

April 26, 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; Elton Daniels, Assistant City Manager; Dorothy Brown Smith, Chief Communications and Marketing Consultant; Peter F. Varney, Interim Community and Business Development Director\*; Robin Cox, Communications Specialist; Ken Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation; Brad Kerr, Public Works Director\*; and Amanda James, Water Resources Superintendent; Mark Adcox, Video Production Specialist; and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

*\*present as required*

Others present remotely for presentation relative to Community Land Trust (Professor and UNC CAPSTONE TEAM: Professor Jeanne Milliken-Bonds; Students: Jenna Quistorff; Lucy Sasser; Charlie Chapman; Allyson Davenport; and Taylor Gosk).

*NOTE: Public participation limited due to Governor Roy Cooper's Executive Order relative to the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19); meeting was accessible remotely via FaceBook and the City's YouTube Channel.*

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

**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 a closed session will be added for economic development and attorney-client privilege.

Councilmember Daughtridge stated he wished to make a clarification with regard to a grant project ordinance closeout for a building reuse included as a part of the Consent Agenda. He stated that he currently serves on the Department of Commerce but was not involved with the Rural Center or the Department of Commerce in 2010. City Attorney Richard J. Rose opined there is no conflict with Councilmember Daughtridge voting on the items included in the Consent Agenda.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried that the minutes of a regular scheduled meeting of the City Council held April 12, 2021 and the minutes of a regular scheduled Committee of the Whole meeting held April 12, 2021 be approved as submitted to the City Council prior to the meeting.

The April 12, 2021 Committee of the Whole minutes are as follows:

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HELD MONDAY, APRIL 12, 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)*

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

STAFF PRESENT:

Rochelle D. Small-Toney  
 Pamela O. Casey  
 Dorothy Brown Smith  
 Jessie Nunery  
 Ken Hunter  
 Mark Adcox  
 Charles Williams  
 Peter Varney  
 Cornelia McGee  
 Richard J. Rose

**OPENING OF MEETING**

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

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney called on Interim Police Chief Charles Williams to provide a crime statistics update.

**1. CRIME STATISTICS - Charles Williams, Interim Police Chief**

The City Council was advised that the purpose of today's presentation is to provide a summary of city-wide crime numbers. It was noted that the 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. It was explained that crime numbers are tracked by the FBI and shared with the Bureau of Justice Statistics for tracking purposes.

Interim Chief Williams reported there has been a reduction in almost every crime category except for commercial breaking and entering and month to month crime numbers are down by 35 crimes.

Highlights of the Interim Chief'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	March 2020	March 2021	+/-	YTD 2020	YTD 2021	+/-
Total	164	130	-35	458	415	-44

- March 2021 crime numbers for murders, aggravated assault and shooting into occupied building(s)/vehicle(s) (map of location provided):
  - o Victims with injuries = 10
  - o Victims without injuries = 10
  - o Total victims = 20
  - o Cases cleared by arrest = 3
  - o Inactive cases = 3
  - o Open cases = 10
  - o Gang related = 2
- Aggravated assault cases and investigations:
  - o Aggravated assault cases = 16

- o Aggravated assault victims = 20
- o Number cases with multiple victims = 4
- o Aggravated assault arrests = 4
- o Aggravated assault cases cleared = 3
- Shots fired calls City-wide:
  - o Shots fired/heard = 78
  - o Calls resulting in shell casings found = 25
  - o Number shell casings found = 155
  - o Number of Firearms Seized = 47
  - o Number firearms seized (year to date) = 131
  - o Weapon violation arrests = 10
- Property crime cases cleared by arrest:
  - o Larceny (motor vehicle) = 1
  - o Larceny (shoplifting) = 4
  - o Larceny (all other) = 1
  - o Commercial breaking & entering = 2
- Community Involvement:
  - o Started softball/baseball practices with Police Athletic Program and Parks and Recreation
  - o Planned for Citizen and Junior Police Academy (summer 2021)
  - o Conducted presentations on elderly safety for Covenant Homes residents (approximately 25 residents attended meetings; elderly and residential safety)

Interim Chief Williams responded to questions from Councilmembers relative to areas of heavy concentration of shots fired and what policing measures are in place in those higher communities of concentration. He advised that the ShotSpotter equipment is located in the southeast portion of the City and the data is computer generated which is the reason for the higher level of concentration of calls in that area. He added that evidence is collected in those areas and used to match shell casing to weapons used in crimes.

