

July 12, 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; Pamela O. Casey, City Clerk; Elton Daniels, Assistant City Manager; Dorothy Brown Smith, Chief Communications and Marketing Consultant; Jessie Nunery, Media Relations Specialist; Robin Cox, Communications Specialist; Mark Adcox, Video Production Specialist; Chris Beschler, Director of Energy Resources; Peter F. Varney, Interim Director of Community & Business Development; Brad Kerr, Public Works Director; Kena Cofield-Jones, Humans Resources Director; Will Deaton, Development Services; Archie Jones, Director of Human Relations; Gregory Cotten, Chief Technology Officer; Joel Dunn, Parks and Recreation Director; Latasha Hall, Director of Business and Collections Services; Robert Hassell, Police Chief; Abdul Baloch, Chief Internal Auditor; Brenton Bent, Water Resources Director; Tracey Drewery, Assistant Chief of Administration & Planning; Charles (Trip) Bunn, Battalion Chief of Safety and Training; Chase Norwood, Management Analyst; Keyana Walston, Management Analyst; Jayson Dawkins, Policy Analyst, Budget and Evaluation Department; Tariq Al-Harbi, Summer Intern, Budget and Evaluation Department; Richard J. Rose, City Attorney; and Leon Glaster, Financial Advisor.

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

Security Officers: Police Sergeant Stephen Walker and Senior Police Officer, Shawn Battle.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. and requested a moment of meditation and individual silent prayer.

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

Mayor Roberson questioned if there are any additions or deletions to today's agenda. He stated a closed session will be added for attorney-client privilege and personnel matters.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the agenda be approved, as amended.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the minutes of

a regular scheduled Committee of the Whole meeting held June 14, 2021, be approved as submitted to the City Council prior to the meeting.

The June 14, 2021, Committee of the Whole minutes are as follows:

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR RESCHEDULED MEETING OF A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HELD MONDAY, JUNE 14, 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 relative to the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19)*

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Richard Joyner, Mayor Pro Tem  
 André D. Knight  
 Reuben C. Blackwell, IV\*  
 Lige Daughtridge  
 Christine Carroll Miller\*\*  
 Mayor C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

T.J. Walker  
 W.B. Bullock

STAFF PRESENT:

Rochelle D. Small-Toney  
 Pamela O. Casey  
 Dorothy Brown Smith  
 Jessie Nunery  
 Robin Cox  
 Ken Hunter  
 Amy Staton  
 Corey Mercer  
 Keyana Walston  
 Archie Jones  
 Latasha Hall  
 Chase Norwood  
 Joel Dunn  
 Elton Daniels  
 Will Deaton  
 Peter Varney  
 Greg Cotten  
 Abdul Baloch  
 Kelly Cook  
 Kena Cofield-Jones  
 Chris Ballard  
 Charles Williams  
 Brad Kerr  
 Robert Hassell  
 Jayson Dawkins  
 Tim Bunt  
 Richard J. Rose

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr. Jim Johnson, Jr., Kenan-Flagler Business School  
 Professor Jeanne Milliken Bonds, Kenan-Flagler Business School  
 Allyson Davenport, Summer Intern, Kenan-Flagler Business School

**OPENING OF MEETING**

Mayor Pro Tem Richard Joyner called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. and called on City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney to introduce the agenda items.

City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney thanked the City Council for their willingness to meet an hour earlier than the regular scheduled time for Committee of the Whole meetings. She said the additional time is needed due to the length of the agenda.

Ms. Small-Toney advised the Council that the first item on today's agenda is a presentation on the Community Land Trust by Dr. Jim Johnson of the Kenan-Flagler Business School. She noted Dr. Johnson and his team were scheduled to make a presentation at the annual City Council Retreat but for unforeseen circumstances were

unable to do so. She said she is pleased that Dr. Johnson and his team are able to be here today.

The City Manager outlined the remaining agenda items and invited Dr. Johnson to the podium.

