

February 22, 2021

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 Pro Tem Richard Joyner presiding.

Councilmembers present: André D. Knight, Reuben C. Blackwell, IV, Richard Joyner, T. J. Walker, Lige Daughtridge* and W. B. Bullock.

Councilmember Miller was signed into the meeting early and following the meeting reported to the City Clerk that she was able to hear and see but was unable to be heard at the time of roll call. She said she could hear and see the meeting up until such time as the PowerPoint presentation relative to the insurance coverage was being set up. She said while she was hearing discussion about the presentation her screen went black and "connecting" showed on the screen; however, her device never reconnected, and she finally closed it down and tried to reconnect multiple times. She reports she was never able to reconnect and texted the City Clerk to indicate she could not log into the meeting. The City Clerk called her, and she attempted to listen via the telephone but was unable to hear well enough to successfully participate.

Councilmember Daughtridge reported though he was logged into the meeting remotely and able to hear the roll called, he was unable to respond.

**joined remotely*

Member absent: Mayor C. Saunders Roberson, Jr.

Staff present: Rochelle Small-Toney, City Manager; Pamela O. Casey, City Clerk; Dorothy Brown Smith, Chief Communications and Marketing Consultant; Robin Cox, Communications Specialist; Mark Adcox, Video Production Specialist; Kenneth Hunter, Assistant to the Manager for Budget and Evaluation; and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

Security Officer: Police Sergeant Stephen Walker.

The Mayor Pro Tem called the meeting to order and requested a moment of silence for individual prayer.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

By consensus and without objection, the minutes of a regular scheduled meeting of the City Council held February 8, 2021 were approved as submitted to the City Council prior to the meeting.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

The City Council received the minutes from a regular scheduled Committee of the Whole meeting held February 8, 2021. The minutes are as follows:

MINUTES OF A REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HELD MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2021 IN THE GEORGE W. DUDLEY CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER OF THE FREDERICK E. TURNAGE MUNICIPAL BUILDING WITH MAYOR PRO TEM RICHARD JOYNER PRESIDING:

NOTE: Participation limited due to Governor Roy Cooper's Executive Order relative to the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19); meeting was available remotely

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Richard Joyner, Mayor Pro Tem
André D. Knight
Reuben C. Blackwell, IV

STAFF PRESENT:

Rochelle D. Small-Toney
Pamela O. Casey
Dorothy Brown Smith

T.J. Walker	Robin Cox
Lige Daughtridge	Ken Hunter
W.B. Bullock	Mark Adcox
Christine Carroll Miller*	George Robinson***
Mayor C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr.	Chris Ballard***
	Richard J. Rose

* Participated remotely
 *** Present as required

Security Officer: Sergeant Stephen Walker

OPENING OF MEETING

Mayor Pro Tem Richard Joyner called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. and called on City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney to introduce the agenda items.

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney noted there are three items on the Committee of the Whole agenda and introduced Kenneth Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation, to present the first agenda item.

1. FY 2021 SECOND QUARTER REPORT OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES: *Kenneth Hunter*

Kenneth Hunter provided the Council with a report of revenues and expenditures for government funds for FY 2021 as of December 31, 2020 and a PowerPoint presentation review of revenues and expenditures for the second quarter of FY 2021. Mr. Hunter reported:

- Budget forecasts for 2021 were conservative relative to collection of revenue and revenues have exceeded projections;
- Overall budgeted funds are in excellent shape and staff has done an excellent job of fund management;
- General fund revenues remained stronger than forecast;
- Ad valorem taxes grew by 13.7% (due to strong housing market) and local option sales tax grew by 9% as compared to FY 2020;
- Other revenue groups finished the second quarter higher than projected (approximately 1.9% higher), with the exception of interest earnings;
- Expenditures across all funds remained well-managed by staff;
- Electric, Gas and Water revenues continued to be less than forecast; and
- Sewer sales increased (due to the impact of summer weather)

Mr. Hunter presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining the following:

- Overview:
 - General Fund:
 - Revenues continue to exceed COVID-adjusted forecasts;
 - Ad valorem tax receipts reflect strong housing market; seeing collection of past due taxes partly because of collection as a part of closing costs; increased vehicle sales in certain areas;
 - Local option sales tax remains strong; October through December up by noticeable margin;
 - Expenditures have been constrained and carefully managed;
 - Economy remained relatively stable
 - Revenue Performance Review:
 - General Fund Revenues/2nd Quarter
 - ❖ Actual: \$10.627M
 - ❖ Budget forecast: \$10.433M