Interim Chief Williams added, in response to other questions:

- Cameras for the ShotSpotter equipment are included in the 2021-2022 budget;
- Sometimes when arrests are made multiple firearms are seized, particularly when there are multiple people in a vehicle;
- The presentation to elderly residents of the Covenant Homes included information on personal and residential safety (watching to make sure they are not being followed; being aware of their surroundings when exiting a vehicle; telephone scams and other related information)

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Received report; no formal action**

**2. PROPOSED THREE-YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN, ANNUAL ACTION PLAN AND ANALYSIS OF IMPEDIMENTS TO FAIR HOUSING - Peter Varney, Interim Community and Business Development Director**

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney told the City Council that spring is the time of year that the consolidated plan is prepared and sent to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). She introduced Interim Director of the Department of Community & Business Development, Peter Varney, to present the proposed plan along with the annual action plan and analysis of impediments to Fair Housing.

The City Council was advised that a consolidated plan and annual action plan is required by localities receiving funding through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program and the HOME Investment Program (HOME) Program of HUD and is due to HUD on May 15, 2021. It was noted that during FY 2021-2022 the City will receive \$506,949 in CDBG funding and the Down East Home Consortium (DEHC) will receive \$407,772 in HOME funding.

The City Council was advised that annually the City receives CDBG and HOME funds from HUD which is administered by the Department of Community & Business Development. It was noted that:

- The primary purpose of these grant programs is to develop viable communities through the provision of decent housing, a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons and the City is required to produce the following documents:
  - 2021-2023 Consolidated Plan - a three-year plan that documents the City's housing and community development needs, outlines strategies to address those needs and identifies proposed program accomplishments;
  - 2021 Annual Action Plan - an annual plan that provides a summary of how CDBG and HOME funding will be used to address priority needs and goals as identified in the three-year Consolidated Plan; and
  - Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice - a three-year plan that analyzes disparities in access to housing opportunities to the City/DEHC and identifies priorities and goals to address those impediments.

Mr. Varney reported that the public display period will be advertised in local newspapers and will begin on Thursday April 1, 2021 and end on Monday, May 3, 2021. He added that during this time the above documents will be on display in the Department of Community & Business Development (in City Hall), on the City's website and in the County (Nash and Edgecombe) Office buildings. The Council was advised that public hearings will be held in Rocky Mount and Nash and Edgecombe Counties.

Mr. Varney presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining priority needs and the proposed budget and projects for the CDBG (\$506,949) and HOME (\$407,772) programs and responded to questions from Councilmembers. Impediments were outlined as:

- Lower employment rates and wages;
- Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) concentration in inner City neighborhoods;
- Non-white households less likely to be homeowners;
- Moderate levels of segregation in inner City;
- Lack of transportation in areas outside of the City; and
- Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) allowed but only available to the property owner, family members or potential caregivers employed on the premises

The following goals were identified:

- 1) Expanding housing choice/access to opportunity - continued funding for rehab and nonprofits particularly for career readiness counseling and transit access to major employers;
- 2) Increasing home ownership - funding home buyer counseling services; developing a mortgage loan pool at local banks;
- 3) Strengthening anti-discrimination investigation, enforcement and operations - support Human Relations Commission with fair housing activities; and
- 4) Educating landlords, tenants and the public about fair housing - developing a fair housing guidebook for renters, buyers and landlords; partner with counties to hold a Fair Housing Forum; and contract for discrimination testing.

It was recommended that the public display period/process outlined above proceed and that the documents, including all comments received, be placed on the May 10, 2021 agenda for formal consideration of adoption by Council.

Comments were made by Councilmembers and Mr. Varney responded to questions. It was recommended that appropriate City Boards, Commissions and Committees and Transit be included in conversations with the Department of Community & Business Development to advance the larger plan.