1. **COMMUNITY LAND TRUST** - Dr. Jim Johnson, Professor Jeanne Milliken Bonds and Summer Intern, Allyson Davenport

Dr. Johnson said he and his team are excited to be present today to share thoughts with the Council. He said they have been working with the City for the past fifteen (15) months in a pandemic-driven strategy to create a more inclusive and equitable community. He said during this time his team has worked with a total of 26 southern cities and he suggested that "Rocky Mount is the place" and has a wonderful opportunity to become "the" prototype, not just in North Carolina but in the nation for how to create equitable and inclusive development. He said in this post-COVID area the communities that had moratorium benefits for mortgages and grants will be facing challenges and referred to the challenge as an impending post-COVID cliff. He said his team is in the process of developing a land trust and the City has a unique propitious opportunity to develop a more inclusive supply chain management system that leverages City contracting and procurement to grown historically underutilized businesses and create a workforce that is engaged in not only affordable housing but bringing business development to the City and the broader community. He said the model being proposed is a sustainable model with the following three goals:

- 1) Minimizing impact on the physical environment;
- 2) Engaging in principles of social equity and justice; and
- 3) Returning both great shareholder and stakeholder values.

He added it is through those three (3) lenses that the City can achieve equity and inclusive outcomes and create a sense of belonging.

*Councilmember Blackwell arrived\**

Dr. Johnson told the Council he knows the Council is committed to investing in a vision for inclusive and equitable development, but it will take more money than is available and the question is how they will pay for it. He said his team will share discussion and ideas on the concept and outlined the four (4) pillars of an inclusive and equitable development strategy as:

• **FOUR "PILLARS" OF AN INCLUSIVE & EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:**

- 1) Community Land Trust
  - Analysis
  - Plan with two pathways - City owned property/other property
  - Community training
- 2) Inclusive Supply Chain Management
  - Contracting
  - Procurement
- 3) Cross-Ward community mobilization and engagement strategy
  - Collective ambition training
  - Management Service Organization
- 4) Impact Investing Strategies

Dr. Johnson introduced Professor Jeanne Bonds and newly graduated and former student, Allyson Davenport, to continue the presentation. Professor Bond provided a refresher to remind Council:

- A Community Land Trust:
  - Is a non-profit (separately incorporated entity);
  - Can develop or redevelop properties;
  - Can provide a pathway to affordable homeownership (land remains held by the non-profit; purchasers will purchase housing only; reduces costs of housing)

She outlined the secondary functions of a Community Land Trust to include:

- Homebuyer education classes
- Help with loans for repairs and energy efficiency work
- Training for youth and adults (specialty trades, construction, remodeling; vision is to improve equity and inclusiveness of businesses that will build housing and provide opportunity to create businesses and include home-grown workforce)
- Green spaces and urban gardens
- Concept for healthy aging (older population are looking for housing)

Professor Bonds continued her presentation by explaining that a community land trust (CLT) is a non-profit, community-based housing program designed to promote housing affordability for low-income families. She explained that a CLT works by:

- Using capital acquired from private donors; federal housing subsidies; City-owned property; community foundations; and/or neighborhood associations to acquire or rehabilitate homes/land

She added that:

- The CLT will own and manage the land permanently (removes land from the housing market);
- Land ownership is separate from homeownership;
- The CLT minimizes the impact of housing price inflation and gentrification, maintaining long-term affordability; and
- Low-income residents can build equity and credit while avoiding foreclosure and frequent moves

Professor Bonds continued her presentation. Some of her main points are outlined below:

- Cycle of Permanent affordability:
  - is created by allowing the resident to sell their house at a price set by the CLT, earning a portion of the increase in the value of the home while the CLT retains the land;
  - A new resident buys the house at an affordable price; and agrees to the same requirements for resale
- The process for creating a CLT was outlined to include:
  - Creating a non-profit with a Board and Bylaws;
  - Developing a Business Plan;
  - Incorporating and creating relationships with Neighborhood(s) Management Services; and
  - Creating various pathways for properties by funding
- An example of Community Land Trust Governance (Board of Directors) might include:
  - Possible Seven at-large representatives chosen for their experience;
  - Possible Seven resident representatives; and
  - Possible Seven public representatives and stakeholder intermediaries representing the City, CDC and/or Redevelopment Authority

- Areas for Community Gardens and/or Accessory Dwelling Units are often designated in CLTs; accessory dwellings could be built at the same time as the main units
- Steps taken by public policy students were identified as:
  - Reviewing current housing and renovation costs for affordable housing parcels under consideration;
  - Determining future potential properties for the CLT; and
  - Assessing funding sources and engaging community partners.