- ❖ Difference: +1.9%
- General Fund Revenues/through end of 2nd Quarter
 - ❖ Actual: \$37.534M
 - ❖ Budget forecast: \$34.848M
 - ❖ Difference: +7.7%
- General Fund Revenues/2nd Quarter
 - ❖ Actual: \$10.627M
 - ❖ Budget forecast: \$10.433M
 - ❖ Difference: +1.9%
- Enterprise Funds:
 - Electric and Gas
 - ❖ Sales lower than last year
 - ❖ Expenditures limited
 - Water and Sewer
 - ❖ Water sales down; sewer sales up
 - ❖ Expenditures limited
 - ❖ Significant capital sewer improvements continue
 - Stormwater
 - ❖ Revenues meeting expectations - up slightly; spending controlled
- Outlook:
 - Revenue Monitoring Continues
 - ❖ Overall outlook is positive;
 - ❖ Anticipate finishing FY 2021 in line with budget forecasts
 - ❖ Ad valorem taxes key (primarily collected in 2nd quarter)
 - Staff continues to minimize expenditures
 - Proposed CIP review planned for Council Retreat
 - FY 2022 Budget development in process

Mr. Hunter concluded his presentation with a review of local employment statistics through November 2020 noting:

City:

- Citywide Employment:
 - -0.5% for November 2020
 - -6.7% since February
 - -7.0% since last November (March and April saw most decline)
- Labor Force:
 - -0.4% for November 2020
 - -1.0% since February
 - -1.3% since last November
- Current unemployment rate = 11.0% (relatively intact)

MSA:

- MSA Employment:
 - -0.5% for November 2020
 - -6.7% since February
 - -7.1% since last November
- Labor Force:
 - -0.4% for November 2020
 - -3.1% since February
 - -3.3% since last November (overall reduced)
- Current unemployment rate = 8.1%

The Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation provided information outlining employment by sector and told the Council the largest sectors of employment are trade, manufacturing, transportation utilities and retail sales. He added the City has seen an increase in business and professional services largely due to the relocation of the DMV to Rocky Mount.

Mr. Hunter concluded his presentation by reporting it is anticipated the City is moving ahead in certain areas and it is anticipated manufacturing reductions will shrink as the economy recovers. He responded to questions from Councilmembers (Daughtridge -budget transfers and strategic initiatives; Blackwell - refresh of the sales tax collection process).

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Information only; no formal action.

2. FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE FUNDING PRIORITIES: Kenneth Hunter

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney told the City Council the City has a federal and state legislative liaison. She reported that Ron Hamm with The Hamm Consulting Group is the federal liaison and advised his role is to keep the City apprised of federal initiatives. Mrs. Small-Toney told the Council Mr. Ham has done an excellent job. She reported that Mr. Hamm contacted her and Ken Hunter to advise the potential for the new administration to provide funding for municipalities to help bolster the economy and requested the City provide to him a list of "shovel-ready projects" by the end of February.

The following projects were identified for potential federal funding through earmarks, grants and other legislative action:

- Downtown Drainage Culvert
- Sewer Outfall Reconstruction
- Downtown Pedestrian Bridge
- Battleboro Community Center
- City Hall Renovations and Development of new Emergency Operations Center
- Replacement of Fire Station 2
- Establishment of Community Land Trust

The City Manager noted that projects deemed "shovel-ready" are best positioned for federal funding. She added that other projects can move into "shovel ready" status with additional planning which has been budgeted in the current fiscal year.

Approval of the list of identified projects was requested and it was further requested that the City Council advise the Manager of any additional projects they would like to have included. Mrs. Small-Toney and Kenneth Hunter responded to questions from Councilmembers.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Information only; no formal action.

CRIME STATISTICS - George Robinson

Interim Police Chief George Robinson introduced Division Commander Chris Ballard and advised the City Council that he will be presenting the January 2021 crime report. Interim Chief Robinson noted the report will cover Part 1 crime incidents throughout the City currently and as compared with the same time period in the prior year and will include investigation outcomes for violent crimes and related arrests, maps depicting areas of shots fired, incidences of aggravated assault and murder and will highlight the efforts and successes of the Police Department. Highlights of the report include:

- Crime comparisons by type were provided. Total crime numbers by months and years were reported as:

Crimes/NIBRS Part 1	January 2020	January 2021	+/-	YTD 2020	YTD 2021	+/-
Total	159	154	-5	159	154	-5