**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 real estate acquisition.

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**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION.** *Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Miller and unanimously carried that the City Council enter into Closed Session at 5:53 p.m.*

The minutes of the Closed Session shall be placed on file as **ESM-576** at the end of **Minute Book 37** upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

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**REGULAR SESSION/ADJOURNMENT.** The Mayor Pro Tem convened the Committee in regular session at 6:42 p.m. and, without opposition, adjourned the Committee of the Whole meeting.

**PRAYER/MOMENT OF SILENCE**

Councilmember Knight requested a moment of silence for the family of George Floyd and those individuals who have lost their lives due to gun violence.

The Mayor requested a moment of silence for individual prayer.

**COMMUNITY UPDATE BY CITY MANAGER**

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

- Reported that the City Council recently held its annual retreat in Asheville, North Carolina and the public meeting was broadcast live on the City's YouTube channel. She noted the sessions are archived and available for viewing at YouTube.com by searching for CITY TV 19 Rocky Mount.
- 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.
- 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 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](http://rockymountnc.gov) or call the Community Development Administrator at 252-972-1178.

Councilmember Walker arrived\*\*

- The City's Community and Business Development Department will conclude Community Development Month with a virtual meeting on Thursday, April 29<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m. that will focus on businesses and include speakers on downtown incentives, financial literacy and minority contracting. The link can be found at [rockymountnc.gov](http://rockymountnc.gov).
- The City's 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 their patients. Free rides will be available until at least June 30, 2021. Visit [tarrivertransit.org](http://tarrivertransit.org) regarding more information about general routes and services.
- Following Governor Roy Cooper's recent announcement, the City is preparing for the possibility of reopening all public facilities including the Council Chamber for Council meetings and boards and commissions meetings in June. A committee has been appointed to formulate a plan and it will be shared at the Committee of the Whole meeting on May 10.

Mayor Roberson stated he would like the record to reflect that Councilmember Walker is in attendance.

Councilmember Joyner asked if the City will be looking at the COVID-19 pandemic data for both Nash and Edgecombe Counties in making this determination.

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney responded in the affirmative and added that all factors and trends in both Nash and Edgecombe Counties will be considered and she expects to receive the plan in early May and hopes to present it to Council at the first meeting in May.

Councilmember Miller asked if when the Council Chamber is open to the public if the public will be allowed to approach Councilmembers at the conclusion of the meetings.

The City Manager responded that instructions will be provided to the public for entering and exiting the Council Chamber and attendance will be limited (including staff). She added that adjustments will be made for staff attendance to allow more room for the public and there will be other areas available within City Hall to view the meetings.

#### **PUBLIC WORKS WEEK**

The Mayor read a Proclamation proclaiming May 16-22, 2021 as Public Works Week in the City and presented the Proclamation to Brad Kerr, Public Works Director, and Amanda James, Water Resources Superintendent. The City Manager joined the Mayor, Mr. Kerr and Ms. James 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:

- **Mary Warren:**
  - Said she is here today to speak in reference to fair housing;
  - Said she lives in the Branch/Clark Street area and has been active in the community for 40 years;
  - Said she hopes what the City is doing now will include more funding for low income and senior residents;
  - Said she attended the retreat in Asheville and thanked the City Manager and all who made it possible for people from the community to attend the retreat; and
  - Said she is excited about what she heard and hopes the low-income community will not be left out saying more funding is needed for housing issues in neighborhoods
  
- **Samuel Battle:**
  - Asked that the Council consider a moment of silence in memory of DMS (Digital Underground) hip hop rapper, songwriter and producer, Gregory Edward Jacobs, known as Shock G aka 'Humpty Hump';
  - Said he came today to talk about crime, drugs and gangs and said programs won't stop violence, but will slow it down adding that as summer approaches violence increases; he said someone from the community needs to be in charge of programs in the communities;
  - Said racism is not going away no matter how much it is talked about; said he has learned to deal with a lot of things;
  - Spoke in support of a boxing program; and
  - Said the gym at Booker T used to open at 8 a.m. and questioned why City gyms cannot open at 8 a.m. and be open on the weekends
  
