

August 10, 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 7:05 p.m. and called for a moment of silence for individual prayer.

Councilmembers present: André D. Knight, Reuben C. Blackwell, IV, Richard Joyner, T. J. Walker\*, Lige Daughtridg 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; Ken Hunter, Assistant to the Manager for Budget and Evaluation\*\*; Robin Cox, Communications Specialist; and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

*\*\*in attendance as needed*

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA (ADDED IN OPEN MEETING)**

Mayor Roberson requested consideration of approval of the agenda. He added that the City Attorney has asked for two items to be added. Councilmember Daughtridg requested that consideration of a distribution of funds to the United Community Ministries Homeless Shelter be added to Item 7 on the agenda. City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney reported that Item 7 on the agenda is a project ordinance for CARES Act Funding (CDBG-CV) previously authorized by the Council. She stated the discussion could include uses of other funding.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the agenda be approved, as amended.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, 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 July 27, 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:

- She commended City staff for their excellent preparation in advance of last week's Tropical Storm adding that, thankfully, our City went largely unaffected by the storm. She noted that because of that, our Energy Resources Department was able to send crews to the Belhaven/Washington communities to assist with restoring power to their residents.

- She reported that this past weekend Nash County experienced a major water main break in their Central Nash Water District and had to issue a public boil water notice to its residents due to the drop in water pressure. She stated the County contacted the City's Water Resources Department to assist with conducting bacteriological analysis to help expedite the lifting of the notice and said without assistance from the City the notice would have remained in effect until this Tuesday, after the Nash County Health Department completed the analysis.

The Manager added that City staff was able to run the test on Saturday, and provided Nash County with the results yesterday, which allowed Nash County to lift the boil water notice much earlier. She reported that Nash County Board of Commissioner, Chairman Robbie Davis expressed his gratitude for the City's assistance and said she appreciates the work of both departments who used their skills to help other communities in need.

- She told the Council that due to recent weather conditions, the Rocky Mount Police Department has rescheduled its Drive-Thru School Supplies Giveaway for Tuesday, August 11 from 4-6 p.m. in the parking lot of the Frederick E. Turnage Municipal Building. She reported that the giveaway is for students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade and stated attendees are asked to remain in their cars. More information can be obtained by visiting the City's website or social media pages.
- The Manager stated the City is still in a pandemic and reminded citizens that the CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings to help slow the spread of COVID-19. She urged adherence to that recommendation and all other guidelines issued by the CDC.
- Ms. Small-Toney stated that pursuant to the City Council's direction, a moratorium on all utility disconnections remains in effect until further notice and late fees will not be assessed during this time. She stated customers may contact the Business Services Center at 252-972-1250 if they need help with their bills.
- She reported that OIC continues to hold COVID-19 testing sites at the Rocky Mount Event Center. She noted that those tested will need to bring their photo ID and insurance cards and insurance is not required for testing. She said testing days are Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. and registration can be performed prior to arrival by logging on to oicrmhub.com and that more information can be obtained by calling 252-210-9856.
- She reminded the public that it is important to fill out and send in 2020 Census forms. She stated the census will determine funding for housing programs, schools, hospitals, economic development and much more in our community and said response may be made online, by phone or by mail noting that more information can be obtained and response can be made by visiting 2020census.gov.

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

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

- **Bob Norman:**
  - Stated he has lived in Rocky Mount for 50 years and is a retired teacher, coach and businessman
  - Said he feels the City would do better promoting unity rather than division
  - Stated that a statue was taken down because some people were offended by it and he had no problem with that
  - Said he feels like the Black Lives Matter mural may offend some people and he would rather see out-of-town travelers see unity promoted
  - Said he feels some on the dais should apologize to Robert Carr
  
- **Trisha Thompson:**
  - Said she opposes the City Council's endorsement of Black Lives Matter for two reasons: 1) she feels Council is not supporting the United States Constitution; and 2) Black Lives Matter only addresses one race exclusively
  - Said Rocky Mount City Government is for all of Rocky Mount and not just one race
  
- **Nehemiah Smith, Jr.:**
  - Stated the initial document of independence was hypocritical because it was only independence for white people
  - Stated the more hypocritical document was the United States Constitution because black people were only considered three fifths of a person or property
  - Stated he would like to know when black lives have mattered
  - Stated he does not understand why asking to paint three words should cause others to be upset
  
- **Samuel Battle:**
  - Stated all lives matter to him because his son is biracial and his life matters, so you cannot only say Black Lives Matter
  - Stated the police brutality that is happening in other areas is not happening here in Rocky Mount and he feels like people just want to grab onto something
  - Stated if Black Lives really matter then why are there 52 unsolved murders and 19 murders from just last year
  - Said he feels certain people are given special privileges because of who their family is
  
