

January 27, 2020

The City Council of the City of Rocky Mount met this day in a regular session scheduled for 4:00 p.m. in the George W. Dudley City Council Chamber of the Frederick E. Turnage Municipal Building with Mayor C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr. presiding.

Councilmembers present: André D. Knight, Reuben C. Blackwell, IV, Richard Joyner, T. J. Walker, Lige Daughtride, W. B. Bullock and Christine Carrol Miller.

Staff Present: Rochelle Small-Toney, City Manager; Pamela O. Casey, City Clerk; Natasha Hampton and Elton Daniels, Assistant City Managers; Dorothy Brown Smith, Chief Communications and Marketing Consultant; Ken Hunter, Budget and Evaluation Manager; Chase Norwood, Management Analyst; Brenton Bent, Director of Water Resources; Tim Farmer, Operations Manager, Public Works Department; Chris Beschler, Director of Energy Resources; Brad Kerr, Public Works Director; Archie Jones, Director of Human Relations; Amy Staton, Finance Director; Will Deaton, Director of Development Services; George Robinson, Police Chief; James Staton, Police Lieutenant; Elayne Henderson; Director of Human Resources; Corey Mercer, Fire Chief; Michael Roupp, Interim Division Chief of Operations; Tracey Drewery, Division Chief; Anthony Ladd, Interim Battalion Chief of Training; Kevin Harris, Business Development Manager; Mark Adcox, Video Production Specialist; Robin Cox, Communications Specialist; Jessie Nunery, Media Relations Specialist; Kim Batts, Deputy City Clerk; and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

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

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. and called on Councilmember Blackwell to offer prayer.

WELCOME/AMENDED AGENDA

The Mayor welcomed citizens and directed them to copies of the agenda near the entrance of the City Council Chamber.

Mayor Roberson noted the City Manager has requested a closed at the end of today's meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried that the minutes of a regular scheduled meeting of the City Council held January 13, 2020 be approved as submitted to the City Council prior to the meeting.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

The City Council received the minutes and recommendations from a regular rescheduled Committee of the Whole meeting held Monday, January 13, 2020. The minutes are as follows:

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR RESCHEDULED MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
HELD MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2020 AT 4:00 P.M. IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM OF THE
FREDERICK E. TURNAGE MUNICIPAL BUILDING:**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

André D Knight, Mayor Pro Tem
Reuben C. Blackwell, IV
Richard Joyner
T. J. Walker*
Lige Daughtridge
W. B. Bullock
Christine Carroll Miller
Mayor C. Saunders Roberson, Jr.

STAFF PRESENT:

Rochelle Small-Toney
Pamela O. Casey
Natasha Hampton
Elton Daniels
Ken Hunter
Amy Staton
Dorothy Brown Smith
Brad Kerr
Chase Norwood
Tim Farmer
Brad Kerr
Candace Kirtz
Paula Carbone
Kim Batts
Richard J. Rose

OPENING OF MEETING

Mayor Pro Tem André D Knight called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m., welcomed all present and outlined the guidelines for Committee of the Whole Meetings. He called on City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney to introduce agenda items.

CLOSED SESSION

The City Manager requested a closed session to discuss a matter concerning attorney-client privilege/real estate.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Motion was made by Councilmember Miller, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried that the City Council go into Closed Session at 4:03 p.m.

*Councilmember Walker arrived (4:06 p.m.)

The minutes of the Closed Session (attorney-client privilege/real estate) shall be placed on file as **ESM-545** at the end of **Minute Book 37** upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

REGULAR SESSION. Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge and unanimously carried that the City Council return to Open Session at 4:19 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

André D Knight, Mayor Pro Tem
Reuben C. Blackwell, IV
Richard Joyner
T. J. Walker
Lige Daughtridge
W. B. Bullock
Christine Carroll Miller
Mayor C. Saunders Roberson, Jr.

STAFF PRESENT:

Rochelle Small-Toney
Pamela O. Casey
Natasha Hampton
Elton Daniels
Ken Hunter
Amy Staton
Dorothy Brown Smith
Brad Kerr
Chase Norwood
Tim Farmer
Brad Kerr
Candace Kirtz
Paula Carbone
Kim Batts
Richard J. Rose

The Mayor Pro Tem called on City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney to introduce the next agenda item.

Ms. Small-Toney noted the next item is DFI - Developer Recommendations. She stated that the presenter is not yet here and asked that the item be skipped and introduced Brad Kerr, Public Works Director, to explain the next item.

PAVEMENT CONDITION SURVEY: *Brad Kerr*

Public Works Director Brad Kerr outlined the following roadway maintenance funding sources:

- Streets and ROW operating budget: \$1,932,000
- Resurfacing and Capital Projects:
 - Powell Bill Allocation: \$1,512,000
 - Vehicle Permit Fees: \$800,000
- Annual Resurfacing Budget: \$1,600,000

Council was provided a Pavement Condition Survey Report and were advised that Kercher/SEPI completed a survey in August 2018. Data collection from the report identified the follow pavement surface distresses:

- Fatigue cracking
- Transverse cracking
- Block cracking
- Reflective cracking
- Patching/potholes
- Surface defects
- Rutting/roughness

The Council was advised that the City maintains 276.6 miles of asphalt street with an average Pavement Condition Index of 64.9 (compared to other cities). The Public Works Director noted the total net worth of the roadways is \$137,374,824 and the backlog of needed work is just over \$38M.