- January 2021 crime numbers for murders, aggravated assault and shooting into occupied building/vehicle (map of location provided):
 - Victims with injuries = 13
 - Victims without injuries = 22
 - Total victims = 35
 - Cases cleared by arrest = 5
 - Inactive cases = 3
 - Open cases = 23
 - Gang related = 4
- Aggravated assault cases and investigations:
 - Aggravated assault cases = 25
 - Aggravated assault victims = 34
 - Number cases with multiple victims = 5
 - Aggravated assault arrests = 4
 - Aggravated assault cases cleared = 5
- Shots fired calls City-wide:
 - Shots fired/heard = 99
 - Calls resulting in shell casings found = 38
 - Number shell casings found = 381
 - Number firearms seized to date = 40
 - Weapon violation arrests = 7
- Property crime cases cleared by arrest:
 - Commercial robbery = 1
 - Larceny (other) = 1
 - Larceny (shoplifting) = 5
 - Commercial breaking & entering = 3

Interim Chief Robinson advised the City Council that the vetting process for Police Officers includes:

- Receipt of application
- Criminal history check
- Interview (with Chief of Police)
- Test
- Oral Board
- Background investigation
- Polygraph
- Conditional offer
- Medical and psychological exams (The FMRT Group)
- Psychological Profiles for Police:
 - Psychological profiles are performed during the hiring process for candidates and police officers (to date the Department has not hired any candidates who have not been recommended)
 - EAP Services are available for employees during traumatic events

Interim Chief Robinson explained that currently the ShotSpotter system does not utilize cameras although the system does support the use of cameras. He added to utilize cameras additional service agreements will be required at the approximate cost of:

- \$3,600 per camera;
- \$10,000 per year (recurring)

The Interim Chief reported that officers do a good job interacting with citizens. Incident tracking numbers were provided as:

	2019	2020	2021
Pursuits	38	30	2
Citizen Complaints	38	18	1
Use of Force	72	46	0
- Taser use	11	7	0
- Pointing Handgun	31	22	0
- Handgun use with injury	0	1	0
- Handgun animal dispatch	8	4	0
- OC or hand control	22	12	0

Police involved community events were identified as:

Pre-Covid	Current	Post-Covid Plan
Coffee with a Cop	Limited Social Events	Enhance the Police Athletic League
Chat with the Chief	Toy Drives	Citizen Police Academy
National Night Out Against Crime	Food Giveaways	Virtual Community Watch Meetings
Trunk or Treat		Food Giveaways
Citizens Police Academy		Toy Drives
Junior Police Academy		Citizen and Junior Police Academies
Food Giveaways		National Night Out Event
Toy Drives		Coffee with a Cop
		Chat with the Chief

The Council was advised that the following future community involvement plans include:

- Expansion of the Police Athletic Program to include more sports;
- Continuing the Citizen and Junior Police Academies (virtually, if needed due to Covid-19);
- Virtual community meetings;
- Expanded partnerships with youth-based organizations (Scouts of American, Boys and Girls Club, local church youth programs)

Interim Chief Robinson stated that many Officers give of their own personal finances to ensure community events are successful. Chief Robinson responded to questions from Councilmembers including future plans relative to shootings and gang-related incidents. The Chief stated that we cannot arrest ourselves out of this problem and the community needs to be involved. He encouraged those in the community to say something if they see something and stated the Police and community will be powerful if they work together.

Discussion was held with Councilmembers expressing appreciation to the Police and Interim Chief Robinson providing information relative to community policing efforts including text a tip and the crime prevention hotline (252-972-1411). He stated a small amount of people are causing a majority of the crime in the City and it is important to build the best case possible to ensure a conviction.

There was continued discussion relative to the ShotSpotter system and the City Manager advised that ShotSpotter is not the only option and that staff is looking at options and evaluating the use of cameras. She added a recommendation may be a part of the FY 2021-2022 budget.

Comments were made by Councilmembers relative to the correlation of crime and poverty; concern that behavior such as that seen recently in the insurrection in DC could happen in Rocky Mount; monitoring of social media; available resources for both victims and families of aggressors; police presence in the community; the relationship of the Police Department with the local Sheriff Departments; the jurisdiction of State Troopers in the City; and mental health concerns.

Mayor Pro Tem Joyner thanked Interim Chief Robinson for returning to serve as interim chief following his retirement.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Received report; no formal action

CITY COUNCIL RETREAT (added to agenda in open meeting) – Mayor Pro Tem Richard Joyner

Mayor Pro Tem Joyner stated there is time available to discuss the evaluation of the City Manager and City Clerk or that discussion can be held at the City Council's retreat.