- **Dr. Kim Koo:**
  - Said she lives in the Englewood area;
  - Said she is here to speak about the continuing murders of Black people in the nation in spite of ongoing and frequent protests and the BLM movement; she said the killings have not abated and it has to stop;
  - Said the conviction of Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd is only a drop in the bucket and said police in many cities from coast to coast continue to kill with impunity at the slightest perceived offense;
  - Said these willful and unlawful acts are signs of the disintegration of our society and the social and moral cohesion;
  - Said attempts by the state to control social unrest that steams from long-term government neglect has been brutal;
  - Said every city should consider measures to curb the ability of the police to shoot at will and increase accountability of police to citizens and militarization of police must stop;
  - Said she hopes the message gets across and said it is getting to the point of being an existential crisis, particularly for people of color

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

#### **CONSENT AGENDA**

##### **A. TEMPORARY STREET CLOSING (recommended for approval):**

- Request by Laverne Bullock for permission to close the 100 Block of NW Main Street on Saturday, May 1, 2021 from 4:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. for a vendor block party in memory of Karen Jones, owner of Cleen Sweep

**B. PROJECT ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS/CLOSE OUTS (gives final summary of actual revenues and expenditures - recommended for adoption):**

- 1) Ordinance No. O-2021-23 entitled FINAL GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE/REDEVELOPMENT OF CARLETON HOUSE RESTAURANT;
- 2) Ordinance No. O-2021-24 entitled FINAL GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE/MAIN STREET SOLUTIONS GRANT DOUGLAS BLOCK;
- 3) Ordinance No. O-2021-25 entitled FINAL GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE/ARRA MAIN STREET ENERGY GRANT;
- 4) Ordinance No. O-2021-26 entitled FINAL CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE/CAPITAL PROJECT EDGEcombe PARK; and
- 5) Ordinance No. O-2021-27 entitled FINAL CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE/HAPPY HILL CAPITAL PROJECT

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

- Project Ordinance:  
Ordinance No. O-2021-28 entitled OCCUPANCY TAX PROJECT AMENDMENT – appropriates funds from the Occupancy Tax Fund to the General Fund as appropriated in FY 2021 Annual Operating Budget – (\$500,000)
- Budget Ordinance:  
Ordinance No. O-2021-29 entitled ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET ORDINANCE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021 FOR TRANSFER OF SURFACE TRANSPORTATION FUNDS – appropriates funds in the General Fund (\$3,109,586) and Powell Bill Fund (\$2,345,586) for Transfer of Surface Transportation Funds provided from the annual vehicle license fee

Councilmember Knight stated that he has received an opinion from City Attorney Richard J. Rose that as Board Chair of OIC he is entitled to vote on Item 8B(5) relative to the Happy Hill Capital Project Grant Project Closeout as he will receive no financial gain. The City Attorney confirmed that he has given this opinion.

Councilmember Knight added that when the world was waiting on the George Floyd verdict there was an article in the local newspaper relative to the OIC China American building rezoning that mentioned that Reuben Blackwell is CEO and Andre Knight Board Chair of OIC and he wanted to make it clear today that he is Board Chair and as such, according to the City Attorney, is able to vote on this item. Councilmember Blackwell requested clarification from the City Attorney that he is able to vote on this matter and the City Attorney confirmed that Councilmember Blackwell is not disqualified from voting.

Councilmember Blackwell said that OIC has adhered to all agreements and spent much more money than it has received, millions more.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the recommendations relative to the Consent Agenda items be approved inclusive of approval of the temporary street closing and adoption of Project/Budget Ordinances, as recommended.

**FY 2021-2023 PROPOSED THREE-YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN, FY 2021-2022 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN AND ANALYSIS OF IMPEDIMENTS OF FAIR HOUSING CHOICE/PUBLIC HEARING**

The City Council was advised that in accordance with federal regulations the City and the Down East HOME Consortium (DEHC) has prepared a Consolidated Plan for the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development and Planning Program. Peter F. Varney, Interim Director of Community & Business Development, provided an update to the overview of the process presented on April 12, 2021 and advised that a meeting has been held with the Workforce Housing Advisory Commission. He said the Commission members have reviewed the same information presented to the City Council on April 12 and have indicated their desire for the City Council to proceed with full energy towards development of a housing bond. Mr. Varney added that today he received a letter from Legal Aid of North Carolina in support of the City's pursuit of a housing bond with all expediency.