Mr. Kerr explained that maintenance activities included in the work program includes:

TREATMENT	LANE MILES	TREATMENT COSTS
Crack Seal	32.87	\$ 211,258
Patching	67.67	7,507,271
Preservation (micro surfacing)	84.05	2,411,293
Reconstruction (full depth reclamation)	4.37	933,885
Rehab-Minor (mill and fill or asphalt overlay)	261.16	27,051,729
GRAND TOTAL	450.12	38,115,436

It was explained that micro surfacing is a new maintenance technology for the City that has been used throughout the southeast to rehab aged but structurally sound roadways at a much lower cost than traditional overlays.

Council was provided with a backlog summary by county and ward.

Mr. Kerr explained that the goal is to get the right treatment at the right time to get the optimization "benefit" over time to achieve the desired goals to extend the life of the roadway and reduce overall maintenance costs. He told the Council deferring maintenance results in accelerated degradation and higher maintenance costs.

Council was advised that the toolbox menu includes:

- Crack sealing
- Patching
- Rejuvenation
- Scrub seal
- Micro surfacing
- Hot/cold in place recycling

The Public Works Director told the Council the City has not used rejuvenation or micro surfacing before. He noted that NCDOT recently used the mill and fill process on Sunset Avenue.

He outlined budget scenarios and responded to questions from Councilmembers. Mr. Kerr advised that some patching is done in-house, but not all. He reported that Barnhill has had the City's resurfacing contract for years.

It was explained that the analysis determined that an investment of \$3.5M per year would be required to maintain the current average pavement condition and the current budget level programmed for resurfacing is \$1.6M.

Model results revealed that at \$1.4M yearly optimization is losing ground on backlog.

Council was advised that staff has requested an evaluation of two additional scenarios and, given current funding limitations, recommends proceeding with the \$1.4M per year 10-year ward constrained plan until additional funding can be identified. It was explained that this plan includes \$200,000 per year for a micro surfacing pilot program and that \$200,000 of the current \$1.6M resurfacing budget is being reserved for dirt street paving should Council decide to proceed with this initiative.

Mayor Pro Tem Knight suggested that consideration of a bond referendum for street maintenance in addition to housing may be needed. The Council discussed previous decisions relative to dirt street paving and sidewalk installation.

Discussion was held relative to a need to tie the roadwork to building contractors that can work with Barnhill to provide equity and opportunity, including use of the MWBE Program. Councilmember Blackwell requested that information be provided to Council relative to this goal including the use of local small business, regardless of ethnicity.

A 10-year investment plan (by Ward) was explained and recommended (grand total of 555.48). It was explained that the investment for the 10-year plan will be from \$137,271 to \$12,025,920 and still there will be a lot of untouched streets. Council was provided with a graph showing the recommended work plan summary.

Mr. Kerr stated if micro surfacing is approved the next step will be to look for a contractor and start preparing next year's resurfacing contract. He advised it will take 3 to 4 months to prepare a list of streets.

The City Manager stated one of the takeaways is for the City to look at advancing funding or looking for better funding for the street paving program to include the possibility of a future bond referendum. She said staff will review this matter and bring options back to the Council for consideration.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Information only; no formal action.

DIRT STREET PAVING PROGRAM/POLICY - Brad Kerr

Public Works Director Brad Kerr provided the City Council with the current inventory of dirt streets:

- 5.1 Miles
- 45 Streets
- Developed lots served: 179

The City Council was advised that, in order to advance the paving of existing dirt streets, staff has developed an updated priority list and is recommending that Administrative Policy Number VII.16 entitled "Policy: Dirt Street Paving Program Policy" be amended to allow ditch section construction as an option for streets in the program, where appropriate, based on traffic volume and existing drainage patterns. Council was further advised that existing dirt streets are currently operating as ditch sections. The Director of Public Works noted that maintaining and enhancing this design allows the existing drainage patterns from the adjacent development to be maintained while also providing water quality benefits and reducing initial capital cost by more than 50%. He added that initial evaluations indicated that all but two of the dirt streets, Swift Road and Mercedes Street, are viable candidates for ditch section construction.

Councilmember Blackwell stated that there were a lot of dirt streets when Councilmember Helen P. Gay was on the Council and paving of dirt streets was one of her initiatives. He reported that when sidewalks became more prominent and more people were walking, the Council chose to invest more in sidewalks and delayed paving of dirt streets for a number of years. He stated that perhaps the time has come to turn attention back to paving of dirt streets and said if the City is working to become a mobility-friendly City it is important that all our communities are walkable and bikeable.

Councilmember Miller added that does not mean the City is caught up on building sidewalks. Mr. Kerr told the Council that many sidewalks were able to be done with NCDOT matches and with safe routes to school grants.

The Public Works Director presented a PowerPoint Presentation outlining the current policy and advised that staff recommends that Council adopt a new project-based priority list grouping some streets into a single project. He suggested that projects be prioritized based on:

- The number of developed lots served;
- Street classification (collector, connector, dead end); and
- The length of the street

Mr. Kerr reported that staff recommends that Section 4.C on water and sewer assessments be removed from the current policy. He stated that only a portion of the dirt streets are not currently served by water and/or sewer and the policy limits for utility extension in those areas do not necessarily coincide with the limits of the paving projects. He recommended that utility extensions and possible assessments associated with those projects follow the standard petition process and be considered in conjunction with, but independent of, the pavement project.

Mr. Kerr further recommended that Council consider elimination of the assessment process for streets funded through the program noting that said elimination would streamline the process and likely improve

buy-in from adjacent property owners who might be in opposition to the project due to the assessment.

Council was advised that at the proposed funding level of \$200,000 annually, it will take 12 years to eliminate all dirt streets in the City. The Council was provided with a list of dirt streets.

