

March 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 C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr. presiding.

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

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; Archie Jones*, Director of Human Relations; and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

**present as required*

Security Officer: Police Sergeant Stephen Walker.

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

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

APPROVAL OF/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)

Mayor Roberson inquired if there are any changes to or additions/deletions to the agenda. He stated that Item C on the Consent Agenda will be removed from today's agenda and that a Closed Session for attorney-client privilege/economic development and personnel will be added to today's agenda.

Councilmember Walker requested a moment to address the public prior to public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Walker and unanimously carried that the minutes of a regular scheduled meeting of the City Council held March 8, 2021 and the minutes and recommendations of a regular scheduled Committee of the Whole meeting held March 8, 2021 be approved as submitted to the City Council prior to the meeting.

The March 8, 2021 Committee of the Whole minutes are as follows:

MINUTES OF A REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HELD MONDAY, MARCH 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
 Lige Daughtridge
 W.B. Bullock
 Christine Carroll Miller*
 Mayor C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr.

Robin Cox
 Kenneth Hunter
 Mark Adcox
 George Robinson***
 Elton Daniels***
 Joel Dunn***
 Richard J. Rose

* Participated remotely
 *** Present as needed

Security Officer: Sergeant Stephen Walker

OPENING OF MEETING

Mayor Pro Tem Richard Joyner called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and called on City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney to introduce the agenda items.

The City Manager requested an amendment to the agenda to add discussion relative to Battle Park in light of recent publicity.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the agenda be amended as requested.

Ms. Small-Toney called on Interim Police Chief George Robinson for a presentation on crime statistics.

1. **CRIME STATISTICS** - George Robinson, Interim Police Chief

Interim Police Chief George Robinson reported that his presentation will cover Part 1 crime incidents throughout the City currently and as compared to the same time period in the prior year and will include outcomes of violent crimes and related arrests and maps depicting areas of shots fired, incidences of aggravated assault and murder. He added that efforts and successes of the Police Department to combat violent crime will also be shared.

Highlights of Interim Chief Robinson's PowerPoint presentation include:

- National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) Part 1 crime comparisons by type were provided. Total crime numbers by months and years were reported as:

Crimes/NIBRS Part 1	February 2020	February 2021	+/-	YTD 2020	YTD 2021	+/-
Total	129	127	-2	288	286	-2

Interim Chief Robinson reported that 2 of the murders were cleared within 24 hours and thanked citizens for the assistance provided.

- February 2021 crime numbers for murders, aggravated assault and shooting into occupied building/vehicle (map of location provided):
 - o Victims with injuries = 15
 - o Victims without injuries = 22
 - o Total victims = 37
 - o Cases cleared by arrest = 4
 - o Inactive cases = 2
 - o Open cases = 14
 - o Gang related = 3
- Aggravated assault cases and investigations:
 - o Aggravated assault cases = 17
 - o Aggravated assault victims = 34
 - o Number cases with multiple victims = 7

- o Aggravated assault arrests = 1
- o Aggravated assault cases cleared = 3
- Shots fired calls City-wide:
 - o Shots fired/heard = 85
 - o Calls resulting in shell casings found = 32
 - o Number shell casings found = 213
 - o Number firearms seized to date = 84
 - o Weapon violation arrests = 7
- Property crime cases cleared by arrest:
 - o Motor vehicle theft = 1
 - o Larceny (other) = 4
 - o Larceny (shoplifting) = 1
 - o Commercial breaking & entering = 1
- Police Involved Community Events:
 - o 2 COVID Vaccination Events
 - o Planning for a Citizen's Police Academy (April)
 - o Planned "Know Your Rights" forum with the Delta Sigma Theta sorority
 - o Redesigned the "Text-a-Tip" and Crime Stoppers" flyers (more customer friendly)

Interim Chief Robinson introduced Lieutenant Timothy Bunt, Commander of the Gang Unit and Special Operations Division, and responded to questions from City Councilmembers reporting:

 - Approximately 20+ officers are actively involved in the gang unit;
 - Approximately 50% or less of the aggravated assault reports on the Police Department's Police to Citizen (P2C) website involve guns;
 - Crime numbers reflected on the report may vary due to the difference between the date the crime is committed vs. reported;
 - ShotSpotter reports can include cars backfiring or shots fired into the air; the shots fired report includes calls where shell casings were found;
 - The Department is looking at adding cameras to the existing ShotSpotter Technology (stationary location);
 - Crime in Rocky Mount compares to other cities of similar size throughout the state and nation; more crime can be seen in high poverty areas and crime comes into Rocky Mount from other areas but also travels from Rocky Mount to other areas (regionally);
 - Crime also occurs along 95 and 64 and from Florida to New York;
 - The Police Department has a focus on suppliers in efforts towards drug enforcement;
 - It is discouraging to hear Rocky Mount called disparaging names in the news and by citizens (Murder Mount) because if one would take the time to analyze crime throughout the state the City is not different from other areas across the state and country.

The Mayor Pro Tem thanked Interim Chief Robinson and the Rocky Mount Police Department for working to keep the City safe.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Received report; no formal action

2. UNITY CEMETERY - Rochelle D. Small-Toney and Kenneth Hunter

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney stated that last November the City Council asked her and City staff to research and recommend next steps for the upkeep and maintenance of Unity Cemetery and to provide an update of her findings at the March 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting.

The City Manager provided a history of Unity Cemetery to include the following:

- Unity Cemetery is an 18-acre site located on the Edgecombe County side of the City which began in 1901 when a group of local citizens

requested the North Carolina General Assembly to incorporate a private Burial Association in or near the Town of Rocky Mount for the burial of African Americans;

- On March 13, 1901 an "Act to Incorporate the Unity Cemetery Association for the Town of Rocky Mount" was ratified as Chapter 380 of the Private Laws of North Carolina, Session 1901;
- Among the powers granted to the Trustee was the authority to purchase land in the name of the Association and to lay-off and sell burial lots;
- The group later named this plot of land "Unity Cemetery";
- The Rocky Mount African American community and surrounding areas have a deep reverence for Unity Cemetery and its history;
- Unity Cemetery is one of the oldest African American cemeteries in eastern North Carolina;
- There are many historic familiar burials of civic leaders, businesspeople, educators, clerics, athletes and others, some of national prominence, in Unity Cemetery;
- Gravestones mark the final resting place for veterans dating back to WWI, WWII, the Korean War and the Vietnam War; and
- The cemetery is divided into eight (8) sections. A map of the cemetery was provided depicting sections A through H.

The Manager provided the Council with City activities to date at Unity Cemetery. She advised that:

- The City of Rocky Mount is not the owner of Unity Cemetery and it does not fall under the supervision of the City's Cemetery Division in the Parks and Recreation Department;
- There is no definitive information that can be used to declare that Unity Cemetery is abandoned which is the condition that could be used for the purpose of the City gaining ownership of the cemetery;
- Under the arrangement of perpetual care, descendants are responsible for maintenance of their plots;
- Some families have maintained their plots and other plots have fallen into disrepair;
- If the City Council is interested in gaining ownership of the cemetery the necessary and critical next steps are:
 - 1) A survey of the boundaries of the cemetery; and
 - 2) Deed research to determine the heirs of purchased plots and owners of the cemetery;
 - 3) Legal counsel will be needed to direct any future City ownership of the cemetery.
- The City does not have access to the records of the burials at Unity, so it is difficult to determine the exact number of burials, exact locations and the decedents;
- Widely known standards for cemeteries estimate 1,000 plots per acre (Unity Cemetery is estimated to have 18,000 plots);
- Over the years the City Council has authorized staff to perform work at Unity Cemetery:
 - o In 2007 City staff re-established the drainage system, re-graded and improved access roads, installed pedestrian footbridges and removed debris/trash; and
 - o In 2015 City staff investigated the prospect of acquiring Unity Cemetery and provided maintenance and upkeep of the property and also looked into the history and status of the cemetery to determine if it was abandoned or neglected;
 - o Estimated the cost of improvements and yearly maintenance.

The Manager reported that City staff and consultants are working closely with the African American Cemetery Specialists of the North Carolina Office of Archives within the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney recognized and thanked former City Councilmember Lois Watkins for research on this project and stated her work has been extremely valuable.