It was explained that the Consolidated Plan covers the three-year period from 2021 through 2023 and, as part of the Consolidated Plan process, an Annual Action Plan for program year 2021 has been prepared which outlines how the City intends to expend an estimated \$505,949 in Federal Community Development Block Grant funds (CDBG) and \$407,772 in HOME Investment Partnership Program funds (HOME). It was explained that an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice has been prepared which analyzes the disparities in access to housing opportunities in the City/DEHC and identifies priorities and goals to address those impediments.

The Council was informed that a draft of the Proposed Three-Year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and Analysis of Impediments of Fair Housing Choice is available for public review and comment for 30 days beginning April 1, 2021 and ending on May 3, 2021 and copies of the draft documents will be available for review in the Rocky Mount Office of Community & Business Development and the Edgecombe County Planning & Development Department and online on the City's website.

The Mayor opened a public hearing to receive public comment relative to the proposed FY 2021-2023 Three-Year Consolidated Plan, the FY 2021-2022 Annual Action Plan and the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice. A summary of comments are outlined below.

- ***Susan Perry Cole:***
  - Stated she lives at 251 Rose Street and is a member of the Community Academy which is a group of concerned neighborhood residents who have come together to improve housing conditions in racially segregated and blighted communities experiencing disinvestment;
  - Stated she currently serves as Chair of the City's Workforce Housing Advisory Commission also known as the WHAC;
  - Noted that April is National Fair Housing month and added the Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability and family status yet after 53 years after the Act was signed in 1968 we still live in a society that is racially and economically divided and said, in fact, on page 63 of the Consolidated Plan, commenting on the status

of Rocky Mount's neighborhoods, the plan notes: "Some parts of the City have flourished, while others have declined, with heavy concentrations of vacancy, deferred maintenance and population loss bringing instability to once-growing communities."

- Said for the most part, the impoverished and Black residents of Rocky Mount have been concentrated disproportionately in a number of distressed urban core neighborhoods which is where she has lived for the past 35 years;
- Said if there is one thing we have learned since 1968 it is that the inequalities in housing opportunities and neighborhood segregation we see today were centuries in the making and these patterns are the result of government policy, housing industry practices, individual acts of discrimination and local zoning and land use barriers;
- Said she wants to frame the recommendations she makes today within the context of equitable development. Equitable development occurs when smart, intentional strategies are put into place to ensure low-income neighborhoods and communities of color participate in and benefit from the decisions that shape their neighborhoods;
- Directed Council's attention to the affordable housing bond strategy mentioned earlier and said it is worth noting that as far back as the City's 2003 comprehensive plan (Together Tomorrow) the document included the following statements:
  - "The City must identify new funding sources for its housing programs, given the ongoing decline in Federal support. In reviewing the new funding sources, serious consideration should be given to use of housing bonds to provide a more flexible source of revenue to address the community's housing needs."
- Stated that likewise, the Consolidated Plan before Council today mentions on page 113, "the City recognizes the federal funds received will not address all of the affordable housing needs in the community."
- Added that the Consolidated Plan also documents the City conducted "a cost-benefit analysis since the last Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice on the following community revitalization strategies; that includes the general obligation bond for affordable housing rehabilitation, construction and homeownership assistance";
- Stated another provision in the 2018 Analyst of Impediments directed the City to "begin to implement any community revitalization strategies determined to be feasible through the cost-benefit analysis."
- Added that Mr. Varney has informed Council of the actions taken by the Workforce Housing Advisory Commission when they met last week which was a group vote to unanimously recommend the City continue research towards implementation of an affordable housing bond;
- Said for all of the above referenced reasons and after 18 years of patiently waiting for action by the City's leadership, she strongly recommends the City make the following change: amend the section of the 2021 Analysis of Impediments entitled *Goals and Actions to Address Impediments*, at the top of page 12, to include language that directs the City to continue research toward implementation of an affordable housing bond;
- She ended her comments with a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King from a 1967 speech and thanked the Council for the opportunity to share her comments

Mayor Roberson requested Ms. Cole provide a copy of her written comments.

