officer if anyone has delivered any roses saying her Mom always said "give me my flowers while I can smell them";
    - Asked ladies in the audience to stand in honor and support of former Councilwoman Lois Watkins and said for the past 13 years of service as a Councilwoman Ms. Watkins has been a shaker and a mover in this City;
    - Said her accomplishments as a Councilmember speak for themselves in Ward 4 and throughout the City and tonight is bitter sweet but the sweet outweighs the bitter for Ms. Watkins;
    - Said for the past 36 years there has been an African American female on the Council adding there are 36 roses floating around somewhere to represent the 36 years;
    - Said even though it appears to be the end of an era 2020 is right around the corner and is the dawn of a decade;
    - Appreciated Ms. Watkins for her service and thanked her family for coming;
    - Said she prays the Lord will continue to bless Ms. Watkins and her family in every area of life;
    - Said Ms. Watkins has done so much for Ward 4 and that she is sure that work will continue with the new City Council

Mayor Roberson recognized Bob Farris, an attorney from Wilson, who indicated he wished to speak relative to a rezoning request listed as Item 19 on the agenda. Mayor Roberson requested that Mr. Farris speak during the public hearing for the rezoning request.

- ***Morrie Minges:***

- Wished the Councilmembers who are leaving the Council good luck and wished the new Council lots of wisdom saying they already have luck because they were voted in;
- Said an article she read in today's newspaper about the Event Center is her real concern in that the City has had to pay thousands of dollars for somebody's screw ups;
- Questioned who runs the Event Center since the City had to foot the bill; and asked who hires the Event Center employees;
- Said she was an art teacher, formerly, and is now a small business owner and said you have got to put your best foot forward when you start something;
- Said she hopes the City gets more involved in our education system;
- Added "please don't litter"

- ***Nathlyn Ohree:***

- Said she is the third vice president of the local branch of the NAACP;
- Thanked the outgoing administration for the fine job that they have done in managing the City;
- Said it is a beautiful thing to end an administration on a positive note;
- Welcomed the newly installed and returning Council and expressed high hopes for continued peace and increased unity of our nation;
- Read the mission of the NAACP;
- Said she stands before Council to let them know the NAACP is on the side of the City and on the side of everyone for equality and fairness

- ***Dr. Kim Koo:***

- Said she wants to bring to the attention of Council that there are at least 50 plus people outside the Council Chamber with no audio or visual;
- Said she thinks it is kind of disrespectful for Council not to take that into consideration that people took the time and made the effort to come here to be part of this event and had to leave because there was no audio visual;
- Thanked Teresa Alston for allowing some participants to hear through her direct streaming through Facebook;
- Said the end of this year marks the end of the terms of several members of the City Council, particularly Mayor Combs and Councilmembers Watkins and Rogers and thanked them for being willing to serve our City and its communities;
- Congratulated Mayor Roberson and new Councilmembers Walker and Daughtride as well as the returning Councilmembers Knight and Joyner and said she hopes citizens and Council can work together to uplift all citizens in the City and correct past injustices by increasing attention and resources to the poor communities adding this can only be done with consultation from people who live in these communities;
- Said she is sure Council will welcome more input from citizens as they continue to exercise their democratic rights and participate in self-governance;
- Said the greatness of the City is reflected on how well the most unfortunate of the citizens are treated and how reparations are made to heal old wounds that will continue to fester until they're taken care of;
- Said contradictions will never go away unless they are resolved in a timely and correct fashion and expressed hope that this new Council will reflect such greatness;
- Gave the example of Fayetteville's recent wage increase and said she hopes Rocky Mount will also consider raising the wages of the City workers to above merely survival rates;
- Said she hopes the new Council will improve the working conditions and allow City workers to be organized so they can be heard when they raise questions

regarding workplace safety, abuse and discriminatory practices on the part of management and said this is not only about good governance, but also about having a satisfied and happy workforce within the City and a new way to enhance a City's prosperity

#### **PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS**

The City Council received the minutes and recommendations from a Planning Board meeting held November 12, 2019. The minutes are on file in the office of the City Clerk. The following action was taken upon the recommendations of the Planning Board:

#### **PUBLIC HEARING/REZONING REQUEST**

Mayor Sandy Roberson called on the Director of Development Services, Will Deaton, to give an overview of the request and recommendation of the Planning Board and to respond to questions posed by Council.

The Mayor opened a public hearing relative to the following rezoning request recommended for approval and found in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan by the Planning Board:

- request by Sucilla Richardson on behalf of Richie's Auto Group, Inc., for the rezoning of ±0.52 acres at 515 North Church Street from B-2 to B-5

The Mayor recognized Bob Farris, an attorney from Wilson. Mr. Farris introduced his client, the petitioner, and noted the rezoning has been recommended by the Planning Board and further indicated he is unaware of any opposition to the rezoning. He stated he is available for questions.