The City Manager outlined next steps to include:

- 1) Obtaining a survey of the boundaries of Unity Cemetery;
- 2) Establishing the exact ownership of the cemetery;
- 3) Obtaining legal direction as to the best course of action for the City to gain access to maintain the cemetery and make improvements through a lease agreement, purchase or transfer of the cemetery;
- 4) Continuing dialogue with owner(s) regarding plans for the cemetery;
- 5) Obtaining ownership of a lease of the cemetery if an agreement between the owner(s) and City can be negotiated.

Ms. Small-Toney advised the Council that these steps will require considerable investment. She indicated she had a conversation with Dr. Stokes, who may own the cemetery, or a portion thereof, and there has been good dialogue.

She recommended that the City take the following action:

- 1) Establish a project in the FY 2022 5-year CIP (\$1.460M) and the FY 2022 Cemetery operating budget (\$200,000) to provide the necessary funding for the restoration and upkeep of the cemetery as a historical family and heritage tourism site indicating this will be a "heavy lift";
- 2) Pursuing the listing of Unity Cemetery as a national landmark;
- 3) Pursuing grants in support of the sustainability of the cemetery;
- 4) Developing a cemetery plan under the direction of the North Carolina Office of Archives within the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources;
- 5) Establishing the location of and creating an inventory of burials;
- 6) Developing a historical tourism program;
- 7) Forming a group to include descendants of those interred, conservation consultants and local historical societies to work with City staff to help guide the future direction of the cemetery.

Kenneth Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation, provided the City Council with budget information and gave insight and information for beginning the process outlined. Mr. Hunter gave a breakdown of the schedule and budget and indicated the expenditures from FY 2021 through FY 2026 are estimated at \$1,460,000.

The City Council asked questions relative to the process and were provided with the following responses:

- Guidance will be needed from the City Attorney to establish ownership and for understanding legal requirements, including determining if the cemetery is deemed to be abandoned or neglected;
- The City Attorney recommends beginning the process before determining if a third party will be needed to assist;
- An agreement was prepared in 2015 with the Stokes family but it is currently unknown whether it was executed;
- If ownership by plot is required, it will be a huge undertaking.

Councilmember Knight made comments and indicated that he and Councilmember Blackwell have recently met with Mr. Stokes. He stated he feels the cemetery has been lying dormant with no perpetual care and the City should pursue ownership of the entire cemetery in order to provide restoration and perpetual care. He said he appreciates volunteers working to clean the cemetery adding that some are genuinely concerned, and others are attending in an effort to shame or blame the Black community.

Councilmember Knight added that Asheville was the first North Carolina city to publicly discuss reparations and this could be a part

of conversation during the City Council retreat. Councilmember Daughtridg suggested that CARES Act funding be considered for use for the Unity Cemetery project. The City Manager stated that the project was one presented to the Federal Government as being "shovel ready."

Conversation continued. The Mayor Pro Tem requested Council be provided with a timeline for the process.

Councilmember Knight stated that the entire cemetery needs to be included in the project, not just a portion. He voiced concern that volunteers could be injured in the process of cleaning up the cemetery or that the cemetery could be irreparably damaged unintentionally. Mr. Knight shared older newspaper articles relative to the cemetery with the Councilmembers.

It was noted burials are still occurring in Unity Cemetery with the last burial in 2019. Discussion was held relative to the current language in the Code as to burials.

The City Attorney stated a motion should be made in the 7 p.m. meeting should Council desire to take action.

The Council held discussion relative to groups who are cleaning up the cemetery and how it could be damaged. The City Attorney reported that the City does not control the cemetery. Councilmember Knight said he is aware that stones on graves at an Indian burial ground were removed during the renovation of the Mill. The City Attorney stated the City could send out a press release to provide information/education to make the public aware that graves could be damaged by removing stones.

Mayor Pro Tem Joyner stated when policy is discussed and changed it is his hope that discussion can be held to discuss how policy got us to the place we are. Discussion was held with regard to the language of current policy.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Knight and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the City Council adopt the recommendation of the City Manager and her team, as submitted, and begin the process of healing and restoration for the dead that are buried and make a first move towards stating that the policies creating Unity Cemetery were wrong and make a historic wrong right today adding that it is an act of reparations to honor our dead and that the City united is doing right by those families forced to segregate their dead.