Discussion was held relative to the City Council's retreat and the Mayor and Councilmembers Daughtridge and Miller voiced a preference to hold the retreat at the Rocky Mount Event Center. Councilmember Blackwell provided his perspective relative to holding the retreat out of town and stated he prefers to hold this year's retreat in Asheville. Councilmembers Knight, Walker and the Mayor Pro Tem concurred.

Conversation continued relative to the location and dates of the retreat. It was explained that the reason Asheville was considered as a possible destination for the retreat is affordable housing including land trusts. City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney stated she would work to select a date most convenient to all and indicated the date will likely be April 7-9, 2021. It was noted that weather could be a potential concern due to the location of the retreat being in the western part of the state.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. *Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and carried by a vote of 4-3 (Councilmembers Daughtridge, Bullock and Miller opposed) that the retreat be held in Asheville at the Omni Grove Park Hotel on April 7-9 or April 28-30, 2021.*

ADJOURNMENT. Without opposition, the Mayor Pro Tem adjourned the Committee of the Whole meeting at 6:45 p.m.

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney advised the dates of the retreat will be April 7, 8 and 9, 2021.

Councilmember Daughtridge questioned the time of the retreat. Ms. Small Toney responded that the conference normally ends on Friday about noon.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Walker and unanimously carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the minutes and recommendations from the February 8, 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting be approved.

COMMUNITY UPDATE BY CITY MANAGER

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

- Congratulated the Parks and Recreation Department, specifically, the Rocky Mount Senior Center, on earning accreditation status from the National Institute of Senior Centers. The recognition lasts for the next five years and brings the Rocky Mount Senior Center into a select group of only 120 honorees who have met accreditation standards set by the NISC. She said staff was recognized for their wide-ranging array of fitness, health and wellness programs and services as well as the enhancement of the facility via upgrades and remodeling, and strong marketing and electronic communications efforts with participants. She congratulated Parks and Recreation Director Joel Dunn and Senior Center Manager Brian Harrell for the accomplishment.
- Congratulated the latest recipients of the City Manager's Award: Public Works, James Arrington; Parks and Recreation, Brian Harrell and Gregory Silver; and Finance, Sandy Rainey who were each honored during a recent meeting of the City's Executive Leadership Team.

She reported that the award recognizes employees who perform outstanding work and excel in the City's core values of Customer-Centered Service, Professionalism, Respect, Teamwork and Support and Leadership and are nominated by citizens and fellow employees. Specifically, Arrington was lauded for his dedication and willingness to complete tasks; Harrell was recognized for his leadership and bringing the Rocky Mount Senior Center to accreditation status; Silver was noted for his excellent customer service and wide-ranging skills; and Rainey was acknowledged for her guidance and expertise regarding payroll.

- Said congratulations are also in store for the City of Rocky Mount as it will receive a Spirit of North Carolina Award for Campaign Excellence given by the United Way of North Carolina. The award honors the City for demonstrating excellence in its United Way Campaign participation and donations received, as well as exceptional leadership and partnership with communities to create positive, lasting change. This statewide recognition will take place via a virtual format on March 3. She extended congratulations to the organization and members who, through their generosity, played a vital role in this recognition.
- Reported to assist with COVID-19 vaccination opportunities, the City's Tar River Transit Service is offering free rides to those with scheduled appointments to "drive-up" sites. Transportation is available from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Saturday to vaccination sites located in Nash and Edgecombe Counties. Citizens who are interested in transportation to and from vaccination sites may call Tar River Transit at 252-972-1174, 252-972-1514, 252-972-1515, 252-972-1516 or 252-972-1517. All appointments need to be scheduled the day before the trip. Healthcare facilities may also call and schedule transportation on behalf of their patients. Free rides will be available until at least June 30, 2021. Visit tarrivertransit.org regarding more information about general routes and services.
- Said the City of Rocky Mount's Business and Collections Services Department will utilize the Community Development Block Grant CARES Act to assist utility customers within the city limits who meet income requirements. The program is designed for low-to-moderate income households impacted by the loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Eligible households may receive up to \$500 toward delinquent City of Rocky Mount utilities that became due after March 31, 2020 and remain unpaid. For more information on eligibility requirements, visit rockymountnc.gov or contact the Business Services Center at 972-1250.
- Reported the 2020 Wastewater Systems Annual Report has been published and is available through the City of Rocky Mount Water Resources Department webpage at rockymountnc.gov. Sections of the report include Description of the Collection System and Treatment Process, Performance Summary (Jan. 2020-Dec. 2020), Permit Non-Compliance, Sanitary Sewer Overflows and Collection System Improvements. The report is also available upon request from the Water Quality Services Division by calling 252-972-1408.
- Encouraged all to continue to follow CDC guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic. She said the City will continue to assist community partners during vaccine administration and COVID-19 testing events and share collaborative efforts via the website: rockymountnc.gov, as well as the City's social media platforms.