Allyson Davenport, summer intern and recent graduate of UNC Public Policy, told the Council that she along with four other policy students at UNC under the guidance of Dr. Johnson and Professor Bonds worked last semester on a Capstone project to develop and consider policy recommendations for a CLT in Rocky Mount. She said they created recommendations based on their analysis to see how a CLT would work here and best serve citizens relative to affordable funding and increasing home ownership. She said:

- The main deliverables were created along private funding;
- An analysis of 15 properties currently held by Self-help Credit Union (map provided and available online) was done and current ordinances were reviewed relative to compatibility with the goals of the CLT and a timeline created to try to establish the CLT and build momentum over time to show the promise of the CLT over time;
- The Self-Help properties are to be transferred to the CLT once it is established as a non-profit. She explained that descriptive property cards have been created for each of the 15 properties adding the plan for transfer and build/rehabilitation is for three properties to be completed in the first year, five in the second year and seven in the third year. She said the goal is to build momentum slowly and also in a way to ensure longevity of the CLT overtime.

Ms. Davenport told the Council two main criteria of consideration for properties are proximity (to establish a communal aspect) and property value. Emphasis was placed on vacant lots.

She explained the secondary pathway includes fourteen (14) City-owned properties for growth of the CLT and she and the other interns are currently working on recommendations for the secondary pathway. She added they foresee the recommendation being very similar to the first pathway in the size and general timeline of the growth of the CLT, being cluster plans for years one, two and three (three in year 1, three in year 2 and four in year 3). The City properties were identified as:

- **WARD ONE:**
  - 1110 Sycamore Street
  - 1341 Laurel Court
- **WARD TWO:**
  - 502 Woodland Avenue
- **WARD THREE:**
  - 308 Smith Street
  - 316 S. Discovery Street
  - 1733 Pender Street
- **WARD FOUR:**
  - 811-815 Hammond Street
  - 114 S. Tillery Street
  - 700-710 Sunset Avenue
  - 206-210 N. Pine Street

Ms. Davenport noted that four (4) properties have been added to the original ten (10) properties outlined above. She said these properties are close to the Self-Help properties and the team is working on seeing which properties fit best within the evaluation criteria.

Professor Bonds identified activities underway to integrate City-owned properties into the other plan to have two pathways while understanding the sensitivity to cover the entire City across all wards:

- Services and planning for the CLT;
- Community training program;
- Plan for City properties much like the Self-Help properties;
- City property cards;
- Integration of private and City pathways;
- Business Plan (thinking specifically about the land management asset - how much will the homeowner pay; how much work will the land trust do relative to landscaping, fences, etc.)
  - Analysis of land management options
  - Specifics for properties

The City Council was advised that integration could include a Neighborhood Associations Management Services Corporation. She said there could be a corporation that works with the CLT and Neighborhood Associations to provide some protection in terms of liability should Neighborhood Associations want to undertake projects in their area. She added the Board for the Land Trust could pull from the Neighborhood Associations to strengthen the connection between the CLT and the Neighborhood Associations. Professor Bonds stated the Management Services Corporation could help with procurement, contracting, supply chain and financial services.

Dr. Johnson continued the presentation by adding the bottom line is how to build an ecosystem that enables the City to execute on the ideas presented. He said the Rocky Mount "Spheres of Influence" model has been developed to be the nerve center that enables Neighborhood Associations to focus on the business of developing their neighborhoods so that finance, training, management and all those things are done under a single umbrella of management services to leverage the focus on affordable housing and thinking about how to create a pathway for the next generation of talent in the community of healthy, globally competitive young people. He said basically a roadmap is being created for communities to control their own destiny by helping them with complex technical resources they may need. He stated the first rule in inclusive, equitable development is that the City must lead. He reported that the State does not do a very good job of being inclusive and equitable in leveraging contract procurement and added that a study of community colleges and universities revealed they spend about 11% of their contracting and procuring dollars with historically underutilized businesses. He said another focus is to identify plan encore entrepreneurs to thrive and prosper and create a business succession plan.