3. **REQUEST FOR SPECIAL CALLED MEETING - MARCH 18, 2021** - Rochelle D. Small-Toney

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney requested that a special called Committee of the Whole meeting be scheduled for Tuesday, March 18th, 2021 at 1 p.m.

She noted the meeting will be for the purpose of preparation for the planned City Council work session to discuss the FY 2022 Annual Operating Budget and proposed the following outline for development of the meeting agenda:

- 1) Review of revenue and expenditure forecasts for current budget year 2021;
- 2) Review of preliminary revenue forecast for proposed budget year 2022;
- 3) Review of progress on priorities funded in current budget year;
- 4) Presentation of proposed 2022-2026 Capital Improvement Program (CIP); and
- 5) Council discussion on Proposed CIP and priorities for the proposed budget year.

She noted that discussion on these topics would typically be held during the City Council retreat but because this year's retreat is single focused there is a concern there will not be enough time for discussion. She advised it is anticipated the special called meeting will require two to three hours, depending on the depth of discussion.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Miller and unanimously carried that a special called Committee of the Whole be scheduled for Tuesday, March 18, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. for the purpose of holding discussion relative to the FY 2022 Annual Operating Budget.

4. **BATTLE PARK RENOVATIONS - UPDATE (added to agenda in open meeting)** -
Joel Dunn

Parks and Recreation Director Joel Dunn thanked the City Council and Manager for the opportunity to provide an update relative to Battle Park renovations. He stated staff is excited about the project and added:

- About a year ago the City entered into the public input process for Battle Park which was one of the most extensive public input processes ever and included three stakeholder meetings which were extensively advertised;
- Battle Park is used by many groups and the groups included a social, environmental and economic stakeholder group and feedback was received to gather input;
- Three advertised public meetings were held to obtain public input and while one was canceled due to inclement weather the two other meetings were extended to be sure all were able to provide input;
- It is important to work to provide amenities desired by the public and to be good stewards of taxpayer funds and obtaining public input aids in the scoring process for grant funds;
- The City scored very well on numerous grants for the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and the grants received the top and second-best scores in the state;
- The City received grants from both the Recreation Trail Program and the Department of Environmental Quality Grant and has received more than \$650,000 in grant funds largely due to the public input process and hopes to obtain an additional grant;
- The plan was adopted by the City Council in May of 2020 and since that time staff has been involved in the forestry management process;
- The process was explained, and it was noted that Bill Lewis is working with staff to guide the process and has more than 40 years in forestry management with more than 20 of those years serving as county forest ranger for the North Carolina Forest Service. Council was advised that Mr. Lewis has extensive experience and has worked with the City on many projects and is a subject matter expert;
- Mr. Lewis has advised staff that Battle Park had many invasive species that were harmful to the park and needed to be controlled to prevent environmental damage and to aid visibility in the park, which is one of the concerns voiced in the public meetings;
- A standard process used is a controlled burn which was not an option due to the park's close proximity to Highway 64 and another best management practice is the concept of forestry mulching. Forestry mulching will allow the medium and large trees to protect the canopy of the park and also provide a mulch bed to keep invasive species from coming back and provides nutrients to the soil. He added that forestry mulching will not occur regularly, and this is a best management measure as it does not disrupt the soil

which is particularly important in areas within a floodplain such as Battle Park;

- A lot of research was done to ensure the park was being cared for from an environmental standard. He said this type work is generally done in the winter before the greenery starts to grow;
- Part 1 of the Plan has been completed and Part 2 will be learning how to maintain the park in such a way that the native species are allowed to return and invasive species are eliminated;
- The intent is to expand the greenery into parking lots that are in disrepair and unused and to replace the parking lots with nature play areas and trees. Additionally, there is a plan to renovate the asphalt trail and to put down a natural surface trail to be used for races, walking and biking. He added the piers, canoe launches, and boat ramp will all be replaced.

Councilmember Miller said she can be counted among those dismayed by the mulching process. Mr. Dunn responded that sufficient trees have been left to serve as a canopy and over \$20,000 has been allocated for the planting of oak trees. He added the park's proximity to the river requires approval from a number of agencies.

Councilmember Miller said she is quite familiar with the term forestry management and questioned what will happen with the smaller dogwoods, redbuds and other such species that add beauty to the park. Mr. Dunn responded that the plan will allow native species to regrow and the guidance for staff has come from state and national agencies and experts in the field who have advised the park needs to be managed. He added that much of the work is being done by hand.