SIGNATORY AUTHORITY

Councilmember Blackwell stated there has been a lack of clarity related to requirements and eligibility for the Federal CARES Act funding and asked the City Manager to provide detail.

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney responded by advising that it is required that applicants for the funding demonstrate they have been negatively affected by the pandemic in that they have lost their job or

had reduced income. She added that staff is available to assist customers to determine eligibility and to help with COVID funding but also to pair those needing assistance with other community agencies who may be able to help.

She added the City Council followed the Executive Order of the Governor and put into place a moratorium on the disconnection of utilities and went beyond the Governor's orders extending the moratorium by an additional three months. She stated the recommendation of staff to set aside certain funds for assistance with utilities was accepted and approved by the City Council.

Councilmember Knight questioned when grant funding will be available to small businesses. City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney advised that the agreements can be signed as early as today depending on whether the Council provides to her signatory authority to execute the Small Business Assistance Grant Agreements.

Discussion was held.

Councilmember Daughtridge stated it is difficult for him to hear since he is participating remotely, but questioned what agreements are being held up that the Mayor has not been able to sign. The City Manager said that when the small business grants were approved signatory was not given to anyone in an open meeting and although these are documents she would sign the official authorization has not formally been given. Mr. Daughtridge asked for more information relative to the small business grants. He added that Councilmember Miller has been unable to join the meeting and said he would hope she would be able to cast a vote as well.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and carried by a roll call vote of 5-1 (Councilmember Daughtridge opposed) that the City Manager and/or Mayor be given signatory authority to execute any and all documentation necessary relative to projects approved by the City Council.

PROCLAMATION/RECOGNIZING AND EXPRESSING APPRECIATION TO LEONARD WIGGINS

Mayor Pro Tem Joyner read aloud a Proclamation issued by the Mayor recognizing and expressing appreciation to Leonard Wiggins for his service to the City of Rocky Mount by serving on the City Council from January 1985 through December 1993; serving on the Rocky Mount Housing Authority from 1994 through 2020, and Chairing the Housing Authority from 2007 through 2020. Additionally Mayor Roberson proclaimed Tuesday, February 23, 2021 as "Leonard Wiggins' Day" in the City of Rocky Mount.

The City Manager and Councilmembers Knight, Blackwell, Joyner and Walker joined Mr. Wiggins' for a photograph. Family members of Mr. Wiggins were present, and comments were made by Mr. Wiggins.

PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The City Manager opened the meeting for petitions from the public and outlined guidelines for public petitions. He recognized the

following individuals for public comment and a summary of comments is outlined below:

- ***Samuel Battle:***
 - Congratulated Leonard Wiggins on his recognition saying the Wiggins' family has been doing things in the community for years;
 - Said crime is an issue in Rocky Mount and youth are dying; said some Police Officers are disrespectful noting the issue that occurred recently at the IHOP. He said if the people in the parking lot had been 15-16 year old kids the occurrence could have ended very differently; he said you cannot dictate the law over constitutional rights and if a young person knows the law it is likely an Officer will not respond well;
 - Said he does not know how much a retreat to Asheville will cost but has heard it will be from \$300-\$400 [per night] and said the retreat should be held at the Rocky Mount Event Center because it is only being used for soccer;
 - Said the water at the Shady Grove trailer park was recently turned off because of an overdue water bill of \$34,000 but others have had overdue utility bills and their utilities were never disconnected;
 - Said the City Attorney should make sure the City and City Council do the right thing legally

- ***Hap Turner:***
 - Said he wanted to share information he has recently uncovered proving the City owns 2 acres of land in what is commonly known as Unity Cemetery;
 - Said information from former City Manager, Stephen W. Raper's, 2011 cemetery study indicating the City purchased 2 acres adjacent to the cemetery and then gave it to the Unity Cemetery Association is wrong; and said this harmful false assumption now appears to be accepted;
 - Said he has a deed showing the City conveyed 23 burial lots to Frank W. Davis and the St. James Baptist Church in 1935 that are identified as a portion of the 2-acre tract the City purchased in 1915; he read from other information he called "indisputable deed evidence" and said the City has the authority and duty to immediately undertake a cemetery restoration project to save a portion Unity Cemetery and the remarkable African American history it holds; he suggested actions steps to be taken and said he has included a detailed estimate

The Mayor Pro Tem requested Mr. Turner provide his research to City personnel and it was provided to Ken Hunter. Mayor Pro Tem Joyner stated that someone would be in touch with Mr. Turner and thanked him for his research.