- **Dr. Kim Koo:**

- Stated she is also a member of the Community Academy and Workforce Housing Advisory Commission and the Rocky Mount Racial Justice Group and although she does not live in a marginalized or stressed neighborhood, she is very well aware of the severe crises affecting poor people and people of color;

- Said as a person of conscious she feels it is her responsibility to be part of the struggle for fair and affordable housing;
- Said she feels we are in a period in which there is a lot of crisis and housing has become a crisis of another existential proportion;
- Said the federal government has imposed severe austerity on all of us decreasing annual grants to cities and from the Department of Housing and Urban Development; she said these are our tax dollars and much of the tax dollars given to the federal government each year are shunted to military spending while the super-rich and ultra-wealthy have not paid their share of taxes and as a result federal, state and city funding has shrunk;
- Said that is what austerity is all about and we have to find other sources of funding;
- Said what has been proposed is a general obligation bond and her feeling is that this is a short-term solution but needs exploring and implementing which can also be used to address other public service deficiencies;
- Said another consideration she would like Council to consider is a community trust fund; said she feels the community trust fund would keep the wealth within the community for generations to come and is worth exploring;
- Said because she knows Council's time is short, she has put out a 400-word letter to the Telegram on the housing crisis in her opinion and hopes the Telegram will print it soon because it has never been more timely;
- Applauded the Council for going on the retreat to try to solve the housing problem faced in the City

Mayor Roberson reminded all there is a public review and comment period from April 1 until May 3, 2021. No additional comments were made, and the Mayor closed the public hearing.

Councilmember Blackwell questioned how the recommendations by Susan Perry Cole will be incorporated into the content of the documentation and the City Manager responded that the comments from the public will be amended to include today's comments.

Mayor Roberson reminded the public that the documentation is posted on the City's website.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The City Council was advised that the City proposes to appropriate and expend City funds to extend the term of an option to purchase property for economic development and that a public hearing is required pursuant to N.C.G.S. 158-7.1 and has been properly noticed.

It was explained that the option agreement with Edgecombe Genco LLC for the acquisition of land for economic development expired April 6, 2021 and due diligence for this project is ongoing and additional time is necessary to complete the process and financing. The Council was advised that the owner has agreed to an extension of the option agreement for a fee of \$10,000, that the City has previously paid \$45,000 and both these amounts will be applied to the purchase price if the option to purchase is exercised.

Mayor Roberson opened a public hearing relative to the extension of the option to purchase the Edgecombe Genco property. No one appeared and the Mayor closed the public hearing.

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that **Resolution No. R-2021-**

**21a** entitled **RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT AUTHORIZING A SIX (6) MONTH EXTENSION OF THE OPTION TO PURCHASE THE EDGECOMBE GENCO PROPERTY** be adopted; the Second Amendment to Option to Purchase **(C-2021-16)** be approved and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute same on behalf of the City.

**PRESENTATION/COMMUNITY LAND TRUST**

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney told the City Council that a group of UNC students who worked at the direction of Dr. James Johnson and Professor Jeanne Milliken-Bonds will present research to Council that relative to the establishment of a community land trust in Rocky Mount. The City Manager thanked Professor Bonds and the students who will soon be graduating and stated she was very impressed with their research and thinks this lays the groundwork for further discussion relative to the establishment of a community land trust in the City.

Professor Bonds thanked the Council for allowing them to present today and turned the presentation over to the students who are all seniors at UNC and in the Public Policy Program. Council was advised that the students have looked at putting together a plan for the land trust as well as fiscal implications for the City, zoning and ordinance review.

The students introduced themselves and each presented a portion of the presentation outlining a three-year plan for implementation of a community land trust; the fiscal impact of the implementation; and necessary ordinance review. A map depicting the property outlined in the three-year plan and sample property card was provided. The students recommended that the City Council support a community land trust which will work to make homeownership accessible and affordable for all residents.