Dr. Johnson' provided the Council with a "Built2Last Logic Model" and concluded the presentation by outlining the following anticipated outcomes:

- A more inclusive, equitable and sustainable City
- Sustainable workforce housing
- Core values and performances metric that demonstrate a commitment to inclusive and equitable development
- An effective supply chain management system that supports the growth and development of traditionally under-represented business enterprises

- A major investment tool that promotes shared prosperity by investing in ventures that improve the living arrangements and overall quality of life of the working poor

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney reminded the Council she has suggested the City commit \$3M of the American Rescue Plan funds for housing and \$1M for the Community Land Trust. She said the next presentation will include a more robust timeline. She added that the City has made great strides in the past two years under the Purchasing Manager in expanding the MWBE program.

Councilmember Daughtridge requested that the Council be provided the PowerPoint presentation outlined today. He asked for clarification that the properties to be included in the program will be removed from the tax base and Professor Bonds responded in the affirmative.

Dr. Johnson responded to questions from Councilmembers.

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Information only; no formal action**

**2. UPDATE - IMPLEMENTATION ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGIC PLAN -**  
Ken Hunter and Jayson Dawkins

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney called on Assistant to the City Manager for Budget & Evaluation, Ken Hunter, to provide an update relative to implementation of the Affordable Housing Strategic Plan with a special focus on the Community Land Trust and Housing Bond.

It was noted that staff presented the Rocky Mount Affordable Housing Strategic Plan to the City Council at the retreat in Asheville, North Carolina on April 8, 2021 and that in the months following that presentation staff has followed up with narrative updates and estimated budgetary costs on each of the fourteen (14) recommendations presented to Council on May 10. The City Council was advised that staff has added the following two (2) Council recommendations: 1) inclusion of residential solar technology; and 2) green building technology.

Mr. Hunter provided an update on the Affordable Housing Strategic Plan as a follow up to the presentation by Dr. Johnson and Professor Bond relative to Community Land Trusts along with an overall timeline for implementation of the recommendations. He outlined the recommendations to include:

- Creation of a Housing Trust Fund
- Creation of a Preservation Fund
- Creation of an Acquisition Fund
- Creation of a Community Land Trust (CLT)
- Revision of the Density Bonus Policy
- Increasing Construction of Multi-Family Housing near Major Transit Stations
- Increasing Promotion of Accessory Dwelling Unit Policy
- Implementation of a Tax/Lien Foreclosure Policy
- Revising Minimum Parking Requirements
- Implementing a Receivership Program
- Passing a General Obligation Housing Bond
- Revising and adding to the Existing Definitions for Dwellings in the LDC
- Allowing Residential Housing in Commercial Districts
- Implementing a Residential Production Program
- Utilizing Solar Energy for New Construction and Home Rehabilitation

- Utilizing Green Building Practices for New Construction and Home Rehabilitation

Selected properties owned by the City or Redevelopment Commission targeted to be included in the initial implementation were identified as:

- Ward 1
  - Edgemont - 1110 Sycamore Street
  - Hillsdale - 1341 Laurel Court
- Ward 2
  - The Neighborhood (Holly Street) - 502 Woodland Avenue
- Ward 3
  - South Rocky Mount - 308 Smith Street
  - Downtown/The Neighborhood - 316 S. Discovery Street
  - Southeast Rocky Mount - 1733 Pender Street
- Ward 4
  - Villa Place - 811-815 Hammond Street  
114 S. Tillery Street
  - Happy Hill - 700-710 Sunset Avenue  
206-210 N. Pine Street

The location and a visual of each property was provided and it was explained that these properties are located in or next to the targeted neighborhoods to be included in the Affordable Housing Strategic Plan.

The City Council was provided with an implementation timeline for the next 18 months. It was explained that some policy related actions may be implemented quicker while others will take longer. Mr. Hunter stated the intent is to move forward with the implementation of the plan over the next 12 months.

Jayson Dawkins explained that the Affordable Housing Strategic Plan implementation will include: organization, implementation and action and guided the Council in reviewing a Gantt chart timeline for implementation. Council was advised that staff's goal is to achieve significant, measurable progress on each recommendation by the end of the 2021 calendar year with noticeable redevelopment activity being underway and, in some cases completed, by the end of FY 2022.

Councilmember Blackwell questioned if the City is patterning the program after Washington, DC adding that he is not in favor of the Washington, DC model. Councilmember Blackwell added that it is the vision of Council that once the plan is created it takes on a life of its own. Councilmember Knight stated that Council will want to approve the mission statement and may provide language to staff.

