

July 13, 2020

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

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. and called on Councilmember Lige Daughtride. Councilmember Daughtride called for a moment of silence.

Councilmembers present: André D. Knight, Reuben C. Blackwell, IV, Richard Joyner, T. J. Walker*, Lige Daughtride and Christine Carroll Miller*.

**joining remotely*

Councilmember absent: W. B. Bullock

Staff present: Rochelle Small-Toney, City Manager; Pamela O. Casey, City Clerk; Dorothy Brown Smith, Chief Communications and Marketing Consultant; Robin Cox, Communications Specialist; and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

Some staff members participated via MS Teams.

Security Officer: Retired Police Sergeant L. S. Parker, Jr.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the minutes of a regular scheduled meeting of the City Council held June 22, 2020 be approved as submitted to the City Council prior to the meeting.

COMMUNITY UPDATE BY CITY MANAGER

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney provided the following community update:

- The public is encouraged to participate in a virtual meeting regarding the Sunset Avenue Corridor from 5:30-7 p.m. on Wednesday, July 15. The City is currently working with an engineering/design consultant to seek improvements for the corridor from Halifax Road to Buck Leonard Boulevard. The meeting will take place via Zoom. More information is listed on the calendar page of the City's website at rockymountnc.gov.
- It is a tough time for a lot of residents with layoffs and furloughs. As a reminder, pursuant to the Council's direction as well as a pair of Executive Orders from the Governor, there is a moratorium on all utility disconnections until further notice and late fees will not be assessed during this time. If customers are struggling and need help with utility bills, please contact the Business Services Center at 252-972-1250.
- OIC continues to hold COVID-19 testing sites at the Rocky Mount Event Center. Those tested will need to bring their photo ID and insurance cards. Insurance is not required for testing. Testing days are Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Registration can be performed prior to arrival by logging on to oicrmhub.com. Call 252-210-9856 for more information.

- Councilmembers were congratulated on the recent release of individual newsletters to their constituents. The newsletters, which will be delivered monthly via email to members of all seven wards, are designed to inform constituents about the latest news, projects and focus areas specific to their wards. If you did not receive the July edition of your newsletter, you are encouraged to send an email to: communications@rockymountnc.gov.
- Citizens were encouraged to remember to fill out and send in their 2020 Census form and that the census will determine funding for housing programs, schools, hospitals, economic development and much more in our community. Response can be online, by phone or by mail. For more information or to respond, visit 2020census.gov.

PRESENTATION - BLACK LIVES MATTER RESOLUTION

Mayor Roberson read aloud **Resolution No. R-2020-16** adopted by the City Council on June 8, 2020 entitled **RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT AGAINST RACIAL INJUSTICE AND DECLARATION THAT BLACK LIVES MATTER**. Cooper Blackwell accepted a framed copy of the resolution on behalf of the Rocky Mount Black Action Committee. Councilmembers Knight, Blackwell and Joyner joined the Mayor and Mr. Cooper Blackwell for a photograph.

PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The City Manager noted that due to the City Hall elevators being out of service, members of the public who are unable take the stairs to the Council Chamber will be allowed to address the Council from the first floor. She added that those wishing to speak to the Council from the podium in the Council Chamber are welcome to do so.

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

- ***Nehemiah Smith:***
 - Requested that the area from the stoplight at Raleigh Road to Hunter Street (Weeks Armstrong side of the street) be designated as a no-parking zone (Mayview Community)
 - Announced that Mount Zion First Baptist Church will be celebrating their sesquicentennial next year
 - Stated that Mount Zion Baptist Church will have food giveaways starting July 21st until the community is able to start their community gardens in association with Conetoe; plan to give away 300 boxes of food
- ***Susan Perry Cole:***
 - Reported there is an urgent need for rental housing payment assistance
 - Spoke for the Community Academy in voicing concern for the future of COVID-19 impacted residents who live in under-resourced neighborhoods due to the expiration of the CARES Act unemployment benefits being just months away adding that some may have already been stressed and struggling prior to the pandemic (provided statistical information)
 - Stated that eviction moratoriums that have been in place do nothing to help landlords pay their own bills
 - Said eviction is a very public experience
 - Stated \$150M was included in the \$1.6B Coronavirus Relief Recovery package approved by the General Assembly and she said would like the City Council

make sure that City executives apply for either Nash or Edgecombe County where the funds will be allocated for emergency rental assistance and urged that timely action be taken to avoid the massive increase in homelessness

