

May 10, 2021

The City Council of the City of Rocky Mount met this day in a regular session scheduled for 7:00 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; Kim Batts, Acting City Clerk/Deputy City Clerk; Elton Daniels, Assistant City Manager; Dorothy Brown Smith, Chief Communications and Marketing Consultant; Amy Staton; Finance Director\*; Peter F. Varney, Interim Community & Business Development Director\*; Robin Cox, Communications Specialist; Ken Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation; Brad Kerr, Public Works Director\*; Mark Adcox, Video Production Specialist; and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

*\*present as required*

*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 7:04 p.m.

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

Mayor Roberson inquired if there were any changes or additions/deletions to the agenda. He stated he is aware of two additions, one being a statement from the City Attorney about a personnel matter and the second being the Aetna Insurance matter. He then stated there was a request to have item 17a voted on separately. Discussion was held.

The Mayor requested by a vote of hands that Councilmembers vote on amendments to the agenda. Councilmembers Walker, Daughtridge, Bullock and Miller voted in the affirmative and Councilmembers Knight, Blackwell and Joyner opposed.

**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 April 26, 2021 be approved as submitted to the City Council prior to the meeting.

**COMMUNITY UPDATE BY CITY MANAGER**

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

- Shared that the Rocky Mount Fire Department will hold its Citizens Fire Academy beginning Tuesday, May 18. The academy is free and runs each Tuesday through June 22 from 6-8 p.m. Citizens will learn about the department's history, hiring and training procedures, special operations teams and more. There is no registration fee, but those interested will need to call

972-1379 or 972-1449 to register. Social distancing and COVID-19 precautions will be taken.

- Reported that the Rocky Mount Police Department will offer a week-long Junior Police Academy for youth ages 13-18. Academy participants will enroll in a week-long camp (July 19-23) and learn about police procedures, ride along with a police officer and get to know officers via a fun environment. Registration information is available by visiting [rockymountnc.gov/police](http://rockymountnc.gov/police) or by calling 972-1436.
- Said the City of Rocky Mount 2020 Water Quality report is now available and can be viewed at [rockymountnc.gov](http://rockymountnc.gov). This report contains important information about the source and quality of the City's drinking water. To speak to someone about the report, or to request the mailing of a paper copy, call 252-972-1336.
- The City of Rocky Mount's Business and Collections Services Department is utilizing the Community Development Block Grant CARES Act funding to assist utility customers within the City limits who meet income requirements. The program is designed to assist with payment of delinquent utility bills for low-to-moderate income households impacted by the loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Households that became delinquent after March 31, 2020 and in which income was affected by COVID-19 may receive up to six months of utilities assistance via this program. For more information on eligibility requirements, visit [rockymountnc.gov](http://rockymountnc.gov) or contact the Business Services Center at 972-1250.
- The City of Rocky Mount'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](http://rockymountnc.gov) or call the Community Development Administrator at 252-972-1178.
- 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. Visit [tarrivertransit.org](http://tarrivertransit.org) regarding more information about general routes and services.

The Mayor asked if there were any questions for the City Manager. Councilmember Miller asked if there was a way to make the Fire Academy available via Zoom or on the City's website for those that are not signed up for the class to still be able to learn the information and if the water quality information is available on the website. City Manager Small-Toney responded that making the Fire Academy available via Zoom was a great idea and said staff will look into that. She confirmed the water quality report was available on the website.

The Mayor recognized the City Manager and her staff for their work relative to the National Day of Prayer event at City Hall.

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WEEK**

The Mayor read a Proclamation proclaiming May 9-15, 2021 as Economic Development Week in the City and presented the Proclamation to Rochelle D. Small-Toney, City Manager and Ken Hunter, Assistant to the

City Manager for Budget and Evaluation. The Mayor joined Mr. Hunter and the Manager 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:

- ***Samuel Battle:***
  - Said he did not understand why the City was not paying to replace netting in batting cages;
  - Spoke in support of a boxing program;
  - Asked the City Council to help get Jim Boyd's gold medal back that was lost
- ***Troy Davis:***
  - Pointed out that dilapidated, vacant buildings without activity do not help the City grow;
  - Stated that until some of the heavy lifting shifts off developers the City will have to help bank roll downtown in order for it to grow;
  - Stated that a councilmember-elect one time said that downtown, alongside the railroad track, gave a displeasing view to Amtrack passengers and that we needed to do better; so, he wants to see it done;
- ***Michael Deloach:***
  - Said he returned to Rocky Mount after retiring from his basketball career so he could give back to his hometown;
  - Said he would like to work with the City to bring more programming and training for the youth
- ***Bronson Williams:***
  - Stated when he checked the agenda on Friday, he noticed an item that involved the transfer of City property;
  - Stated that as a member of the City's Redevelopment Commission he knows they have talked about making sure not to handpick people and ensure things are available to the entire community;
  - Stated in the spirit of transparency he would like to see a plan to allow all individuals to know what is available in the City
- ***Nehemiah Smith:***
  - Stated he echoes Mr. Williams' comments on transparency;
  - Stated he feels item 14 is disturbing and is something that should go before the Redevelopment Commission;
  - Said while he wants to see people develop, he wants to make sure that everyone has a fair shot;
  - Said he is hoping that Council will not vote to move forward with item 14

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

#### **PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS**

The City Council acknowledged receipt of draft minutes and recommendations from a Planning Board meeting held April 13, 2021. The draft minutes are on file in the office of the City Clerk.