The City Manager called on Finance Director, Amy Staton, to provide an update relative to the general obligation bond. Ms. Staton told the Council that work is underway towards preparing for a general obligation bond to be on the ballot for voters and staff is analyzing existing and future debt along with financing and capital improvement plans for the next five (5) years.

The Council was advised that the City has a financial rating of AA. She provided an overview of the bond process adding that the next step will be for Council to adopt a resolution setting the process in motion and providing notice of intent to apply to the Local Government Corporation (LGC). She added that public education is also an important part of the process. Ms. Staton responded to questions from Councilmembers and advised that a vote on a housing bond would be expected to be on the referendum for November 2022.

In response to a question from Council, City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney responded that affordable housing is a broad



component, but no decision has been made as to what other specific projects are anticipated to be included in the bond.

The Finance Director reported that staff reviewed many different financing tools relative to financing of the Event Center and will look at a bond, but also other financing tools and opportunities as well for affordable housing.

Mayor Pro Tem Joyner stated the public education process should be aggressive and proactive and Councilmember Blackwell agreed. Councilmember Blackwell questioned who would be responsible for the public education aspect and the City Manager responded by saying she expects she will have a team with a project lead to work on building momentum to demonstrate to the community that the Council takes this matter seriously and has been aggressive about achieving this goal.

Ken Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Valuation provided additional information about the properties selected to initiate the first phase of the Affordable Housing Strategic Plan (all controlled by the City or the Redevelopment Commission). Councilmember Blackwell stated it is important that historical communities not be renamed.

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Information only; no formal action**

**CDBG PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS - Peter Varney**

Peter Varney, Interim Director of Community & Business Development reported that the City's CDBG public service allocation for FY 2021-2022 is \$77,163 and the City has received six (6) proposals seeking a total of \$145,565 in funding.

The Council was advised that the total amount of CDBG funds obligated for public service activities must not exceed 15% of the annual grant allocation. It was noted that a request for proposals was issued to local nonprofits from April 6 to May 17, 2021 and notice was published in the local newspaper for five weeks as well as posted on the City's webpage.

The City Council was further advised that pursuant to HUD guidelines all proposals must meet the following primary objective of the CDBG program: "the development of viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a sustainable living environment and expanding economic opportunities for persons of low- and moderate-income." The criteria of service providers and eligible activities were outlined along with CDBG funding priorities for the City.

It was noted that the City has received notice from HUD that the HOME Investment Partnerships Program - American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) is allocating \$1,476,477 to the Down East HOME Consortium and the City will receive a portion of those funds. Mr. Varney added that this allocation makes it possible for the City to meet funding requests in full but with a time delay for Ripple Effects Group, The Mercer Foundation and United Community Ministries. It was explained that the delay is due to staff being required to meet with the Down East HOME Consortium to agree on funding allocations by jurisdiction and developing a plan for utilizing funding. Mr. Varney added that once a plan is developed the City will need to advertise for public comment, conduct a public hearing and submit an amendment to HUD revising the budget for the Consortium which is expected to take 90-120 days.

Council was advised that staff has met with Ripple Effects, United Community Ministries and The Mercer Foundation representatives to review the proposed two-stage funding program and they have indicated approval and support. Mr. Varney added that the Ripple Effects Group representative has agreed to cover the rent for

Mrs. Harper until she is able to return to her home at 623 Branch Street.

The following recommendation for public service awards was presented for consideration by the City Council:

1) CDBG Public Service funding = \$77,163

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| Buck Leonard Association for Sports & Human Enrichment  | \$21,000        |
| Ripple Effects Group                                    | 19,163          |
| Rocky Mount Edgecombe Community Development Corporation | 30,000          |
| United Community Ministries - Bassett Center            | 7,000           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>\$77,163</b> |

2) HOME-ARP funding = \$1,476,477 (contingent upon HUD approval of Consortium's amended HOME budget - expected in 90-120 days):

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| Ripple Effects Group   | \$10,977        |
| The Mercer Foundation, Inc. (new applicant; located in Ward 2; provides transitional housing/financial assistance to Veterans) | 28,425          |
| United Community Ministries  | 30,000          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>\$69,402</b> |