- **Samuel Battle:**
 - Said Rosewood and Lynn Avenue need street repairs
 - Questioned why police officers and City employees are not receiving hazard pay (for working during the pandemic)
 - Said Wilson pays Parks and Recreation employees more than Rocky Mount and Rocky Mount has more parks
 - Said Unity Cemetery in Ward 1 is in disrepair and there is a lot of black history in the cemetery and it needs to be kept up
 - Said trees are tearing up the sidewalks on Hill and Tarboro Streets and people are falling
 - Said he asked a couple months ago when the mammography machine will be up and running at the OIC clinic in the Event Center
 - Asked when the Councilmember in Ward 1 will pay the utility bill for \$47,000 stating the City needs that money
 - Said he has been reading the paper about a property being landlocked and added Ward 1 is landlocked also

- **Ari Barnes:**
 - Stated he is co-founder of the Unmuted Organization
 - Said he is aware of the monument being removed and of the painting of black lives matter on the street and said those people who are satisfied with that are part of the problem
 - Said they want justice, equal chances at generational wealth and to be included in the conversation when it comes to moves of power
 - Said they are not satisfied with child's play...they want the main course
 - Said they want to own property, build schools, teach and empower and want the same chance their counterparts have

- **Morrie Minges:**
 - Said she is disappointed in the entire Council
 - Feels an apology is owed to Robert Carr and stated she feels a Councilmember jumped the gun and rushed to judgment relative to a gesture made by Mr. Carr; said that might be because he is Caucasian and the perhaps the dark-skinned Councilmembers didn't realize that some old white men give a salute and jumped to conclusions; said he didn't scare anyone and that unreasonable biases go both ways
 - Said she is worried about the City's financial well-being; wants to know who decides how money is spent
 - Said she feels money spent on painting "Black Lives Matter" on a roof of the old train loading dock in front of the Event Center could have been spent to help children in the area that do not have food, shelter or air conditioning adding she is sure the painting project is not cheap

Councilmember Knight asked that Ms. Minges not address Councilmembers as dark-skinned people. He stated it was a racist comment and those Councilmembers should be addressed as African American or Black.

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney stated while it is unusual for her to respond during petitions from the public, she feels the need to set the record straight relative to the gesture made by Mr. Carr. She said it appears that some think Mr. Carr's gesture was misinterpreted, but it was not misinterpreted because it was directed at her. She said no one can speak for how she interpreted the gesture and she does not take things like that lightly,

particularly in an environment like this. She stated it was a threat to her and she thinks about it quite a bit when she comes into City Hall. She added that she has not heard from Mr. Carr but would be happy to sit down and talk with him about his gesture. She said Mr. Carr is certainly allowed to come back into the Council Chambers but with restrictions in terms of his gesturing, because the next time it's not going to be as easily handled as this time.

- ***Curmilus Dancy:***
 - Stated he continues to support the Council
 - Thanked the Council for the monument begin removed
 - Stated he wants to see the Council continue to stand up for themselves and not let others disrespect them
 - Said he commended the Council not because they are a black majority but because they are an elected board
- ***Clint Williams:***
 - Said he feels the City Council has failed the City by not taking the State Auditor's findings seriously and working to make things right
 - Stated he does not understand how the Council can think it is a good idea to question the State Auditor on her findings when she sits on the panel from which they are seeking approval for the parking deck financing and said they have made an enemy of the State
 - Added that funds should be repaid, and he is further disappointed that Councilmember are not disclosing conflicts of interest;
 - Stated those calling themselves preachers are hypocrites
- ***Johnny Cunningham:***
 - Said he has known the owner of Mom's Fish Market for 17 years and he is a hardworking, dedicated family man
 - Stated he hopes the Council will not tolerate boycotting and will send out a message that a modern-day black lynch mob will not be allowed to target for personal reasons
 - Said the owner has video of young African American girls coming into his shop kicking over his trash cans and pushing things off the counter
- ***Cooper Blackwell:***
 - Said according to Dictionary.com Black Lives Matter is a political and social movement originating among African Americans, emphasizing basic human rights and racial equality for black people and campaigning against various forms of racism. It is was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murder
 - Said the Rocky Mount Black Action Committee is in support of a visual display for Black Lives Matter that shows communal support of the movement and feels it should be a collective effort that is community driven. They would like to be a part of designing the RFP process and creating the message and where it goes (they may not want it to just say Black Lives Matter)
 - Would like to work with the City to find an artist to participate and work with the City Manager and the Council to develop ideas on how else budget line items could be re-appropriated
 - Stated that art is a great place to start with Community Development
- ***Sydney Meeks:***
 - Stated she wanted to address some of the demands they have for the City
 - Said there is a demand for reparations for the genocide and displacement of indigenous people and the enslavement of social, political and economic disenfranchisement of black people