- ***Kingsley McLeod:***
 - Thanked the Council for taking his comments;
 - Suggested Futsal basketball goals be installed at Sunset Park indicating the he believes they would enhance the lives of many in the community and have a lasting impact; would also provide another physical activity in the community and create diversity in fitness routines;
 - Explained what would be needed to install the basketball goals adding they would cost about \$2,700 per goal for the raw materials and would not require additional maintenance;
 - Said he graduated from Rocky Mount High School and was able to obtain an athletic scholarship to play soccer at the Division 1 level which has enriched his life;
 - Said to show his commitment he has a public fund raiser open on Go Fund Me and his friends have issued a challenge to raise funds for the basketball goals; asked the City Council to provide funding and approve installation of the goals

The Mayor Pro Tem requested Mr. McLeod provide staff with information on the project.

Councilmember Walker asked for clarification relative to the request and Mr. McLeod said his suggestion is to replace one of the current basketball courts at Sunset Park with the Futsal goal.

○ ***Bronson Williams:***

- Said 441 days ago 4 individuals took an oath to serve the citizens of Rocky Mount; said while he understands the lingering issues of COVID 19, issues facing the community continue to compound; said there was wasted time in the past 441 days in calling special meetings to review the State Auditor's findings, talk about issues in the community and voting no against the moratorium on utility disconnections. Added as late as today there was a "no" vote relative to giving the City Manager authority to sign documents to move the City forward;
- Said there is the issue of identifying who are real developers in the community; said if someone is looking to redevelopment the Downtown the only issue should be how fast the City can provide support; said he hopes Councilmembers are not acting in the spirit of "no" similar to the idea that happened in 1898 in Wilmington, NC; said we must be about progression and growth;
- Questioned what type of investment PNC is putting into the Rocky Mount community particularly to ensure there are loan programs for African Americans with struggles in getting financed and added that the City has invested millions of dollars with PNC

○ ***Nehemiah Smith:***

- Said on Monday, February 8, 2021 at the local IHOP the Rocky Mount Police were called by the general manager reporting there were three men outside the restaurant allegedly causing a disturbance. He said that information has since been disproved and the general manager fired after the IHOP did an investigation;
- Said the incident could have concluded quite differently because the Police precipitated a situation that should not have happened after the initial Officer arrived at the scene. He said the three men outside were merely having a conversation and after the initial Officer arrived nearly 8 additional Officers arrived on the scene. He said the men left the premises confused after some conversation with the Officers and eventually met with IHOP's national representative and the franchisee and also requested the 911 call. Mr. Smith said in the 911 call the dispatcher asked questions which included asking if the men were Black or Hispanic and once the manager responded the men were Black, he feels that is when it was decided how many officers to send to the location. He said he is not for defunding the Police but is for reforming the Police and said if they do not have adequate training they need to be retrained. He questioned way it took 8 officers to respond to 3 men talking outside a restaurant where they ate regularly. He also said the Officer did not know the North Carolina General Statutes. He added the manager never asked them to leave.

Mayor Pro Tem Joyner responded by asking the Manager and Police Chief to investigate this matter. The Manager responded an investigation is underway.

○ ***Nathlyn Ohree:***

- Said she is a proud citizen of Rocky Mount;
- Said this is currently part of the Christian Lenten season, a time for fasting and prayer, and with it also being Black history month she thought of how proud she is of her City representatives and sees them out helping citizens during the pandemic;
- Said she does not want citizens to lose sight of the efforts Council is making individually and collectively to save the City;
- Said she has received a lot of positive comments relative to OIC's attempts to vaccinate;
- Said there are wonderful things going on in the City and though there are problems it takes more than 7 people to solve the whole City's problems and takes the entire City population. She said she dials 911 if she knows of something going on in her

community and Officers responding in the Meadowbrook Community have been very respectful;

- Said it is the responsibility of citizens to report incidences and let the Police handle the issues;
- Encouraged citizens to call the appropriate City department if they have issues; thanked the Council for what they have done and will continue to do

o *Shanté Davis:*

- Said she is here again because her son, Jahere Jones, who was locked up on December 2nd is still incarcerated with no bond and no hearing has been scheduled;
- Said she is here to talk about the crime in Rocky Mount and read a list of recent shootings and homicides;
- Said her son was riding down the highway and was shot at and the front windshield, back window and side windows in her vehicle were shot out;
- Said a boy confessed to the murder and she asked why those who shot at her son and his friends have not been arrested adding the Police have the names of the kids, their addresses and their information;
- Said the Police are not looking for them because they are juveniles; and her son continues to sit in jail with no representation, bond or court hearing scheduled and there is no evidence against him;
- Said the juvenile who shot at her son has not been arrested because his Daddy is a Police informant; said her son did not have a gun and questioned where the justice is

There being no other speakers, the public petitions portion of the meeting was closed.