Councilmember Blackwell thanked Mr. Dunn for his research, methodical and scientific methods for dealing with invasive species and bringing restoration and improvement noting that wildlife management needs to be ensure there are goals, objectives and preservation of native species. He added there was a need for more visibility in the park. He stated the park is known for Indian and native artifacts and was a burial ground for former slaves and questioned if that has been taken into consideration. Mr. Dunn said that information has been made available to all agencies and noted there is a cemetery located at Battle Park. He advised that no work is occurring within the cemetery zones and conversation has been held with the State Preservation Office.

Councilmember Knight reported the area of concern he mentioned is behind or in front of Colonial Avenue and added he is not aware that research has been done and offered to provide the information he has collected to Mr. Dunn. He questioned how the media missed that the City has received guidance from state and federal partners in their reporting on the Battle Park project.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Received report; no formal action

CLOSED SESSION

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney requested a closed session for discussion relative to matters concerning attorney-client privilege and economic development.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the City Council enter into Closed Session at 6:37 p.m.

The minutes of the Closed Session shall be placed on file as **ESM-573** at the end of **Minute Book 38** upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

REGULAR SESSION/ADJOURNMENT. The Mayor Pro Tem convened the Committee in regular session at 6:50 p.m. and, without opposition, adjourned the Committee of the Whole meeting.

COMMUNITY UPDATE BY CITY MANAGER

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

- Encouraged citizens to sign up for the upcoming Citizen’s Police Academy that will be held Tuesdays from 7-9 p.m. from April 5-May 25. The Academy is free and will take place here at City Hall. Citizens will be able to provide feedback and suggestions to members of the Police Department while also learning more about law enforcement policies and building a stronger relationship with the Police force. The class size will be limited to nine participants, who will be required to wear face coverings and practice social distancing. Registration is required by April 1. Visit rockymountnc.gov to apply or call 972-1436.
- Advised that the City’s Business and Collections Services Department is utilizing the Community Development Block Grant CARES Act to assist utilities customers within the city limits who meet income requirements. The program is designed to assist with helping pay utility bills 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 that the City’s Community and Business Development Department is currently accepting applications for the Small Business Assistance Grant Program. All interested and eligible small businesses with 25 or fewer employees, based in the City of Rocky Mount, are encouraged to apply for CARES Act Community Development Block Grant (CDBG-CV) funding to assist in the preparation, prevention and response to coronavirus. For more information or to download an application, visit rockymountnc.gov or call the Community Development Administrator at 252-972-1178.
- Announced that Tar River Transit service is offering free rides to COVID-19 vaccination sites for 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 patients. Free rides will be available until at least June 30, 2021. Visit tarrivertransit.org regarding more information about general routes and services.
- Announced that the Communications, Marketing and Public Relations office has relaunched the video format of City Beat. The weekly discussions are designed to provide another platform for residents to receive the latest city news and information, and the episodes will feature guests including city staff, city leaders and elected officials. Episodes will be streamlined to be more social media friendly. Episode locations will vary throughout the city. Broadcast platforms include a Spotify podcast, the city’s Facebook page as well as the CITY-TV 19 YouTube page. Suddenlink cable subscribers will also be able to view the episodes on Tuesdays and Thursdays on Channel 19 at 4 a.m., 6 p.m. and 11 p.m.

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney stated she would like to bring clarity to the process around proposed improvements to the armory on Raleigh Boulevard. She said:

- Due to her misunderstanding of the desired use of the building after meeting with Councilmember Walker and representatives of Ebenezer Baptist

Church she proposed in the draft of the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan that the building be used for a Police evidence facility;

- She and staff would have presented the proposal to Council at last Thursday's scheduled meeting on the budget had that meeting not been canceled due to the threat of inclement weather;
- The City also posted an RFP for design services to use the building as a Police evidence facility in the event the Council gave permission to move forward;
- Since that is not the direction of the Council and the community the RFQ has been removed;
- The process involving the community will restart and a proposal reflective of the community's desire will be prepared for the consideration of Council at a future time;
- Staff is respectful of the community's input in a major project such as this and looks forward to working with the community to bring an innovative project to the Council for consideration.