Discussion continued relative to maintenance and increased code enforcement. The Manager stated with increased enforcement comes increased cost. She stated that the City is currently not taking an aggressive approach to recovering code enforcement costs reclamation. Councilmember Blackwell stated that perhaps it is time to review the City's approach and look for ways to incent communities to take care of their own community.

A discussion was held relative to summer/youth employment opportunities.

The Finance Director was asked to provide an estimate of current liens. She stated the City could foreclose on properties with weed liens and added there are other actions the City can take to enforce collection. Councilmember Joyner requested that the Council be provided with liens reported by Ward.

Council was advised that options include:

- Do nothing and continue current maintenance activities;
- Redirect resurfacing funds to dirt street paving; and/or
- Identify new funding for the paving of dirt streets.

The Council discussed priorities and costs and Mr. Kerr advised that grants are no longer available.

Mayor Pro Tem Knight stated that Council will need time to consider the information presented prior to taking action. He suggested that staff be provided direction from Council during the Council Retreat or at budget time.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Information only; no formal action.

DFI - DEVELOPER RECOMMENDATION: Sara Odio

DFI Project Manager Sarah Odio introduced Rory Dowling, Development Advisor for DFI.

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney provided the Council with a DFI P3 Housing Development Initiative Timeline.

Ms. Odio told the Council today's presentation will include an overview of the Tarboro Street Development Public-Private Partnerships for housing; an overview of the solicitation process; developer responses and next steps.

Ms. Odio presented a PowerPoint Presentation and reported that the Development Finance Initiative (DFI) is a program of UNC Chapel Hill's School of Government and collaborates with communities in North Carolina to attract private investment for transformative projects by providing specialized finance and real estate development expertise in the areas of real estate development, architecture, public and private finance, public-private partnerships (P3), public development law, community engagement and land use and market analysis.

She stated the DFI program was borne out of requests relative to development and while the UNC School of Government could give legal advice, they could not provide advice about what communities should do. She noted that DFI was created to help attract investment in a way that

meets the public interest and reported that DFI works on both large and small development projects.

Ms. Odio reported that DFI was engaged by the State to assist with attracting private investment for the development of affordable housing for low- and/or moderate-income households in hurricane-impacted communities, prioritizing displaced households. She told the Council the scope of work includes:

1. Identification of development sites in Matthew-impacted communities;
2. DFI pre-development process to leverage disaster recovery funds through NCORR; and
3. Selection of a development partner.

Ms. Odio explained the DFI Pre-development Process to include:

- Market analysis (to determine the demand; the type of product desired and the gap)
- Site Analysis (to identify sites and determine what can actually be done at the site, considering any constraints)
- Financial Analysis (to determine what is financially feasible and will allow private investors to achieve a return on the project)
- Development Plan/Building Program (built from information received)
- Public Process (to determine what level of public engagement Council desires)

She stated that when the process began it had not been determined where the funding would come from, but now it has been determined that it will be CDBG funded. She said DFI will work with the City to find a development partner to execute on the project and DFI will stay involved until there is a shovel in the ground.

Ms. Odio reported that on February 25, 2019 the City Council voted to convey the Tarboro Street property, via sale or lease, for the development of affordable workforce housing contingent upon the selection of a qualified developer. She noted today's goal is to select a development partner in a manner as to make what could be private as public as possible.

Ms. Odio provided a solicitation overview and noted that 3 responses were received on November 22, 2019 from:

- Community Housing Partners;
- Pendergraph Companies; and
- Woda Cooper Companies.

Ms. Odio reported that the evaluation criteria included:

- Qualifications and experience with 4% LIHTC and federal funding sources;
- Demonstration of the ability to execute projects of similar scale and complexity;
- References from previous local government partners; and
- The ability to meet the estimated timeline.

She reported that all 3 candidates are qualified and that DFI has ensured that all have done complex projects. The developer responses including photographs of past projects were provided and discussed with Council, including any special traits.

Councilmember Daughtridge asked for clarification of the City's investment in the project and why the Tarboro site was chosen instead of the Crossing at 64 site. Ms. Odio stated that the City's only

contribution is conveyance of the property. City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney reported that DFI did due diligence of the sites and concluded the Tarboro site to best fit the model. She stated DFI met with the Council several times. She added that the project will bring diversity of housing to the Downtown and will support Edgecombe Community College and the community around the site by providing workforce housing. She clarified the definition of workforce housing and stated that many City employees will fall into that category.

Mayor Pro Tem Knight stated that DFI is here today relative to selection of the development partner and it was explained that Council has already voted to convey the property.

Discussion was held relative to those expected to live in the housing being developed. Ms. Odio clarified that the project is not public housing and that residents will pay rent estimated at \$450 to \$500 per month.

A comparison of developer responses was reviewed, and the next steps were identified as:

- Selection of the preferred partner to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City and negotiations for the property;
- Council approval of the MOU;
- Start of pre-development process by development partner (finalizing plan and design and securing project financing [Low-income housing tax credits (LIHTCs) and State funds])

The City Manager recommended the selection of Woda Cooper as the development partner due to their experience in Rocky Mount relative to redevelopment of the Ravenwood Crossing.

Ms. Odio reported that following selection of the Development Partner a meeting with the attorney, the Manager and the Development Partner will need to take place and a Memorandum of Understanding prepared to provide an option for the Development Partner to enter the site and perform due diligence.

The City Manager noted she is interested in discussing a ground lease as opposed to conveyance of the property. Ms. Odio advised that most developers prefer a 50 to 99-year ground lease.