The following action was taken upon the recommendations of the Planning Board:

**A. PUBLIC HEARING/REZONING REQUEST**

Mayor C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr. opened a public hearing relative to the following rezoning request recommended for approval and found in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan by the Planning Board:

- request by Melvin Mitchell to rezone +0.57 acres located at 3501 Sunset Avenue and 108 Tyson Avenue from O-I to B-2

Melvin Mitchell appeared and thanked the City Council for its consideration of the project. Councilmember Joyner congratulated Mr. Mitchell on being sworn to serve on the North Carolina Board of Transportation. Will Deaton, Director of Development Services, told the Council that staff recommends approval based upon the recommendation by the Planning Board.

No one else appeared and the Mayor declared the public hearing closed.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried that **Ordinance No. O-2021-30** entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE AND MAP OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT** be adopted.

**B. PUBLIC HEARING/REZONING REQUEST**

Mayor C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr. opened a public hearing relative to the following rezoning request recommended for approval and found in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan by the Planning Board:

- request by Laura Kay Brantley Tart of New Perspective Death Care, LLC to rezone +0.13 acres at 1601 W. Thomas Street from B-1 to O-I

Laura Kay Brantley Tart of New Perspective Death Care appeared and thanked the City Council for its consideration of the request. Will Deaton, Director of Development Services, told the Council that staff recommends approval based upon the recommendation by the Planning Board.

No one else appeared and the Mayor declared the public hearing closed.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge and unanimously carried that **Ordinance No. O-2021-31** entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE AND MAP OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT** be adopted.

**BUDGET REVIEW FY 2021-2022**

The City Council received a proposed schedule for budget review work sessions. Mayor Roberson requested the Manager provide details relative to the proposed schedule. The City Manager called on Budget and Evaluation Manager Ken Hunter to provide a report to the City Council.

Mr. Hunter reported that the proposed schedule is similar to past budget sessions and outlined the schedule in detail as follows:

- Monday, May 17 - 2021-2022 Proposed Budget Delivered to City Council
- Monday, May 24 - Presentation of 2021-2022 Proposed Budget, 4 p.m. (Council Chamber)

- Wednesday, May 26 - Council Work session, 4 p.m. - 2022-2026 Proposed CIP (Council Chamber)
- Wednesday, June 2 - Council Work Session, 4 p.m. - General Fund Enterprise Funds (Council Chamber)
- Monday, June 7 - Council Work Session, 4 p.m. - Other Funds (Council Chamber)
- Wednesday, June 9 - Council Work Session, 4 p.m. - Additional Work Session [if necessary] (Council Chamber)
- Monday, June 14 - Budget Public Hearing during Regular Council Meeting, 7 p.m. (Council Chamber)
- Wednesday, June 16 - Council Work Session (if necessary), 4 p.m. (Council Chamber)
- Monday, June 28 - Budget Adoption during Regular Council Meeting, 4 p.m. (Council Chamber)

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the budget review work session schedule be approved, as recommended.

#### **TEMPORARY STREET CLOSING**

The City Council received a request from Emmanuel Health Education, Inc. for the temporary closing of S. Washington Street from Tarboro Street to Hill Street from 5:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 26, 2021 for the "We Are One" Prostate Cancer Walk, Run, Ride.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Miller and unanimously carried that the temporary street closing request be approved.

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

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, advised the City Council that in response to a request from the Workforce Housing Advisory Commission and Community Academy at the April 26, 2021 Public Hearing, the section of the Analysis of Impediments of Fair Housing Choice, entitled Goal and Actions has been amended to direct the City to continue research towards implementation of an affordable housing bond.

The City Council was further advised that the Annual Action Plan is part of the Down East HOME Consortium's (DEHC) Three-Year Consolidated Plan which is mandated by federal law and regulations promulgated by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the City to receive federal funding for affordable housing and community development initiatives that benefit low- and moderate-income individuals. The Council was further advised that the City is expected to receive \$506,949 in CDBG funding and the Down East HOME Consortium is expected to receive \$407,772 in HOME funding.