No one else from the public appeared relative to the rezoning request and the Mayor declared the public hearing closed.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried that **Ordinance No. O-2019-78** entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE AND MAP OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT** be adopted.

#### **ASSESSMENTS/HOUSING CODE ENFORCEMENT**

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried consideration of assessments proposed to be levied to recover costs incurred by the City in connection with Housing Code Enforcement on the property located at 300/302 Middle Street which was deferred at the November 11, 2019 Council meeting be tabled.

#### **LEASE/209 NE MAIN STREET (DOUGLAS BLOCK)**

The City Council was provided with a two-year lease (December 1, 2019 through December 1, 2021) with Dazella D. Battle for approximately 572 square feet of space in the Douglas Building at 209 NE Main Street in the Historic Douglas Block at \$500 per month, with the option of three one-year extensions upon at least ninety (90) days written notice. The Council was advised the lease has been advertised pursuant to NCGS 160A-272.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Miller and unanimously carried that the lease be approved and that **Resolution No. R-2019-50** entitled **RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE LEASE OF CERTAIN PROPERTY** be adopted. It was noted that the Resolution authorizes the Mayor and City Clerk to execute the Lease Agreement (**C-2019-35**) on behalf of the City.

Councilmember Daughtridge requested that the City Council be provided with a detailed list of all City-owned property that is currently leased.

**WATER ASSESSMENT CONTRACT**

The City Council received a water assessment contract with Calvin Douglas Williams for water service to 316 Rouse Road (PIN #377926206500). Council was advised that the contract provides for prepayment of water meter, capacity, tap and partial main fees of \$2,132.50 and for the remaining water main fees of \$2,132.50 to be assessed against the property.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge and unanimously carried that the assessment contract with Calvin Douglas Williams for water service to 316 Rouse Road (**C-2019-36**) be approved and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the same on behalf of the City. This contract will be recorded in the Office of the Edgecombe County Register of Deeds.

**GRANT APPLICATION/NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF WATER RESOURCES - BATTLE PARK PHASE I**

The City Council was advised that staff is requesting authorization to apply for a grant (\$199,873) through the North Carolina Division of Water Resources to assist with the renovation of Battle Park. Council was further advised that staff recognizes that certain renovations will need to be made as the City moves forward with the park plan for Battle Park to include: 8,760 feet of greenway and a small greenway bridge, canoe launch, boat ramp and two fishing piers and, by moving forward with an application for these Phase I amenities, the City can utilize the approximately \$791,600 Phase I project budget to leverage future renovation phases. It was noted that a 50% local match will be required, and that staff recommends overmatching with existing 2020-2024 CIP funds (\$591,727) to increase the competitiveness of current and future grant applications.

Motion was made by Councilmember Miller, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the grant application and local match of \$591,727 be approved and that staff be authorized to submit the grant application on behalf of the City; and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute any required documentation and/or certifications, including the subsequent grant agreement.

**BIDS/CITY HALL RENOVATIONS - DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

The City Council received the tabulation of bids received for City Hall Renovations - Development Services. Bids were received and opened on November 21, 2019 after all necessary legal procedures had been implemented and the bid tabulation is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2019-33**.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the bid be awarded to AR Chesson for a total cost of \$698,403, which includes the base bid of \$544,641 and Alternates 1, 3 and 4:

- Alternate 1 - storefront = \$36,296;
- Alternate 3 - lobby = \$101,522; and
- Alternate 4 - second floor = \$15,944

The Mayor and City Clerk were authorized to execute the bid contract on behalf of the City.

**PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS**

Councilmember Knight requested that the City Attorney provide information to the public relative to certain public records requests made by the *Rocky Mount Telegram* in order to assure the public that staff is working to respond.

City Attorney Richard J. Rose stated that the public records law requires that the information be provided within a reasonable period of time but does not specify a number of days or weeks when that information is required to be provided. He added that a reasonable period of time depends on the volume of information involved in the public records request.

Mr. Rose reported he is speaking with respect to a public records request for e-mails which have to be reviewed because some contain confidential information that is not public record. He gave examples of records that are not public records.

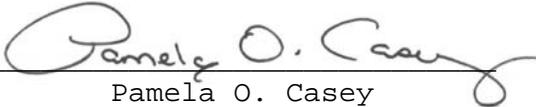
Mr. Rose reported that the *Telegram* has requested a huge volume of e-mails noting that over 6,000 e-mails have already been furnished to the newspaper. He added that staff and his office are trying to refine the process to provide for a quicker turn around, but it is a lot of information and will take time.

**RECEPTION**

All present were invited to attend a reception in the third-floor atrium immediately following the Council meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the City Council meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

  
 Pamela O. Casey  
 City Clerk