Mayor Pro Tem Knight stated that Council would like to receive the information today and have additional discussion at the next Council meeting.

The City Manager requested authority to hold a discussion with Woda Cooper. Councilmember Walker expressed concern with the selection of Woda Cooper based on complaints he has received relative to the operational side of Ravenwood Crossing. He noted that selection of Woda Cooper as the developer would also mean they would be in charge of property management and said he is not currently in favor of Woda Cooper as the developer. He expressed a desire to meet with all three developers.

In response to a question from the Mayor, Ms. Odio reported that at the end of 30 years the project will no longer be a monitored project.

A discussion was held relative to funding applications and Ms. Odio advised that the process opens in May and will remain open until October. She noted selection of the development partner sooner rather than later is best but added that Council needs to be confident in its decision.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. A motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell that interviews be scheduled with the top two Development Partners

(Pendergraph Companies and Woda Cooper Companies) to include members of the Workforce Housing Development Commission.

Councilmember Blackwell moved to amend the motion to include interviews of all 3 recommended development partners (Community Housing Partners, Pendergraph Companies and Woda Cooper Companies) and that the Chair and two Vice-Chairs of the Workforce Housing Commission be included in the interviews. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Walker and passed by a vote of 6-1 (Councilmember Bullock opposed).

FIRST QUARTER FY 2020 FINANCIAL REPORT/REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES: *Ken Hunter*

The City Manager introduced Budget Manager Kenneth Hunter to present the Fiscal Year 2020 First Quarter Financial Report.

Mr. Hunter provided the Council with a report of revenues and expenditures for government funds and reported:

- Overall financial activity for the City during the First Quarter of FY 2020 remained strong and consistent with activity for a similar period of time in prior fiscal years;
- The General Fund revenues from property tax, sales tax, solid waste operations and investments are strong and exceeding budgeted projections;
- The Powell Bill allocation was received in the first half of the fiscal year and the total allocation was 2.4% below the amount forecast and 0.7% below the FY 2019 allocation; remains a challenge;
- Electric and gas sales are both increased from FY 2019 for the First Quarter and it appears both funds will meet their projected operating margins and finish the fiscal year in strong fiscal position;
- Water sales are better than FY 2019 and consistent with budgeted forecasts;
- Sewer sales declined for the First Quarter of 2020 due to dry weather and reduced sales to wholesale and industrial customers;
- Both water and sewer funds are active with capital projects which are planned expenditures reflecting essential improvements;
- Stormwater revenues are on track with FY 2019 with upcoming spending focused on key projects including significant enhancements to drainage systems in the Central City

The Budget and Evaluation Manager presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining the following:

- Overview:
 - General review of revenues and expenditures:
 - Continued ad valorem and sales tax growth;
 - Reflects operations of Event Center (opened 2nd quarter of FY 2019);
 - Expenditure growth in line with budget;
 - Focus on capital expenditures; and
 - Anticipate most ad valorem revenue by end of 2nd quarter

Mr. Hunter concluded his presentation by reporting that local economic activity is improving and there are visible value, sales and job growth. He added that the growth key to improving the City's fiscal condition enables stability and maintaining excellent public service.

Council was provided with graphs outlining taxes received. Mr. Hunter reported that overall employment growth is good.

Councilmember Joyner requested that Council be provided with employment information by zip code and Ward. Mr. Hunter responded that the information could be obtained annually by census tracts.

Councilmember Blackwell stated it would be of benefit to have quarterly reporting from the Rocky Mount Chamber of Commerce, Alan Matthews and the Carolinas Gateway Partnership to provide information relative to trends, what is working and a report on existing gaps.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. *Information only; no formal action.*

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. *Motion was made by Councilmember Miller, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried that the City Council go into Closed Session at 6:34 p.m. relative to attorney-client privilege.*

The minutes of the Closed Session (attorney-client privilege) shall be an addition to **ESM-545** filed at the end of **Minute Book 37** upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

REGULAR SESSION/ADJOURN. The Mayor Pro Tem convened the Committee in regular session at 7:05 p.m. and it was stated that Council will go into closed session following the regular 7:00 p.m. meeting. The meeting adjourned.

A printed copy of the PowerPoint presentations are on file in the office of the City Clerk

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Miller and unanimously carried that the minutes and recommendations of the Committee of the Whole be approved.

COMMUNITY UPDATE BY CITY MANAGER

Community and Business Development:

- Cynthia Jones will begin her tenure as the City's Community and Business Development Director on Monday, February 24 having been appointed by the Manager to this position last week;
- Ms. Jones is a native of Rocky Mount and has nearly 20 years of municipal government experience;
- Ms. Jones spent the past four years as Edgecombe County's Planning and Inspections Department Director;
- She holds a master's degree in Public Administration from North Carolina Central University, a Bachelor of Science Degree in Urban and Regional Planning from East Carolina University and an associate degree in Applied Science and Administrative Office Technology from Edgecombe Community College; and
- The City looks forward to Cynthia's leadership in one of the most strategic areas of this administration

Tar River Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility:

- The Tar River Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility treated 4.33 billion gallons of wastewater in 2019. The wastewater system Annual Performance Report is now available and can be found on the Water Resources page of the City's website.

Imperial Centre:

- The Children's Museum and Science Center's new traveling exhibit "From Here to There" is now open and will run through May 10. Visitors will be able to explore the science of how things move by land, sea and air. This is located in the Imperial Centre for the Arts and Sciences. The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at a cost of \$6 per child and on Sundays from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The museum is free [on Sundays] for City residents.