- **Bronson Williams:**
  - Said he supports the idea of a Black Lives Matter mural because he wants young black boys and girls to know their life has value
  - Stated he feels school suspensions adversely impact students of color, educational opportunities, employment opportunities and economic development are all indicators that we need to make swift changes in our decision making as it relates to black America
  - Stated he would like for his non-black friends to understand this is not to devalue their worth or their value, but rather to bring equity to where we live
  
- **Morrie Minges:**
  - Stated education gives people opportunity to succeed and people should not be given things in life but should earn them
  - Stated she hopes the Black Lives Matter campaign is helping people who are black because it is not helping any caucasian people
  - Said she is worried about the way money is being spent adding that because of current spending the City may not have the money it needs for everyday things
  - Expressed thanks to another citizen that was agreeing to help with combatting litter
  - Asked if Council had given any thought to having a section in the newspaper for citizens to ask their councilmember questions

- Stated she felt Samuel Battle should have been among the black men that were photographed for the Black Light Project
- ***Nathlyn Ohree:***
  - Stated she has received calls from across the City letting her know where food distributions are being made to our citizens
  - Said Black Lives do matter and for a long time, Black lives have not been considered as much as they should have been
  - Requested the City please move forward with building the new hotel
  - Thanked the Mayor and City Council for the job they are doing

**GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE/CDBG CARES ACT**

The City Council received a Grant Project Ordinance that budgets CDBG Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) funds in the amount of \$309,806 from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. This funding is designed for affordable housing and community development initiatives that benefit primarily low- and moderate-income individuals and will be used to provide one-time utility assistance to residential customers who are below the 80% AMI for the area.

Councilmember Daughtridg voiced concern for the United Community Ministries Homeless Shelter and stated he is hopeful that the City can provide funding assistance.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that **Ordinance No. O-2020-33** entitled **GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT CARES ACT FUNDING PROJECT** be adopted.

**GRANT/EDWARD BYRNE MEMORIAL JUSTICE ASSISTANCE (JAG 2020)**

The City Council was advised that the City is eligible to receive \$35,048 through the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance in the form of the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) for 2020. They were further advised that these funds which are normally received each year are typically used by the Police Department to purchase equipment items that it is unable to acquire through normal budgetary channels and, if awarded, the funds will be shared with the Nash County Sheriff's office in a 60/40 split. The City Council was notified that funding can be used to purchase equipment and supplies and the planned use is to purchase tasers to replace units that are no longer serviceable.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridg, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that staff be authorized to submit the grant application and that the Mayor, City Clerk and/or appropriate staff be authorized to execute any required documentation, including the final application and subsequent grant agreement, certifications and assurances on behalf of the City.

**NO OVERDUE TAX DEBT/NORTH CAROLINA SCIENCE MUSEUM GRANT PROGRAM**

Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney notified the City Council that the City received \$37,970.35 in grant funding last year from the North Carolina Science Museum Grant Program (NCSMGP) and is now in the second year of the grant. Council was advised that a requirement of the grant is that the Finance Director and Mayor execute a certification of no overdue tax debts in order to receive this year's allocation.

Councilmember Miller asked for clarification and Finance Director Amy Staton explained that though the City does not have tax debt, it is responsible for payment of payroll taxes and confirmed that the City has no overdue tax debt.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the Mayor and Finance Director be authorized to execute the certification of no overdue tax debts on behalf of the City.

**DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INITIATIVE (DFI)/TARBORO STREET REDEVELOPMENT (ADDENDUM TO PURCHASE AGREEMENT - ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)**

The City Council was provided with an addendum to Exhibit A (Option to Purchase Agreement Addendum) of the 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 approved by Council on July 13, 2020. He explained that the addendum more clearly clarifies the four tax parcels under option as: 218 Tarboro Street; 226 Tarboro Street; 242 Tarboro Street; and 213 Rose Street.

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Knight and unanimously carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding with Woda Cooper Companies, Inc. be approved and that the Mayor be authorized to execute the same on behalf of the City. The addendum will be filed with the original Memorandum of Understanding (C-2020-20) in the office of the City Clerk.

**REPORT OF CLAIM RESOLUTION - DAVID WISE (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)**

City Attorney Richard J. Rose reported that a claim filed by former City employee David Wise has been settled. He outlined the following terms of the settlement as:

- Payment to Mr. Wise and his attorney - \$7,000
- Complete release to the City

Mr. Rose stated the settlement was under the threshold required for Council approval.