It was noted that a public hearing was held on April 26, 2021 in Rocky Mount and an additional public hearing was held on May 3, 2021 in

Edgecombe County and if additional written comments are received, they will be shared with the City Council. It was explained that the deadline for submitting the FY 2021-2023 Three-Year Consolidated Plan, FY 2021-2022 Annual Action Plan and Analysis of Impediments of Fair Housing Choice is May 15, 2021.

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker, seconded by Councilmember Daughtride and unanimously carried that the FY 2021-2023 Three-Year Consolidated Plan, FY 2021-2022 Annual Action Plan and Analysis of Impediments of Fair Housing Choice be approved; that the Mayor be authorized to execute the required certifications; and that staff be authorized to submit the Plans to HUD.

**STREET NAME CHANGE/BATTLE STREET TO SHEHADEH DRIVE**

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney advised the City Council that the City's Street Name Review Committee has completed a review of a street name change request from Mousa Shehadeh and recommends approval of the requested street name change from Battle Street to Shehadeh Drive.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Miller and unanimously carried that **Resolution No. R-2021-22** entitled **RESOLUTION APPROVING STREET NAME CHANGE FROM BATTLE STREET TO SHEHADEH DRIVE** be adopted.

**SURPLUS PROPERTY DISPOSAL/ELECTRONIC AUCTION**

The City Council received a list of personal property proposed to be declared surplus and sold at electronic auction. The list shall be placed on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2021-6**.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtride, seconded by Councilmember Miller and unanimously carried that **Resolution No. R-2021-23** entitled **RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SALE OF CERTAIN PERSONAL PROPERTY AT ELECTRONIC AUCTION** be adopted.

**PROPERTY DISPOSITION - 811 AND 815-821 HAMMOND STREET**

Peter F. Varney, Interim Director of Community & Business Development advised the City Council that an offer in the amount of \$200 (\$100 for each parcel) for the purchase of 811 and 815-821 Hammond Street has been received from Kevin Jones and he has agreed to enter into a Home Purchase Agreement for rehabilitation of the property, the main terms of which are as follows:

1. **Improvements:** The owner must obtain all permits and perform the work required to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy within twelve (12) months;
2. **Financing:** The owner must secure the financing required to accomplish the improvements on his own;
3. **Progress Reports:** The City is to receive quarterly progress reports;
4. **Insurance:** The owner must carry casualty insurance for full replacement value and liability insurance for \$1,000,000; and
5. **Sales Price:** The City will convey the properties for \$200 after the Certificate of Occupancy is issued.

Mr. Varney stated that several Home Purchase Agreements were completed in the same manner in 2010. City Council discussion ensued.

The City Manager stated she would like to put a formal procedure in place to make situations such as this useful to achieving Council's goals with affordable housing. Councilmember Knight requested the matter be brought back before the City Council if language is included relative to Council's affordable housing goals.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried that consideration of this item be tabled.

**BID/DESIGN OF DOWNTOWN CULVERT - PHASE I**

The City Council received qualifications for the Downtown Culvert Design - Phase I. Bids were received and opened on April 7, 2021 after all necessary legal procedures had been implemented and the bid tabulation is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2021-7**. The solicitation was also posted on the City's purchasing webpage, on the North Carolina Historically Underutilized Business webpage and on the North Carolina Interactive Purchasing System website.

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the bid be awarded to the highest ranked firm, WK Dickerson, at a total cost of \$331,440 for Phase I; that the Mayor be authorized to execute the bid contract on behalf of the City; and that the following budget ordinance be adopted:

- **Ordinance No. O-2021-32** entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET ORDINANCE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021 FOR PHASE I DOWNTOWN CULVERT ENGINEERING SERVICES (\$340,000)**.

**STOP LOSS CONTRACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022**

Human Resources Director, Kena Cofield-Jones, and Mark III Broker, Mark Browder provided the City Council with a proposal from the Aetna Life Insurance Company (also serving as the City's health plan provider) for Stop Loss Insurance Coverage. It was reported that the current proposal reflects an increase from \$88.11 per employee per month to \$96.04 per employee per month representing a 9% increase. It was noted that the proposal also covers an allocation for laser care at \$200,000 (maximum contingent liability for one high claimant case of laser treatment). The City Council was advised the total annual cost may increase up to \$294,493.88.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the Extension of Master Services Agreement with Aetna Life Insurance Company for one (1) year.

**RE-BID DOWNTOWN ROCKY MOUNT OFFICE SPACE LEASE**

The City Council received the tabulation of re-bids for the Downtown Office Space Lease. Re-bids were received and opened on February 22, 2021 and the bid tabulation is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2021-8**. The solicitation was also posted on the City's purchasing webpage, on the North Carolina Historically Underutilized

Business webpage and on the North Carolina Interactive Purchasing System website.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and carried by a vote of 6-1 (6 ayes/1 nay; Councilmember Daughtridge opposed) that AFRESHnewSTART be awarded a three (3) year lease contract at \$47,500 per year for a total cost of \$142,500 and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the lease agreement on behalf of the City.