- Said another demand is for acknowledgment and repair of black neighborhoods experiencing social immobility and economic drought because of the historic and current disinvestment in those neighborhoods
 - Stated there is another demand for providing more minority business development opportunities with less stringent requirements to make it easier for the common person to access information, buying processes and proper procurement
 - Said she does not care how long a business has been operating, once you mistreat the black community there will be no justice and no peace until it gets solved and this goes for all businesses that serve black people
 - Thanked Council for addressing the issue of an individual referring to African Americans as dark-skinned
- ***Nathlyn Ohree;***
 - Thanked the Council for the plans to paint Black Lives Matter in the City and stated she hopes it will also include painting on the street where she can proudly walk on it
 - Urged Council to continue to pursue the hotel for the Downtown area – stated the last time there was flooding she and her family had to travel around the river to get to the Winstead Avenue Corridor to seek shelter
 - Stated her family is having a reunion soon and she would love to see a facility close by to accommodate her family
 - Thanked the Council for their continued work

Councilmember Blackwell stated he has no issue with the public speaking because it is their right. He said he wished to make clarification about the role of all elected officials and said the State Auditor is an elected office and serves at the pleasure of constituents and in so doing, along with the members of the Local Government Commission, has a role to serve, support and assist communities in creating fiscal responsibility and accountability. He said she also works with cities and local governments to build economies. He added that he understands the role of the auditor to be to evaluate the fiscal capacity of any governmental entity that she is called to evaluate. Mr. Blackwell said the auditor pointed out within her document process recommendations and the City not only responded to the auditor's claims, which they took issue with, but also made corrections in processes, procedures and even in positions.

He clarified that while OIC did receive an \$8,000 roof grant, the grant was obtained legally, and the property was eligible. He also stated that it was interesting that there was nothing noted about OIC's investment of \$2.5M to leverage the \$8,000 grant.

He stated the City has received auditing awards from in-depth audits that were created by or conferred upon it by organizations and entities that deal with all types of municipal finance and he takes issue with it being stated that Rocky Mount is not well managed.

Councilmember Blackwell made the following points that support the City is well managed:

- It has a stellar credit rating;
- Stellar projects are looking to locate in Rocky Mount;
- It is enjoying great growth

Councilmember Joyner suggested that guidelines for public petitions be read at each meeting and that time deadlines for speakers be adhered to.

ANNEXATION NO. 316 - 3786 WEATHERFORD STREET

The Mayor recognized City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney to explain the feasibility study prepared in connection with the annexation. The City Manager called on the Director of Development Services, Will Deaton, to explain the report. Council was advised that, if approved for annexation, the subject property will be a part of Ward 2. Mr. Deaton told the City Council that 3786 Weatherford Street is a one-acre lot that was part of a larger parent tract identified as 3817 Weatherford Street and is currently vacant. He concluded by recommending approval of the annexation. A copy of the report is on file in Annexation No. 316 in the office of the City Clerk.

The Mayor opened a public hearing relative to Annexation No. 316, and no one appeared. The Mayor declared the public hearing closed. Written comments will be accepted up to 24 hours after the public hearing by submitting same to pamela.casey@rockymountnc.gov, pursuant to NCGS 166A-19.24.

PROPOSED FY 2020-2021 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

The City Council was advised that the Annual Action Plan represents year three of the Down East HOME Consortium's (DEHC) Three-Year Consolidated Plan which is mandated by federal law and regulations promulgated by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the City to receive federal funding for affordable housing and community development initiatives that benefit low- and moderate-income individuals. The Council was further advised that the City is expected to receive \$526,640 in CDBG funding and \$309,806 in CDBG Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) funding for FY 2020-2021 and the Down East HOME Consortium is expected to receive \$417,205 in HOME funding.

It was noted that the public hearing was held on June 22, 2020 in Rocky Mount and an additional public hearing was held on July 7, 2020 in Edgecombe County and if additional written comments are received, they will be shared with the City Council. It was explained that the deadline for submitting the FY 2020-2021 Annual Action Plan is July 15, 2020.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NC 160A-75) that the FY 2020-2021 Annual Action Plan be approved and that the Mayor be authorized to execute the Application for Federal Assistance SF-424 for HOME, CDBG and

CDBG-CV funding and any other required documentation or certifications on behalf of the City.