3) Ripple Effect Group (HOME-ARP funding) - additional \$5,000 (to cover rent for Mrs. Harper pending rehabilitation/reconstruction of her home)

Councilmember Knight noted that My Sister's House was not included in the allocations and Mr. Varney responded they did not apply. Councilmember Knight stated he would like staff to reach out to My Sister's House prior to the vote on the annual budget. Mr. Varney responded that there may be an opportunity to provide assistance from ARP funding. Councilmember Blackwell added that The Lighthouse on Eastern Avenue also focuses on providing assistance to homeless women and women with substance abuse issues to aid them towards transitioning to stability.

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. No formal action**

**URGENT REPAIR PROGRAM (URP21) AND POLICIES - Peter Varney**

Interim Director of Community & Business Development, Peter Varney, reported that the City has applied for and was awarded \$100,000 by the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA) to provide urgent repairs to low-and very low-income homeowners within the City limits. He added that repairs will be done up to a total of \$10,000 per address and staff anticipates completing a minimum of twelve (12) projects. He added that it is anticipated that an additional allocation of \$150,000 will be received from the General Fund which will enable repairs to at least eight (8) additional homes.

Goals of the Program were outlined as:

- Alleviating housing conditions which pose an imminent threat to the life or safety of very low-income homeowners with special needs; and
- Providing accessibility modifications and other repairs necessary to prevent displacement of very low-income homeowners with special needs, such as the elderly and persons with disabilities

He told the Council most awards are to the elderly or to the elderly with disabilities and most repairs are relative to roof repair/replacement or HVAC issues. Council was advised that a change this year is that if the property is under minimum housing code, the scope of the work must satisfy all code violations.

Mr. Varney outlined program requirements and reported that funding sources for the past four (4) years include:

| Programs   | FY 2018-2019<br>Allocation<br>(URP18) | FY 2019-2020<br>Allocation<br>(URP19) | FY 2020-2021<br>Allocation<br>(URP20) | FY 2021-2022<br>Allocation<br>(URP21) |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Urgent Repair Program (URP) Grant                  | \$100,000                             | \$100,000                             | \$100,000                             | \$100,000                             |
| Rocky Mount General Fund – Local<br>Matching Funds | 150,000                               | 150,000                               | 150,000                               | 150,000                               |
| <b>Total Funds Committed</b>                       | <b>\$250,000</b>                      | <b>\$250,000</b>                      | <b>\$250,000</b>                      | <b>\$250,000</b>                      |

Mr. Varney reported that over the past three (3) years the City has helped sixty (60) very low-income households with disabilities and special needs, including seniors and veterans, with urgent repairs. He added that repairs not only fix homes but improve the quality of life and help homeowners age in place.

Mr. Varney responded to questions from Councilmembers.

Councilmember Knight voiced concern that funding allocations are depleted quickly and before the winter season. He questioned if additional funding can be allocated for winter assistance. City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney noted that the City is expecting to receive federal funding in the very near future and at this time staff is not fully aware of the eligible uses for the funding. She added this may qualify for funding and she hopes to be able to make recommendations to Council for the use of the funding soon.

Councilmember Blackwell stated he is aware there are more needs than funds but requested that as a follow-up to discussion held at the retreat that consideration be given to splitting the program for housing assistance to carve out a different pathway for investors as opposed to homeowners and take into consideration people who have needs but no upfront money. Mr. Varney reported that this matter is on the agenda for the Workforce Housing Advisory Commission for July 15 to have a discussion relative to a housing rebate policy. Discussion continued relative to waiting lists and funding.

Mr. Knight stated it was reported at the retreat that there are 400 dilapidated houses in the City. He questioned if they are occupied or unoccupied and the City Manager stated that information can be provided to Council. He questioned if there is an inventory of dilapidated houses.

Councilmember Miller left the meeting\*\*

Ms. Small-Toney called on Will Deaton, Director of Community Development. Mr. Deaton reported there is a list of deteriorated and dilapidated housing and the majority are privately owned. He stated that staff is gathering data to support the initiative and can supply a better number. Discussion continued.

Council was advised this matter will be on the June 28, 2021 City Council agenda for consideration of approval and adoption of policies and post approval documentation so that staff can submit the documents to the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency by June 30, 2021.