Key findings and recommendations were outlined as:

- 1) Develop Properties Under the Proposed Three-Year Plan:
  - Three-year, 3-5-7 framework ensures the Community Land Trust can quickly make dramatic changes to the properties that need it most and foster a close-knit community within the neighborhood;
  - In the future, the Community Land Trust can expand and continue to increase affordable housing access in the City
- 2) Allow the Community Land Trust to Fiscally Benefit Rocky Mount:
  - While financial gain is not the primary goal of the Community Land Trust, City staff and residents can rest easy knowing the Community Land Trust can increase tax revenue;
  - Projected overall increase in tax revenue of over \$4,000 per year can be expected even if land values increase
- 3) Ensure Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinances Align to the Community Land Trust:
  - Accessory Dwelling Units provide a huge range of benefits from providing supplemental income for homeowners to increasing access to affordable units;
  - The City Council voted to amend the current code on Accessory Dwelling Units in December 2020 and the amendment aligns with the goals of the Community Land Trust; but it is recommended these changes be realized in the public facing ordinances

- 4) Include Community Garden Supports to Enhance the Community Land Trust:
  - A community garden will enhance the Community Land Trust;
  - Explicitly permitting community gardens in the zoning code for residential areas was recommended
- 5) Financially Support the Community Land Trust:
  - It was recommended that the City financially support the Community Land Trust in its on-going efforts to create affordable housing

Mayor Roberson thanked the students for their presentation and requested Council be provided with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

The City Manager thanked the Capstone students, Professor Milliken-Bonds and Dr. James Johnson noting that time had been allotted for the presentation during the 2021 City Council Annual Retreat but had to be rescheduled. She said another presentation is anticipated for the May 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting if that is the desire of Council.

Ms. Small-Toney added that questions are welcomed prior to the Committee of the Whole to ensure that Dr. Johnson and the team are prepared to give specific answers.

Councilmembers Joyner and Knight expressed appreciation for the presentation and Councilmember Knight added that the focus of Council has shifted to rebuilding fragile communities and reducing demolition.

#### **APPOINTMENTS**

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

Councilmember Knight stated he would like to have discussion relative to the Animal Care and Advisory Board at an upcoming Committee of the Whole meeting as well as discussion relative to the Ordinance regulating Bars, Taverns and Nightclubs.

Mayor Pro Tem Joyner suggested these topics be included on the May 2021 Committee of the Whole agenda. Councilmember Daughtridge requested information be provided to Council as soon as possible before the meeting.

#### **COMMENTS - SUDDENLINK**

Councilmember Blackwell asked for clarification and an update as to Legislative action regarding Suddenlink Communications.

Mayor Roberson stated that he along with a number of other Mayors throughout the state joined together to request the General Assembly to allow municipalities to create and supply broadband.

It was requested that the City Manager collect any data available relative to complaints received. It was noted that Suddenlink has contact numbers that can be shared.

Ms. Small-Toney reported that she has been in conversation with another provider in the North Carolina who is setting up broadband and is expecting to receive information soon.

Councilmember Daughtridge stated it is good for the public to know that the City Council does not had legislative control over cable providers.

Councilmember Blackwell responded by saying the Council has influence and can contact the local legislation. He added that internet service is as critical as water, sewer, housing and education and business and entertainment depend on it. He asked that the Council consider making this a legislative priority.

**CLOSED SESSION (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)**

A Closed Session was requested relative to matters concerning economic development and attorney-client privilege.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the City Council enter into Closed Session at 5:21 p.m. The minutes of the Closed Session shall be filed as **ESM-577** at the end of **Minute Book 37** upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

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**OPEN SESSION**

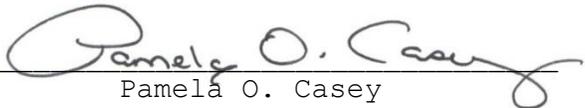
The Council returned to open session at 5:39 p.m.

**REPORT OF LITIGATION SETTLEMENT**

City Attorney Richard J. Rose reported to the City Council on the settlement of a claim in the matter of American Lighting & Signalization vs. The City of Rocky Mount. He indicated American Lighting & Signalization sued the City in connection with replacement of streetlights. He reported the matter has been settled for \$50,000.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, without opposition, the meeting was adjourned at 5:41 p.m.

  
Pamela O. Casey  
City Clerk