- Yoga in the Galleries classes are available every Tuesday from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. for \$5 per class at the Imperial Centre for the Arts and Sciences;
- Clay Arts Afterschool for children ages 7 through 13 also begins this week. For more information and pricing, please go online to imperialcentre.org;
- On February 7 at 6:00 p.m. visitors are invited to watch a documentary, "The Other Boys of Summer," focusing on the Negro League Baseball. The showing is a part of the First Friday activities held at the Imperial Centre for the Arts and Sciences. The documentary is an exploration of civil rights in America through the lives of men and women Negro League baseball players, who played professionally in the 1930s-1950s alongside Jackie Robinson. The Negro Leagues were a form of high-level baseball that existed before African Americans were allowed in Major League Baseball.

Meetings:

- Two meetings will be held during the week of February 2:
 - o The first one on Monday, February 3 at 3:00 p.m., the Technical Coordinator Committee will meet in the Committee Room on the 3rd floor of City Hall; and
 - o On Thursday, February 6 at 8:30 a.m. the Central City Revitalization Panel (CCRP) will meet in the Committee Room located on the 3rd floor of City Hall

All meetings are open to the public.

2020 Census:

- The Manager said over the next several months citizens will hear her talk a lot about the 2020 Census because the census will determine funding for housing programs, schools, hospitals, economic development and much more in our community;
- She encouraged all to ensure their household, their neighbors' households and their community is counted in the 2020 Census and said confidential data can be submitted online at 2020census.gov.
- She added if citizens do not respond online, they will receive a paper application in April via regular mail;
- She encouraged all to stand up and be counted.

The Mayor emphasized the need for all to be counted in the 2020 Census.

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE NEGRO NATIONAL LEAGUE WEEK

Mayor C. Saunders Roberson, Jr. read a proclamation proclaiming the week of February 10-14, 2020 as "Centennial Celebration of the Negro National League Week" in the City of Rocky Mount and presented the Proclamation to Rose Hunter and members of the Buck Leonard Association. City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney, Interim Parks and Recreation Director/Assistant City Manager Elton Daniels and Recreation Superintendent Joel Dunn joined the Mayor, Mrs. Hunter and members of the Buck Leonard Association for a photograph.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Mayor Roberson recognized North Carolina House of Representatives member, Shelly Willingham, who was in attendance.

PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Mayor outlined the guidelines for petitions from the public

and opened the meeting for public petitions. Mayor Roberson recognized the following individuals and a summary of comments is outlined below:

- **Adrienne Copland:**
 - Stated that 306 Villa Street is located in the Villa Place Local Historic District and is on the agenda for tomorrow's Historic Preservation Commission meeting relative to a petition by the Community Code Supervisor to obtain a certificate of appropriateness in order to proceed with the process of demolition;
 - Said the owner is a lovely woman who planned to restore the home and retire there but has not been able to keep up the property;
 - Said a few years ago she made an effort to try to purchase the property but couldn't because of complicated title issues that couldn't be resolved;
 - Said the house is on track for demolition and there are back taxes in the thousands owed on the property that can't be paid, along with assessments;
 - Added that if the property is demolished there will be a lien on the property which will likely exceed the value of the property (approximately \$6,000);
 - Said no can buy the property because of the title issues and would not buy a vacant lot with more liens than it's worth;
 - Said the property value of other homes in the area will suffer even more once the property is vacant because it will look like a missing tooth on the street sending the message that the neighborhood is on the way down;
 - Added that the City will be more than \$15,000 in the hole and still be paying to cut the grass and losing tax revenue;
 - Said this will only get worse because the property can't be sold and said the property owner is going to be out her original investment plus the fines, back taxes and liens that she can't stop from piling up. She said the owner cannot cut her losses and is trapped in this property;
 - Stated that all of this could be avoided with tax foreclosures. She said the house could have been saved years ago because this process wipes out title issues and allows someone to purchase the home and keep it in good shape before it gets beyond the point of no return. It allows an owner to get out of an investment that went bad;
 - Said in cases like this one Council is the only hope. She said the bids could be restricted to in-person bids to avoid out-of-state speculators purchasing property and then just neglecting it and not paying taxes and added that then the City recoup all the back taxes, liens and foreclosure costs by requiring them to be paid at closing;
 - Said the City could contractually obligate the purchaser to complete certain repairs within a timeframe; and
 - Requested that Council not continue to allow this to happen and that they step in and allow someone else to do the work of keeping Rocky Mount beautiful by initiating tax foreclosures

Councilmember Blackwell questioned if the owner lives in the residence and Ms. Copeland responded by saying the family lives out of town.

- **Gwen Wilkins:**
 - Questioned why Council has not held the NAACP accountable for replacing a member of the Human Relations Commission who lives outside of the City;
 - Reported that at the April 22, 2019 COW meeting Council agreed that Mr. Dancy would continue to serve as a member of the Human Relations Commission until the next meeting of the NAACP board;
 - Reported that on April 25, 2019, a posting was made to the NAACP Rocky Mount Facebook page, stating the NAACP would be meeting on April 28, six days after the April 22 council meeting;
 - Stated that almost a year later the NAACP representative, who is not a resident of the City of Rocky Mount and was not a resident when he was appointed, still remains on the HRC;
 - Said throughout the years the National NAACP and the state organizations have been a beacon of light and respected organizations fighting and defending the rights of people of color; added it is extremely important that people of color who live in

this City have a voice on the HRC and for our local NAACP leadership to not consider the urgency of this action is a disappointment;