Mayor Roberson stated that Councilmember Walker has asked to address the Council and opened the floor to Mr. Walker.

Councilmember T.J. Walker thanked the City Manager for clarification relative to the armory. He thanked the brewery for their support and said, as the Manager stated, the armory will no longer be considered for use as an evidence building for the Police Department. He said he wanted to make sure that he publicly stated he is in total support of law enforcement, the Police Department and the City Manager and believes this was a miscommunication and is hopeful the situation will bring more clarity to Council and greater communication.

FAIR HOUSING MONTH

The Mayor read a Proclamation proclaiming the month of April 2021 as Fair Housing Month in the City of Rocky Mount. The Mayor presented the Proclamation to Human Relations Director Archie Jones and the City Manager joined the Mayor and Mr. Jones for a photograph.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MONTH

The Mayor read a Proclamation proclaiming the month of April 2021 as Community Development Month in the City of Rocky Mount. The Mayor presented the Proclamation to the Interim Director of Community and Business Development, Peter Varney, and the following Community Development staff: Cornelia McGee; Jennifer Holmes; Mabel Taylor-Jones; John Perry; Kendra Silver; Loretta Braswell; and Alvina Jenkins. The Mayor and City Manager joined Mr. Varney and staff members for a photograph.

PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Mayor 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:

NOTE: Mayor turned the meeting over to the Mayor Pro Tem and left the Council Chamber.

- ***Alice Davis:***
 - Said she needed assistance in locating owners of some property she is interested in that is vacant; petitioned the City to take site control of vacant properties;

- Questioned the plan for the CSX shelter adding that some business owners that do not need brick and mortar building could possibly use it on the weekends;
- Voiced concern that when someone enters her address into GPS, they are taken to a different address

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney said the City shares Ms. Davis' concern relative to locating owners of vacant properties, but will seek to assist her with the properties that she is interested in. She advised there is a proposal in next year's CIP for discussion for how the CSC Depot may be used and community input will be sought. Mrs. Small-Toney stated that staff will look into the problem relative to the GPS data to ensure the coordinates are correct.

The City Manager welcomed the next speaker to the podium.

NOTE: The Mayor returned to the meeting.

- **Samuel Battle:**
 - Said he previously visited the Armory with Councilmember Walker and does not currently know what the building will be used for; said he continues to push for a boxing gym in the City and said there used to be one in the City and he feels it would be good for the youth; he added that Wilson has a boxing gym at OIC;
 - Voiced concern for crime in the community saying there have been 54 murders in Rocky Mount from 2014 to the present;
 - Said he is pleased Booker T. Washington gym has air conditioning;
 - Said some cannot afford to attend the Boys & Girls Club because there is a charge of \$25-\$35 per week; said Edgecombe County is being left out of everything and children have to go out of their own neighborhoods to play sports

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney said the City is working in partnership with Councilmember Walker and is providing boxing equipment through the Police Department in support of a boxing program.

- **Nehemiah Smith, Jr.:**
 - Said when he was younger and in college in Atlanta he considered those his revolutionary years; that he did a lot of reading then and came to the conclusion that Police Officers were fascist pigs and now that he has lived longer he believes the problem is not that Police are fascist pigs but that the country is ruled by majoritarian pigs;
 - Said Rocky Mount can be the place where Police reform starts and be an example for the rest of the country;
 - Said he is not for defunding the Police but for reforming the Police and there needs to be reformation in law enforcement throughout the country;
 - Said the tik tok videos recently posted of some of the City's Police Officers show the City needs to go beyond checking a box and do in-depth vetting;
 - Said there is a psychosis and fear in the streets relative to policing especially in the Black community
- **Thomas L. Walker:**
 - Said he likes to commend the Council any time he has an opportunity; said he has been a pastor in the community for 50 years and a citizen longer and knows from whence the City comes;
 - Thanked his grandson (Councilmember Walker) for his service and said he talks with him several times daily and knows his heart and the City is fortunate to have him on the Council;
 - Said he came to undergird the City Manager and is glad the misunderstanding relative to the armory has been resolved and it was a good opportunity for collaboration;