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

**CRIME STATISTICS** - Robert Hassell

Police Chief Robert Hassell presented a summary of city-wide crime numbers. It was noted that the presentation will cover crime incidents throughout the City currently and in comparison, with the prior year during the same time period. It was noted that crime numbers are tracked by the FBI and shared with the Bureau of Justice Statistics for tracking purposes.

An overview of Chief Hassell's PowerPoint presentation includes:

- 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 | May 2020 | May 2021 | +/- | YTD 2020 | YTD 2021 | +/- |
|---------------------|----------|----------|-----|----------|----------|-----|
| Total               | 175      | 166      | -9  | 783      | 718      | -65 |

- May 2021 crime numbers for murders, aggravated assault and shooting into occupied building(s)/vehicle(s) (map of location provided):
  - o Victims with injuries = 12
  - o Victims without injuries = 33
  - o Total victims = 46
  - o Cases cleared by arrest = 2
  - o Inactive cases = 4
  - o Open cases = 15
  - o Gang related = 1
- Aggravated assault cases and investigations:
  - o Aggravated assault cases = 23
  - o Aggravated assault victims = 46
  - o Number cases with multiple victims = 9
  - o Aggravated assault arrests = 2
  - o Aggravated assault cases cleared = 4
- Shots fired calls City-wide:
  - o Shots fired/heard = 94
  - o Calls resulting in shell casings found = 36
  - o Number shell casings found = 204
  - o Number of Firearms Seized = 37
  - o Number firearms seized (year to date) = 193
  - o Weapon violation arrests = 11
- Community Involvement:
  - o **Police Athletic Program** - softball and baseball games concluded and 10U boys won the championship; 12U girls were runner-up
  - o **Junior Police Academy** - will be July 19-23, 2021; currently accepting applications
  - o **Active Shooter Training** - has begun for all City employees and will include survival techniques during an active shooter event; training will include lecture and practical exercises

Chief Hassell advised he has met with citizens and stakeholders and will continue the onboarding process.

**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.

\*\*\*\*\*

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION.** Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge and unanimously carried that the City Council enter into Closed Session at 6:22 p.m.

The minutes of the Closed Session shall be placed on file as **ESM-580** at the end of **Minute Book 37** upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

\*\*\*\*\*

**REGULAR SESSION/ADJOURNMENT.** The Mayor Pro Tem convened the Committee in regular session at 7:05 p.m. and, without opposition, adjourned the Committee of the Whole meeting.

**COMMUNITY UPDATE BY CITY MANAGER**

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

- Began her report by sharing that the City will be welcoming members of Elizabeth City State University and Fayetteville State University at noon on Monday, July 19 for a press conference in advance of the Down East Viking Football Classic. The annual event is returning to Rocky Mount this season after a year off due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The game will be held Saturday, September 4 at the Rocky Mount Athletic Stadium. Monday's press conference will be streamed live on the City's social media page and citizens are encouraged to stay connected for more information on the Classic as we get closer to the return of CIAA football to Rocky Mount;
- Reported that the City is set to hold the third installment of the #RockyMount4All Virtual Town Hall Series on Tuesday, July 20 at 7 p.m. The session will focus on Affordable Housing. Ms. Small-Toney stated that she will be joined by members of staff as well as community stakeholders. Most important – YOU are invited to participate. Please visit the City of Rocky Mount's Facebook page for the information to join the virtual session, which will be broadcast live on the City's Facebook and YouTube channels. For more information or to share your views, email the City at [outreach@rockymountnc.gov](mailto:outreach@rockymountnc.gov).
- Stated that the Minority Women Business Enterprise Program is holding its next quarterly virtual session "Added Value,#ContractReady" on Friday, July 23 from 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Staff and guests will educate business owners about bidding procedures, share an interactive walkthrough of the City's bid templates and more. Registration is free, and links are available via Eventbrite.com and the City's social media pages. Call 252-972-1236 for more information.
- Advised that the Spring and Summer is also bringing the return of the Summer Night Lights Series. The Series continues this Friday, July 16 at Martin Luther King Jr. Park and will be held every Friday from 6-8 p.m. at various city parks through the month of August. The event is free and offers field games, family fun, music and hot dog snack packs. In addition, some of these events will feature an opportunity to meet and speak with the new Chief of Police, Robert Hassell. For more information, contact the Parks and Recreation Department at 252-467-4902.
- Stated that 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 whose 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.