- Said Council should have done its due diligence and followed up after the April Council meeting and held the NAACP accountable;
 - Requested that Council do its due diligence and remove Mr. Dancy from the HRC and leave the seat vacant until filled with a City resident adding that nine months is long enough;
 - Said every citizen of the City should have something to say about this and no one organization should be allowed to hold the City or the HRC hostage for nine months; and
 - Said if the NAACP has not named a replacement by the next council meeting, she would urge Council to vote at that time to remove Mr. Dancy and leave the position vacant until a City resident is appointed
- **Dr. Kim Koo:**
 - Said the *Rocky Mount Telegram* reported recently that City streets need work that costs a grand total of \$38.1 million dollars, which includes minor rehabilitation, patchwork, resealing cracks, potholes, repaving and sidewalk repairs;
 - Said the article also mentioned that the work has been contracted out historically and the current Director of Public Works has not seen fit to change this pattern;
 - Said investigating this particular issue with city workers, it seems that in attempting to cut back on expenses the Street Department was merged with Stormwater and workers with particular and specific expertise were made to do other jobs that they were not trained for despite continuous requests for training;
 - Said training to use new and recently purchased equipment is sporadic and even sometimes racially discriminatory in deciding who gets trained;
 - Said as a taxpaying citizen it makes no sense [to her] that millions of dollars are contracted out to private companies on jobs that are always going to be ongoing adding that streets need to be maintained all the time;
 - Requested that consideration be given to:
 - 1) hiring more City workers with living wages;
 - 2) that whatever equipment is necessary to do the jobs be purchased; and
 - 3) That workers be trained on the equipment they need to do the job well
 - Said in doing this the City would not only provide new jobs within the communities, but also use tax dollars to benefit citizens;
 - Said quality jobs are essential for quality services and this is a capital investment that is very much worthwhile;
 - Stated she is opposed to subcontracting out work and paying millions of dollars to private companies when our City workers are eager and willing to provide the very services so vitally needed;
 - Said she would like to see a bond proposal as discussed in the *Rocky Mount Telegram* based on this type of reinvestment into the communities
 - **Jonathan Hunter:**
 - Said he is here to talk about the proclamation which has been proclaimed acknowledging the week of February 10-14, 2020 as the Centennial Celebration of Negro National League Week and said he thinks it's a beautiful thing that happened;
 - Gave a history of baseball relative to African American players and said they didn't have a venue to play after the Civil War;
 - Said years later a native son from Rocky Mount, Buck Leonard, went into the Negro Leagues in 1934 and played 17 seasons, the longest history or tenure of any Negro who played in the history of the Negro Leagues;
 - Noted he is related to Buck Leonard and is happy Buck Leonard is receiving this recognition; and
 - Said he will end by reciting a Bible verse and said when he thinks about Buck Leonard's life he thinks about what the verse entails because he wasn't able to play in the major leagues because of the color of his skin, but somehow, made it to the Hall of Fame and now the whole world knows about his accomplishments and can know

about some other people who played in the Negro Leagues who otherwise wouldn't have been known

- ***Bronson Williams:***

- Said we live in a great area that has a rich history of making things happen even when people count you out;
- Said he happened to stumble across some words on Facebook that said he is his own man or she is her own woman and said going against the grain doesn't make you your own man or own woman but what makes one their own man or own woman is the ability to independently evaluate what's at hand and objectively side with right or wrong;
- Said he will never apologize for choosing to finish school and go off to college and come back home and make a meaningful impact to his community and this is something he encourages all of his friends to do;
- Said some know he has been involved in City government for quite some time and has been known to challenge as well as praise the City;
- Said he tries to be as objective as possible;
- Said he loves Rocky Mount and wants it to be the best City it can possibly be;
- Urged Council not to get caught up in manufactured issues and when they look at and talk to people who are looking, visiting, moving to and talking about Rocky Mount and while they may talk about some of the negative things happening in our City we also can rejoice in the positive;
- Noted the opening of some new businesses and investment in the City and said the City is moving in a great direction;
- Said often people don't like to give credit to this Council who helped set the tone with other community leaders working together to create what is seen in Rocky Mount today;
- Urged the Council to tell its own story adding it is so easy for someone else to try to tell the story and get it wrong;
- Said it's important that TV 19 is used to showcase and highlight what's going on in Rocky Mount along with social media, Twitter accounts, networks, etc. to talk about the positive things happening in the City;
- Said those things are important because once a person has a made-up mind it's real hard to try to change them;
- Urged Council to stay the course because the City is moving in the right direction

- ***Darlene Spencer-Harris:***

- Said the City has some great things going on at the Event Center and said she had the opportunity to see the Harlem Globetrotters and the Monster X tour and people of the community are coming out and supporting the Event Center because it is here to stay;
- Said citizens should support the Event Center so it will be successful;
- Said her concern is because of the advisory committee, the Transition Committee that was formed, adding that when the Mayor announced he would have an advisory committee and was putting Kevin Jones in charge of it she was delighted;
- Said she reached out to Mr. Jones to find out the necessary qualifications required to be a part of that committee and he responded by asking what Ward she resided in;
- Said she lives in Ward 3 and is very proud to live there because they have great things going on;
- Said she then saw an article in the newspaper that said the Transition Committee had been formed had met and come up with great ideas;
- Voiced her disappointment at not having the opportunity to be a part of the committee saying it should include people from every Ward in the City; and
- Asked what requirements are for membership on the committee and how the committee is selected and said she wants the community to know she was excluded

Mayor Roberson stated that he has formed Transition Committees and groups to advise him about various issues and those committees are not affiliated with the City of Rocky Mount. He apologized that the

Committee did not respond to her and said he would love the opportunity to talk to her at a later date.