- Said when he thinks of management style he has always been told it is harder to hit a moving object and said the Manager is always moving and not sitting and waiting for the next issues; said he admires her and members of the Council and is sure when differences arise they will be worked out;
 - Thanked Councilmember Walker for representing Ward 4 and other Councilmembers for representing their wards and the Mayor and Manager for their service to the entire City
- **Curmilus Dancy:**
- Provided the City Council with a handout from the Rocky Mount Branch of the NAACP and said they recognize the culture of American law enforcement is being widely discussed and debated throughout the country as well as in Rocky Mount and the region.;
 - Said they find too often that Black people and other people of color lose their lives and are not treated fairly;
 - Asked the names of the Police Officers who were recently terminated due to violating the City's social media policy;
 - Recommended the City re-evaluate its training curriculum, continuous learning techniques and accountability strategies relative to excessive force, racial bias and crisis intervention noting the settlement of the Cox case could indicate a trend or philosophy about how laws are enforced with Black residents;
 - Said the NAACP believes Police Officers with more than 2 complaints of excessive force should be reported to the City Manager and City Council for review;
 - Said he has still not received any official notification or follow-up concerning the police shooting of an unarmed Latino male;
 - Said he read an article in a newspaper by Lindell Kay saying the City makes mountains out of social media mole hills

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

CONSENT AGENDA

A. TAXICAB LICENSE/APPLICATION: (recommended for approval)

The City Council received a recommendation from Interim Chief of Police George Robinson for the issuance of two (2) new taxi right licenses to:

- Denise A. Hunter

B. FY 2020-2021 ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS: (recommended for approval)

Consideration was given to the following Ordinance amendments:

- Project Ordinances:

- 1) Appropriates Funds to the Public Transportation Fund from Grant Received from North Carolina Department of Transportation and North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services for Transportation Services for Coronavirus Vaccinations (\$46,351);
- 2) Reduces Appropriations in the FY 2020-2021 Community Development Block Grant (\$80);
- 3) Increases Appropriations in the FY 2020-2021 HOME Investment Partnership Grant (\$161,907); and

- Budget Ordinance Amendment:

- 4) Appropriates Funds to the Water Fund (\$1,301,587) and Sewer Fund (\$356,996) for FY 2020-2021 for Reimbursement to North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) for Cost of Improvements to Water and Sewer Services Associated with Road Construction on Wesleyan Boulevard (pursuant to agreement with NCDOT)

C. BID/BUSINESS SERVICES HVAC REPLACEMENT PROJECT: (recommended for approval)

- Award to Matthews Mechanical @ a total cost of \$168,200 (MWBE-owned business)

Consideration of the bid for the Business Services HVAC Replacement Project (Item C) was removed from Agenda.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the Consent Agenda be approved inclusive of approval of taxi permits for issuance to Denise A. Hunter, as recommended by the Interim Chief of Police; and adoption of the following Ordinances:

- Project Ordinances:
 - 1) **Ordinance No. O-2021-15** entitled **GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE/DHHS CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUNDS VACCINE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM - \$46,351;**
 - 2) **Ordinance No. O-2021-16** entitled **GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE AMENDMENT/2020-2021 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT ENTITLEMENT GRANT PROJECT - \$80;**
 - 3) **Ordinance No. O-2021-17** entitled **GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE AMENDMENT/2020-2021 HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP GRANT PROJECT - \$161,907;** and
- Budget Ordinance:
 - 4) **Ordinance No. O-2021-18** entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET ORDINANCE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021 FOR NCDOT REIMBURSEMENT FOR WESLEYAN BOULEVARD WATER AND SEWER IMPROVEMENTS - \$356,996**

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF NAMING THE SUNSET AVENUE/WESLEYAN BOULEVARD BRIDGE IN HONOR OF GUS TULLOSS

The City Council was advised that the Rocky Mount Area Chamber of Commerce has recommended that the recently upgraded bridge on Sunset Avenue (over Wesleyan Boulevard) be named in honor of Gus Tulloss for his contributions to roadway and economic improvements. The City Council was presented with a draft resolution in support of the recommendation. It was noted that a \$2,000 administrative fee will be required which will be paid by outside donors.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Miller and unanimously carried that **Resolution No. R-2021-16** entitled **RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF NAMING THE SUNSET AVENUE/WESLEYAN BOULEVARD BRIDGE IN HONOR OF GUS TULLOSS** be adopted. This resolution will be forwarded to the North Carolina Department of Transportation for erection of the proper signage to recognize this honor to Mr. Tulloss.