**BID/POD TRANSFORMER REPLACEMENT - PHASE II**

The City Council received the tabulation of bids received for POD Transformer Replacement - Phase II. Bids were received and opened on May 14, 2020 and the bid tabulation is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2021-9**. The solicitation was also posted on the City's purchasing webpage, on the North Carolina Historically Underutilized Business webpage and on the North Carolina Interactive Purchasing System website.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge and unanimously carried that the bid be awarded to Booth and Associates at a total cost of \$414,000 and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the bid contract on behalf of the City. It was noted that Booth and Associates will subcontract 10% to a woman owned professional services firm.

**RE-BID REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES MANAGEMENT**

The City Council received the tabulation of re-bids received for Regional Public Transportation Services Management. Bids were received and opened on June 24, 2020 and the bid tabulation is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2021-10**. The Purchasing Department received one proposal as a result of the re-bid. The solicitation was also posted on the City's purchasing webpage and on the North Carolina Interactive Purchasing System website.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge and unanimously carried that the re-bid be awarded to Booth and Associates at a total cost of \$882,479.64 for a five (5) year term and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the bid contract on behalf of the City.

**COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS**

Councilmember Knight stated both individuals who bid on the Downtown Rocky Mount Office Space have done an excellent job on transforming the buildings and he appreciates the new energy in downtown.

**APPOINTMENTS**

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



**COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS**

Councilmember Blackwell read a press release relative to the End Racism Mural Reveal from the Rocky Mount Black Action Committee:

*“(The Rocky Mount Black Action Committee is a youth-led movement to create a just and integral community in which Black people are respected. Our work towards social justice is guided by love, empathy, and collectivism)”*

Rocky Mount Black Action Committee is committed to dismantling racism, revitalizing our community, and bringing forth equitable change for our people in our community. For the past nine months we have partnered and worked together with the City of Rocky Mount, OCA Maintenance INC., and our community artists to deliver a mural that reflects our history and bringing it to the Edgecombe County community.

RMBAC conducted brainstorming sessions during its fall meetings as options for the Black Lives Matter message and ultimately selected “End Racism!” as the message to be painted. This call-to-action is a way to build an inclusive community through a message that everyone in Rocky Mount and anyone who sees the mural can do.

End Racism Street Mural Reveal hosted by **RMBAC at 285 NE Main St. Rocky Mount, NC 27801 (Rocky Mount Event Center) starts at 3pm on Sunday, May 16th.** We realize Edgecombe county is a hot spot for Covid-19. We are asking that everyone follow CDC guidelines: socially distanced 6ft apart and wearing masks. Masks and our PPE will be provided to ensure health safety for our community.

Guest speakers to be announced.

Artists submitted their designs to RMBAC and were selected based on skill level and message. Each artist was given a \$250 stipend by the CORM for their contribution to the mural. Our community artists are Paul J. Jordan-Mayo, Chanita Jones, Tyshika Dickens, Delayna Robbins, Khalil Peoples, Jarome Chesson, and Montrell Richardson. They have worked tirelessly to create a breathtaking display to compliment Rocky Mount Event Center downtown.

The CORM hired OCA Maintenance Inc, a local Black contracting firm owned by DeQuavais Mann, to complete the outline of the message painted on the street. By participating in the mural, the CORM is working with the artists to approve them as City Vendors for future proposal opportunities.

The mural is made possible by the following sponsors: **Rocky Mount Event Center, the City of Rocky Mount Streets & Purchasing Departments, OIC of Rocky Mount, Dairy Queen, NAACP, Larema Coffee, and Blanches Bistro.** Special thanks to the following contributors: **William Manley Photo, D Chill Spot, the Rocky Mount Telegram, Theresa Alston, Susan Fecho Dean of Arts Barton College, and Cooper and Associates”.**

**REPORT OF EMPLOYEE SETTLEMENT/NATASHA HAMPTON (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)**

City Attorney Richard J. Rose reported that all disagreements between the City and former Assistant City Manager Natasha Hampton have been resolved upon payment in the amount of \$65,000 to Ms. Hampton and

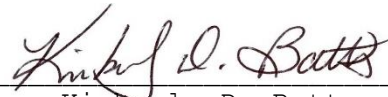
her attorneys. The original agreement is on file in the Human Resources Department.

**REQUEST FROM COUNCILMEMBER**

Councilmember Walker requested an explanation of the upset bid process and the City Attorney explained the process.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, without opposition, the meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.



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Kimberly D. Batts  
Acting City Clerk/Deputy Clerk