Councilmember Knight requested that the City Council be advised of the intent of the Transition Team.

Councilmember Miller stated that anybody can form their own advisory committee but that does not give any legal standing to do anything. She added that the Mayor's Transition Committee is not organized to advise Council. She noted there are many Committees in the City and appointments are made every year and Council solicits nominations. She stated that anybody interested is welcome to fill out a Personal History Form and the form can be found on the City's website. She invited all to consider serving on a City Board or Commission to advise City Council.

Councilmember Joyner stated Ms. Spencer-Harris is a great representative in Ward 3 and invited her to meet with him relative to serving on a City Board or Commission. He thanked her for her presence this evening.

- ***Johnny Cunningham:***
 - Offered to give his 3 minutes to the Mayor to elaborate relative to the Transition Team and Mayor Roberson offered to present a presentation at the next Council meeting or in some other appropriate forum;
 - Said it is a sad day for the City when a customer's private information can be secretly delivered to another person and that person take that private information and do harm and defame a citizen;
 - Said the downward spiral continues on social media;
 - Said it is a sad day for this City when people have a racist agenda and can call City staff that should be bound to secrecy and confidentiality and have that person deliver information about an opponent and then use that information to harm the opponent, adding he is pretty sure it's also illegal;
 - Said transition teams have no power or authority and thanked the Council for their due diligence and understanding of what their jobs are, what their responsibilities are and having committees already established
- ***Nehemiah Smith:***
 - Said he thinks the cause of the day and in recent days has been transparency so he will not address that today although there have been a lot of questions about the Event Center and transparency;
 - Said he would like to know:
 - 1) the City's mandates or rules questioning if it is illegal or if there is a rule against elected officials owning property in the City;
 - 2) the City's policy on conflict of interest; and
 - 3) requested a list of vendors
- ***Kiyah Darden:***
 - Said today is her second time attending a City Council meeting;
 - Said her first attendance was the last City Council meeting and it was quite an experience to see adults conducting themselves in such a manner;
 - Said as an 18-year-old colored female living in the City who is well aware of the crime and gang violence she can say that not all underprivileged kids are thugs and gangbangers;

- Said there are young people like herself who want to live in and take care of a safe City and help develop ideas to make Rocky Mount a great place to live;
 - Said some of the main focus is on the wrong things;
 - Said she is a college student at Edgecombe Community College;
 - Said so often people get an opportunity to exercise their freedom to speak and waste time complaining about what's not being done, how much bad is happening and where the bad is taking place but she doesn't hear solutions for how to bring the crime rate down, sweep guns off the streets or add new developments that are assets to the City;
 - Suggested that community leaders focus on the mission and set aside their feelings and said if they are passionate about saving people from the streets, about feeding the people in our community, about keeping trash off of the streets then they should stop making it personal;
 - Said we may not always like who our elected officials are, but considering that they are in that position, she believes they are the people's choice and despite how we feel about it, the mission is to get something done and in order to do that we have to be adult enough to set our feelings aside and work with our elected officials; and
 - Said if we have a solution instead of complaining and nagging it needs to be voiced
- **Mumtaz Shaik:**
 - Said she enjoys living in Rocky Mount and has seen it expand from a small town to one that now has double-lane roads and more and better housing;
 - Said she is proud to say she has been paying taxes from her first day in the City;
 - Said taxes should remain in Rocky Mount and she was disturbed, like Dr. Koo, by the recent report that road building and sidewalk repairs are going to be turned over to a private company;
 - Said she thinks it would be wonderful if City workers were trained on equipment purchased with taxes over years to make them a skilled workforce that can be depended upon for road building and repairs, sidewalk repairs and all that kind of stuff;
 - Said you lose nothing by training your workforce and added workers need to be paid a living wage so that they can maintain a decent standard of living and an improved quality of life;
 - Asked that taxes not be exported
- **Nathlyn Ohree:**
 - Said she has been informed by the local newspaper that the name "Rocky Mount" is to be removed from the school system resulting in a new brand name for the school system;
 - Said she may not understand it, but does not like it and gave reasons for her dislike;
 - Said though the Nash-Rocky Mount school merger had its good and bad issues it has turned out to be a palatable relationship until now;
 - Said the citizens of Rocky Mount need to know who did it, why it was suggested, and most importantly, what will happen to the fragile minds and hearts of our children, their parents and their grandparents if our name, our legacy and our symbolic representation is removed;
 - Asked if Council cares and what can be done about it and stated she wants and expects a telephone call between 9 and 10 a.m. by next Monday, February 3, 2020 from the Mayor with some consoling words of thought and direction with regards to preserving the positive relationship that Rocky Mount and its constituents have had with Nash County;
 - Said she views removing the name of Rocky Mount from the school system's name as an outright insult and said the citizens of Rocky Mount deserve a clear explanation

AD VALOREM TAX RELEASES

The City Council received the following schedules of ad valorem taxes recommended for release and/or refund:

SCHEDULE A – taxes under \$100 approved for release and/or refund by the City Manager:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>BILL NO.</u>	<u>NAME/ADDRESS</u>	<u>TAX</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
<u>NASH COUNTY</u>				
2019	1095	JACKSON, ROBERT SCOTT & ANGELIA 465 COOLEY RD ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27803	14.32 1.43 .32	CITY PERSONAL PROPERTY PEN LOCATED OUTSIDE INT CITY LIMITS
		TOTAL RELEASE:	16.07	
2019	866	WHITLEY, STEVEN OLIVER 2301 FALLS RIVER AVE RALEIGH, NC 27614	54.53 1.09	CITY OWNER CORRECTION INT
		TOTAL RELEASE:	55.62	