AD VALOREM TAX RELEASES

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

SCHEDULE A - acknowledge receipt of report of the following 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>EDGECOMBE COUNTY</u>				
2020	629	KING, SHIRLEY F KING, CLARENCE 1105 LEGGETT RD ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27801	14.96 0.41	CITY INT PERSONAL PROPERTY LOCATED OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS
		TOTAL RELEASE:	15.37	
2019	427	SMITH, RANDY 100 S MORING AVE ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27801	11.30 1.13 1.46	CITY PEN INT OWNER CORRECTION
		TOTAL RELEASE:	13.89	
2020	169	SMITH, RANDY 100 S MORING AVE ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27801	11.30 1.13 0.34	CITY PEN INT OWNER CORRECTION
		TOTAL RELEASE:	12.77	
<u>NASH COUNTY</u>				
2020	1000467	HUTCHINSON, BRIDGETT CARMELLA 121 DREXEL CT ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27803	50.86 1.40	CITY INT PERSONAL PROPERTY LOCATED OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS
		TOTAL RELEASE:	52.26	

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>NASH COUNTY</u>				
2020	1000413	ADYA, KANCHAN CHANNAKESHAV 2422 PINE TREE LANE ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27804	204.95 5.64	CITY INT PERSONAL PROPERTY LOCATED OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS
		TOTAL RELEASE:	210.59	
2020	13761	RIPPLE EFFECTS GROUP 900 FOREST HILL AVE ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27804	1,083.33 29.79	CITY INT EXEMPT PROPERTY
		TOTAL RELEASE:	1,113.12	
2019	1001883	TAYLOR, CRYSTAL DIANNE 2608 GARY RD ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27803	106.61 12.53	CITY INT PERSONAL PROPERTY LOCATED OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS
		TOTAL RELEASE:	119.14	

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that receipt of the report from the City Manager of Schedule A taxes approved for release and/or refund be acknowledged and that the tax releases and/or refunds listed on Schedule B be approved.

HEALTH BENEFITS CONTRACT EXTENSION

The City Council was advised that the City entered into a Master Services Agreement with Aetna Life Insurance Company for a period of three (3) years starting July 1, 2018 and the agreement is due to expire on June 30, 2021.

The City Council was further advised that the experience with Aetna's services has been satisfactory and Aetna proposes extending health insurance services to the City's self-funded medical plan for an additional year with most of the terms and conditions of the contract remaining unchanged. It was noted that Aetna has offered to provide favorable changes for an increase in fee holiday, better discounts and fees for pharmacy contract and enhanced wellness allowances. It was noted that the Stop Loss Contract will be negotiated separately.

The City Council was advised that the overall savings will be \$431,454 which represents 4.6% of the overall health insurance budget for the current year. It was recommended that the Master Service Agreement for administration and pharmacy contract with Aetna Life Insurance Company be extended for one year effective July 1, 2021.

Human Resources Director Kena Cofield-Jones introduced Mark Browder from Mark III, the City's underwriter. Mr. Browder told the City Council that Mark III has been the City's advisor for 28 years. He made a presentation providing the following medical plan highlights and responded to a number of questions from Councilmembers:

- Aetna has made the following contract extension offers:
 - Increased wellness contribution from \$25,000 to \$50,000
 - Offered administrative fee holiday of additional 2 months = \$38,454
 - Offered improvements in pharmacy contract ingredient costs/rebates = \$246,000
 - Offered employee assistance program - \$13,000 (provides telephonic and face-to-face counseling services for mental health, work life and crisis response needs)
 - Improved pharmacy offers to \$355,000

Mr. Browder added that:

- The Aetna 2022 renewal is a very competitive offer when all administrative and pharmacy services are taken into consideration;
- The one-year renewal would be a solid business decision;
- City staff and Mark III recommends approval of the 2021-2022 renewal of Aetna's administrative services offer; and
- Work on the Stop Loss contract is ongoing

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Knight and carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the Master Services Agreement with Aetna be extended for one year (FY 2021-2022) effective July 1, 2021 and that the Mayor be authorized to execute any appropriate documentation as required on behalf of the City.