**ANNUAL APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS/COMMISSIONS/COMMITTEES (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)**

The City Council confirmed the following recommendations for appointments to the City's various Boards, Commissions and Committees made by the City Council during the Committee of the Whole meeting held just prior to today's Regular Scheduled City Council meeting:

- **Animal Care and Control Advisory Board** (three-year term expires June 30, 2023):
  - Tosha Aldridge (Ward 4)
- **Board of Adjustment** (three-year term expires June 30, 2023):
  - Robert Davis (Ward 1; reappointed)
  - William Jones (Ward 7; reappointed)
- **Business Development Authority** (three-year terms expire June 30, 2023):
  - Blake Tharin (reappointed)
  - Steven Larry Cederberg (reappointed)
- **Community Appeals Board** (three-year terms expire June 30, 2023)
  - Troy Davis (Ward 1; reappointed)
  - Mark Frohman (Ward 7; reappointed)
- **Historic Preservation Commission** (four-year terms expire June 30, 2024)
  - David Michael Latham (reappointed)
  - Bianca Davis
  - John Mebane (reappointed)

*Note: Kera Robinson was appointed inadvertently to position recently filled*
- **Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission** (three-year terms expire June 30, 2023)
  - Terry M. Williams (reappointed)
  - Michael Anthony Parker (reappointed)
  - Gloria Whitley-Williams (reappointed)
  - Polly Jones
- **Mayor's Commission on Persons with Disabilities** (two-year terms expire June 30, 2022)
  - Mary J. Mann (reappointed)
  - Priscilla Whitaker (reappointed)
  - Cynthia Steele (reappointed)
  - Ardelia Burrison (reappointed)
  - Ruth A. Bowens (reappointed)
  - Robert E. Cordell, Sr. (reappointed)
  - Tilmon M. Little (reappointed)
- **Planning Board** (three-year terms expire June 30, 2023)
  - James Robert Davis (reappointed)
- **Redevelopment Commission** (five-year terms expire June 30, 2025)
  - Ida Arrington
  - Steve Deloatch
  - Samuel R. Davis
  - Elaine Courcelles
  - Gloria R. Downing (reappointed)
  - Andrew Votipka

- **Rocky Mount-Wilson Airport Authority** (three-year terms expire June 30, 2023)
  - o Dan E. Herring, Jr. (reappointed)
- **Utility Service Review Board** (four-year terms)
  - o Travis Fredrick Ellis (unexpired term expires 06/2022)
- **EXTERNAL BOARDS:**
  - o Braswell Memorial Library (four-year terms expire December 31)
    - Reid J. Rhodes (unexpired term expires 12/2022)
    - Terry Anderson

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the appointments listed above be approved as recommended.

**UNITED COMMUNITY MINISTRIES HOMELESS SHELTER (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)**

Councilmember Lige Daughtridge stated that United Community Ministries operates a community shelter which houses 25 individuals at a time and also contains a soup kitchen. He said there are 7 males and 3 females currently housed at the shelter and several have tested positive for Coronavirus. He said 1 person is hospitalized, 1 has left the shelter, 2 females are guaranteed in a private office (which has a bathroom) and 1 went out for dialysis treatment and did not return. He said it is his information that OIC is working with United Community Ministries relative to medical needs. He told the Council he is concerned for the shelter because of extra expenses related to COVID-19, stating the shelter assists the homeless community when others are not available, and their budget is already slim. He suggested the possibility of the Event Center being used for housing for the homeless during the COVID-19 recovery.

Councilmember Knight stated that discussion has previously been held relative to the needs of the shelter and Council has requested that the City Manager take steps to ensure United Community Ministries was included in CARES Act funding. He inquired if staff has followed up with the shelter. City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney responded that Mr. Hunter (Ken) has been in contact with the director of the shelter and will continue to work with United Community Ministries. She added that she does not recommend the Event Center be used as a shelter, especially for those having tested positive for COVID-19.

Councilmember Knight stated it is his understanding funding is needed. Councilmember Blackwell told the Council that several members have spoken with the shelter leadership and have been advised a home has been leased and a full-time staff person has been hired to monitor and support COVID-positive individuals and

segregate them by gender. He agreed United Community Ministries is in need of funding to support the expenses related to maintenance of the home and for the needs of the residents and staff. He supported Councilmember Daughtridg'e's request for funding and agreed the matter is time sensitive.

Discussion continued and Councilmember Daughtridg'e informed the Council that COVID cost for the shelter is currently \$87,000.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Knight and unanimously carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the City Manager and City staff be directed to work with United Community Ministries in a timely manner to determine the needs of the shelter and provide a recommendation to Council.

**BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEE - REMOTE MEETINGS (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)**

Mayor Roberson questioned if the City Council desires to discuss the matter of remote meetings for the City's Board, Commissions and Committees.

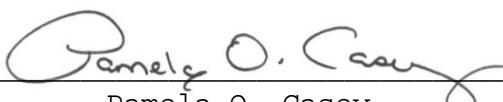
Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridg'e, seconded by Councilmember Miller and unanimously carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the City's boards, commissions and committees be allowed to hold remote meetings.

The City Manager requested staff be allowed time to determine the appropriate format and staff support required for remote meetings.

Councilmember Daughtridg'e amended the motion to direct the City Manager to determine the best format to allow Boards, Commissions and Committees to hold remote meetings. The amended motion was seconded by Councilmember Miller and unanimously carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays).

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Knight and unanimously carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the meeting adjourn at 7:58 p.m.

  
 Pamela O. Casey  
 City Clerk