SCHEDULE B – taxes over \$100 recommended for release and/or refund by the City Council:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>BILL NO.</u>	<u>NAME/ADDRESS</u>	<u>TAX</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
<u>EDGEcombe COUNTY</u>				
2019	21940	BROWN, BERNICE 109 PICKWICK CT ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27801	255.60 5.11	CITY ELDERLY/DISABLED INT EXEMPTION
		TOTAL RELEASE:	260.71	
<u>NASH COUNTY</u>				
2019	1001464	EVANS, ROBERT TONY 3820 MANSFIELD DR ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27804	178.37 3.57	CITY PERSONAL PROPERTY INT LOCATED OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS
		TOTAL RELEASE:	181.94	

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge and unanimously carried that the report from the City Manager of taxes under \$100 listed on Schedule A approved for release and/or refund be acknowledged; and that the taxes over \$100 listed on Schedule B be approved for release and/or refund.

PERSONNEL ORDINANCE CODE AMENDMENT/PEER REVIEW PANEL

Consideration was given to an amendment to Chapter 16 of the City Code entitled "Personnel", Article II. Personnel Plan of the City of Rocky Mount, DIVISION 1. GENERALLY, "Sec. 16-109. Dismissal." and "Sec. 16-142. Grievance procedure." which rewrites the sections to eliminate Peer Review Panel appeals for employees who have been recommended for dismissal and to add Peer Review Panel appeals for all employees subject to disciplinary action other than recommendations for dismissal.

Consideration of this Ordinance was tabled at the January 13, 2020 City Council meeting.

Councilmember Daughtridge asked for clarification of the Ordinance since discussion was held prior to the newest members of the Council being seated and requested further explanation in an upcoming Committee of the Whole meeting. There was discussion and the City Attorney advised that the Ordinance does not abolish the Peer Review Panel but limits its authority to hear disciplinary actions only. He noted that the Peer Review Panel will be eliminated as an option relative to recommendations for termination (dismissal).

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and carried by a vote of 6-1 (Councilmember Daughtridge opposed) that Ordinance No. **O-2020-1** entitled **ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT AMENDING THE PERSONNEL ORDINANCE (CHAPTER 16) OF THE CITY CODE TO ELIMINATE PEER REVIEW PANEL APPEALS FOR EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE BEEN RECOMMENDED FOR DISMISSAL AND TO ADD PEER REVIEW PANEL APPEALS FOR ALL EMPLOYEES SUBJECT TO DISCIPLINARY ACTION OTHER THAN DISMISSAL RECOMMENDATIONS** be adopted.

STATE AUDIT (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)

Councilmember Blackwell stated that much discussion and speculation has been held on social media sites and the local television station relative to the status of the State Audit. He said the audit began in March of 2019 and the City has a project that will continue the development of the City's economic well-being with its first major downtown hotel with a nationally recognized flag worth approximately \$60M and the addition of approximately 1,000 jobs that is being held up. He stated the allegations are yet to be substantiated or dismissed. Mr. Blackwell added that the Council has not been given any clarity about what is being investigated. He added that he thinks it is more than reasonable to request some conclusion or at least an update from the State Auditor's Office. He requested that the City Manager and/or City Attorney make inquiry to the State Auditor's Office about the status of the audit.

Mayor Roberson agreed and added he would also like to see a resolution of the audit so that the City can go about the business of doing business.

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney said she thinks it is unusual for the State Auditor to come into any organization without providing notice to even the Mayor or Council. She said they just showed up which causes her to question not only the intent but the process. She stated that as the City Manager she would have expected to be paid the respect of a visit to her office and other colleagues across the state who have had visits from the State Auditor have told her they were given the due respect of a visit. She stated that courtesy was not paid to the legislative body or to her as the Chief Administrative Officer of the organization. She told the Council she will be happy to find out whatever she can and knows that several City departments have received visits. She noted it is a mystery to her as to where the State Auditor's report will be sent once completed adding there is a lot to be concerned about in terms of whether or not the process is a legitimate process.

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the State Auditor be contacted by the City Manager or City Attorney and inquiry be made as to the full scope of the investigation and that a request be made for audit results

be provided to the Council so that the City can move forward with its economic development plans.

Councilmembers requested that any information received from the State Auditor's office be provided to the Council.

COMMENTS - COUNCILMEMBER DAUGHTRIDGE

Councilmember Daughtridge read a letter that he wrote to the City Manager on October 23, 2019 relative to his companies, Top Dog Waste Solutions, LLC and Daughtridge Sales, advising that he would be withdrawing those entities as vendors for the City due to being elected as a Councilmember in an effort to be transparent, above board and avoid any appearance of conflict.

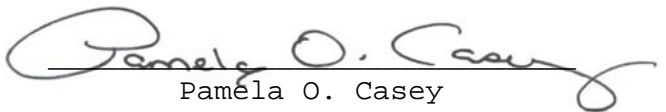
CLOSED SESSION (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)

The Mayor stated that a Closed Session has been requested by the Manager to discuss a matter concerning attorney-client privilege.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried that the City Council go into Closed Session at 5:16 p.m. The minutes of the Closed Session shall be filed as **ESM-546** at the end of **Minute Book 37** upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

REGULAR SESSION/ADJOURNMENT

The Mayor convened the City in regular session at 6:41 p.m. and there being no further business for regular session, adjourned the meeting.


Pamela O. Casey
City Clerk