HAZARD MITIGATION BUYOUT AGREEMENT/3208 CORNWALLIS DRIVE

The City Council was provided with a Memorandum of Agreement with the North Carolina Office of State Budget & Management, Disaster Recovery Section (OSBM-DR) relative to the hazard mitigation of 3208 Cornwallis Drive. Council was advised that the property is prone to flooding and after Hurricane Matthew on October 8 and 9, 2016, the State reached an agreement with the property owner to purchase the property. The City Council was further advised that the OSBM will manage the buyout of the property and subsequent removal of the structure and be responsible for the full cost of the project and, as part of the agreement, the State will convey the property consisting of 3.71 acres to the City. It was explained that the City currently owns a parcel adjacent to 3208 Cornwallis Drive on which stormwater infrastructure is located and ownership of the property will improve access to the stormwater infrastructure.

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried (6 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NC 160A-75) that the Memorandum of Agreement with the North Carolina Office of State Budget & Management, Disaster Recovery Section (OSBM-DR)(**C-2020-16**) be approved and that the Mayor and City Manager be authorized to execute the same on behalf of the City.

CONSTRUCTION AGREEMENT/SIDEWALK AT GOLDFLEAF STREET RAILROAD CROSSING

The City Council was advised that a 2018 study by the engineering firm, WSP, recommended the addition of sidewalk on both sides of Goldleaf Street from Falls Road to NE Main Street in order to improve pedestrian access to the Event Center. Council was provided with a construction agreement, water drainage facility agreement and grade crossing maintenance agreement with CSX Transportation, Inc. relative to the sidewalk construction. It was explained project expenses are estimated at \$166,951 (construction - \$98,142; CSX fees - \$68,809 and there will be a recurring annual fee of \$4,540 for grade crossing maintenance, adjusted annually based on CPI).

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge and unanimously carried (6 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NC 160A-75) that the following agreements be approved and that the Mayor be authorized to execute same on behalf of the City:

- a. Construction Agreement(**C-2020-17**);
- b. Water Drainage Facility Agreement (**C-2020-18**); and

c. Grade Crossing Maintenance Agreement (C-2020-19).

APPOINTMENTS

Motion was made by Councilmember Miller, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried (6 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NC 160A-75) that Travis Frederick Ellis be appointed to the Ward 7 unexpired term on the Utility Service Review Board. This appointment shall expire on June 30, 2022.

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Knight and unanimously carried (6 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NC 160A-75) that Hap Turner be appointed to fill an unexpired term on the Historic Preservation Commission. This term shall expire on June 30, 2022.

No action was taken to fill the remaining vacancies on the City's Boards, Commissions and Committees.

Mayor Pro Tem Knight recommended that consideration of the annual appointments to Boards, Commissions and Committees be the first item for consideration on the Committee of the Whole (COW) agenda for August 10, 2020.

JUNETEENTH HOLIDAY (JUNE 19TH)(ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)

The City Council considered a resolution to declare June 19th (Juneteenth) a paid holiday for City employees.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Knight and unanimously carried (6 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NC 160A-75) that **Resolution No. R-2020-23** entitled **RESOLUTION DECLARING JUNE 19TH, JUNETEENTH, A PAID HOLIDAY FOR CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT EMPLOYEES** be adopted.

Councilmembers Daughtridge and Knight noted the City Manager has reported that due diligence has been done relative to fiscal responsibility of the City's budget to support the additional holiday.

DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INITIATIVE (DFI)/TARBORO STREET REDEVELOPMENT (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)

The City Council was provided with a Memorandum of Understanding with Woda Cooper Companies, Inc. (WCC) designating WWC as the development partner for the Development Finance Initiative (DFI project) at 218-242 Tarboro Street.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried (6 ayes/0 nays) that the Memorandum of Understanding with Woda Cooper Companies, Inc. (C-2020-20) be approved and that the Mayor be authorized to execute the same on behalf of the City.

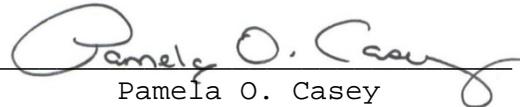
COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS

Councilmember Daughtridge requested that the Mayor Pro Tem add discussion of the City's policy relative to collections/write-offs to the August 10, 2020 Committee of the Whole (COW) agenda.

Councilmember Joyner reported that the Berkshire Community has successfully purchased a home at 1816 Duncan Drive (through Community Wealth Building) and rehab will begin tomorrow morning at 8 a.m. He stated this is an event to be celebrated in Ward 3 and invited all to come and celebrate and work along with members of the Berkshire Community and thanked the City Manager and Archie Jones, Director of Human Relations, for their assistance with this project. Councilmember Knight congratulated Mr. Joyner and the Berkshire Community.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, by consensus, the meeting was adjourned at 8:19 p.m.


Pamela O. Casey
City Clerk