AUDIT CONTRACT

The City Council received a proposal from Martin Starnes & Associates to perform the Fiscal Year 2021 audit for a cost of \$58,200, a 3% increase from the prior year. The City Council was advised that the firm has performed the independent audit for the past fourteen (14) years and has provided excellent service both during the audit engagement and during the year as assistance is required related to financial matters.

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge and carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the proposal of Martin Starnes & Associates be accepted and that the Mayor and Director of Finance be authorized to execute the audit contract (**C-2021-11**) on behalf of the City.

Councilmember Blackwell suggested that as the City's contracts are considered and recommended for award that support of MWBE be one of the required criteria.

REIMBURSEMENT AGREEMENT/NCDCO - HELEN P. GAY HISTORIC TRAIN STATION

The City Council was provided with a Reimbursement Agreement (WBS: 49227) with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) for assistance with specific repairs at the Helen P. Gay Historic Train Station. Council was advised that the scope of work includes repair to exterior doors, replacement of a radiator cover in the waiting area, painting specific interior and exterior areas, repairs to restrooms, lighting upgrade, Amtrak ticket window repairs and expansion joints repair on the sidewalk. It was explained that the agreement will cover 75% of the costs up to \$44,699 and a 25% local match is required.

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Knight and carried by a roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the Reimbursement Agreement with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (C-2021-12) be approved and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the same on behalf of the City.

ENGINEERING SERVICES TASK ORDER (PRE-QUALIFIED FRIM)/OLD MILL SEWER PUMP STATION AND FORCE MAIN REPLACEMENT

The City Council received the tabulation of bids received for the Old Mill Sewer Pump Station and Force Main Replacement (Open-End Water and Sewer Professional Services Task Order Contract). Proposals were received and evaluated by a project team and a recommendation made to award the project to Green Engineering. The bid tabulation is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2021-2**. The solicitation was also posted on the City's purchasing webpage and on the North Carolina Historically Underutilized Business webpage.

Motion was made by Councilmember Bullock, seconded by Councilmember Walker and carried by a roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the bid contract be awarded to Green Engineering (pre-qualified firm) at a total cost of \$177,100 and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the bid contract on behalf of the City.

RE-BIDS/230 KV AUTOTRANSFORMER

The City Council received the tabulation of re-bids received for a 230 KV Autotransformer. Re-bids were received and opened on January 15, 2021 and the bid tabulation is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2021-3**. The solicitation was also posted on the City's purchasing webpage and on the North Carolina Historically Underutilized Business webpage.

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Walker and unanimously carried that the bid be awarded to Virginia Transformer at a total cost of \$1,458,989 and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the bid contract on behalf of the City. It was noted that Virginia Transformer has been identified as a minority business.

APPOINTMENTS

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

REPORT OF SETTLEMENT OF PENDING LITIGATION/HAROLD COX VS. CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT, ET ALS (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)

City Attorney Richard J. Rose reported that a settlement has been reached relative to litigation entitled Harold Cox vs. City of Rocky Mount, et als. Mr. Rose reported that the Court has dismissed all claims against the Police Chief/former Police Chief. He advised the matter has been settled for \$250,000 and the City's insurance company (Travelers Indemnity Company) has paid the amount of the claim.

He added that the City will reimbursement Travelers Insurance the balance of its \$100,000 deductible after deducting defense costs in an amount of approximately \$55,000.

CLOSED SESSION

The City Manager stated that a Closed Session has been requested for a matter concerned economic development. City Attorney Richard J. Rose reported that discussion will also be held relative to matters concerning personnel and attorney-client matters.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and carried by roll call vote (6 ayes/0 nays) that the City Council go into Closed Session at 5:58 p.m. The minutes of the Closed Session shall be filed as **ESM-572** at the end of **Minute Book 38** upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

REGULAR SESSION


The Mayor Pro Tem convened the City in regular session at 6:44 p.m.

CONDOLENCES ON DEATH OF MARY PERRY

Councilmember Blackwell reported that Mary Perry, wife of former Councilmember John Perry, passed away recently. He noted that Mrs. Perry was a public servant and reported her funeral will be at 11 a.m. on February 23, 2021. He requested a condolence letter be prepared for her family on behalf of the entire Council.

ADJOURN

Without opposition, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.



Pamela O. Casey
City Clerk