DEMOLITION ORDINANCE

The City Council received an ordinance ordering the Community Code Inspector to proceed with demolition of the following substandard properties:

- a. 409/411 Arlington Street
- b. 334 Carolina Avenue
- c. 701 Lincoln Drive

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Knight and unanimously carried that consideration of the Ordinance ordering the demolition of the above properties be tabled.

Following conversation, Councilmember Joyner requested an amendment to the Motion that only items (a) 409/411 Arlington Street and (b) 334 Carolina Avenue be tabled.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Walker and unanimously carried that **Ordinance No. O-2021-19** entitled **ORDINANCE ORDERING THE COMMUNITY CODE INSPECTOR TO PROCEED TO DEMOLISH CERTAIN DILAPIDATED STRUCTURES PURSUANT TO THE HOUSING CODE OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT** be adopted (this Ordinance authorizes the demolition of 701 Lincoln Drive).

ELECTRIC SERVICE AGREEMENTS

The City Council received the following electric service agreements outlining the terms and conditions for the purchase of electric power by the following businesses:

- a. **North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles** - service at 1405A, 1417, 1515, 1613 and 1625 North Church Street) **(C-2021-14)** ;
- b. **Fred Smith Company, II, LLC (FSC II, LLC)** - service at 7526 South Halifax Road, Battleboro, NC **(C-2021-15)**

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker, seconded by Councilmember Miller and unanimously carried that the electric service agreements described above be approved and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the same on behalf of the City.

APPOINTMENTS

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

COMMENTS/BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

Councilmember Knight stated that he wished to respond to a comment made during the public petitions portion of the meeting relative to the Boys & Girls Clubs. He said the CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tar Region is Ron Green adding that it is an important organization and is well run. He stated scholarships are available for children who cannot pay. He said the club is doing a fantastic job in both Edgecombe and Nash County and the Boys & Girls Clubs are needed in Rocky Mount and across the state. He said it is important to invest in children at an early age and said the clubs welcome those who wish to invest.

The Mayor agreed and said he cannot say enough about the great things happening at the local Boys & Girls Clubs.

Councilmember Blackwell said he can understand a cry of frustration that more needs to be done and more needs to be done everywhere; however, Rocky Mount has outstanding community support and a Parks and Recreation Department that is second to none. He said while he agrees more needs to be done, especially on the Edgecombe County side of Rocky Mount, he would like to see more involvement and ways sought to strengthen and expand rather than devalue each other. He said City

residents pay taxes to either Nash County or Edgecombe County and the counties have responsibilities that do not end at the City limits because they have Parks and Recreation dollars as well. Mr. Blackwell said when there are conversations about youth programming there needs to be more collaboration.

Councilmember Walker added his support of and agreement with the comments.

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney thanked the City Council for its financial support of the Boys & Girls Clubs and noted that Aetna provided \$50,000 in funding for the Hero's Program at Williford Elementary to which the Council contributed as well.

Councilmember Joyner thanked the Council and City Manager and noted that the Parks & Recreation Department provides activities for a large portion of South Rocky Mount.

Councilmember Knight thanked the City Manager for collaborating with Councilmember Walker relative to work towards creating a boxing program. He added that years ago he, Councilmember Watkins and others asked about a boxing program but at that time it did not come to fruition. He stated that Sugar Ray Leonard was from Rocky Mount and thanked the Council for working to make a boxing program a reality now.

Councilmember Walker added that the Police Department is also getting involved.

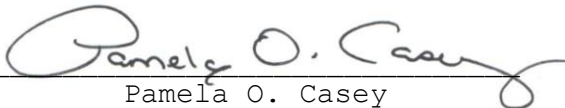
CLOSED SESSION (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)

A Closed Session was requested relative to matters concerning economic development and personnel privilege.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Daughtride and unanimously carried that the City Council enter into Closed Session at 4:52 p.m. The minutes of the Closed Session shall be filed as **ESM-574** at the end of **Minute Book 38** upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

OPEN SESSION/ADJOURNMENT

The Council returned to open session at 5:17 p.m. and there being no further business, without objection, the meeting was adjourned.


Pamela O. Casey
City Clerk