- Reported that the City’s Tar River Transit service has extended its offering of 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 or 252-972-1515. 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 August 31. Visit [tarrivertransit.org](http://tarrivertransit.org) regarding more information about general routes and services.

#### 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:

- ***Dr. Kim E. Koo:***
  - Stated she is a member of the Rocky Mount Racial Justice Group and the Black Power Coalition;
  - Said nothing happens in a vacuum and everything needs to be put in context and SB 473 needs to be put in context and the following questions asked: Who initiated it and why? What was the reason behind it? What was the context of what is happening and what it is supposed to do?;
  - Said for decades, the Black side of Rocky Mount has been disinvested, marginalized and left to deteriorate but under a new Black majority on the City Council that side of the City is gradually seeing progress intentionally brought about to right a terrible historical wrong;
  - Said folks who do not think they are racist, but objectively do the work of racists are those who fight tooth and nail at every step to turn back the clock and keep the poor poorer and the Edgecombe side of the City continuing to decay;
  - Said SB 473 with this sudden self-righteous rediscovery of accountability and transparency is used by the racist cabal in the North Carolina legislature to push back the clock and is part of a national trend to beat back popular resistance characterized by the Black Lives Matter movement and fueled by the continued deterioration of living conditions;
  - Said that rents cannot be paid, mortgages are due and lives have been lost from negligent disregard due to a pandemic;
  - Said the state of violence against Black people due to incredibly low wages and terrible working conditions are some of the real issues the legislature should be concerned about;
  - Said the right-wing push is national and January 6<sup>th</sup> is the tip of the iceberg;
  - Said HB 805 outlawed legitimate protests under the disguise of preventing riots and vandalism;
  - Said the Supreme Court’s endorsement of Arizona's anti-democratic laws, the denial of critical race theory by targeting individuals, Nicole Hannah Jones in UNC Chapel Hill, and Cornell West in Harvard, and most recently, the book “Forget the Alamo” was prevented from being presented in the Texas State History Museum;
  - Said it is her contention that anyone here who actively supports SB 473 becomes a pawn of the races and is doing their dirty work for them;
  - Supported adoption of a City Council resolution to repudiate the state legislature for taking away democratic rights;

- Said the removal of Black power in this City can only bring a halt to this urgent task of bringing people out of poverty and restoring a measure of equality
- ***Susan Perry Cole:***
    - Said she is speaking tonight to call attention to the threat the current controversy over passage of SB 473 poses to concerned residents who are interested in improving housing conditions and neighborhood level inequities in under-resourced neighborhoods where blight and disinvestment have prevailed for far too long;
    - Said the ongoing controversy about SB 473, which is constantly being repackaged in a series of front-page headlines in our local newspaper, obscures a set of real crises that need fixing;
    - Said following the massive economic dislocation resulting from the surge of COVID-19 that began in 2020 many of the City's most vulnerable residents are still struggling to make ends meet as they confront enormous challenges with housing instability;
    - Stated the most pressing and widespread form of displacement: eviction, is threatening to reach epidemic proportions in North Carolina and today she reviewed data compiled by the North Carolina Justice Center indicating some 17% of North Carolina renters reported their households were behind in rent;
    - Said according to the Justice Center's report, the Census Bureau's household pulse survey sample suggests that nearly 400,000 North Carolina renters are behind on rent and 28% of South Carolina adults reported their household often had trouble affording usual expenses in the past 7 days;
    - Said the survey points to discrepancies in hardship across race and nationwide Blacks and Latino adults are two times as likely to report these hardships as white adults;
    - Pinpointed another set of housing challenges plaguing Rocky Mount that cries out for attention as being following decades of under-building and under-investment, North Carolina's housing and Rocky Mount's housing stock, especially in under-resourced neighborhoods is dire;
    - Said with a chronic shortage of affordable and available homes to house the City's most needy residents, of which 15.2% of such households are cost burdened, the housing stock in these disinvested neighborhoods, which are predominantly African American and impoverished, has been neglected;
    - Said a severe lack of new construction and prolonged underinvestment has led to an acute shortage of available housing, an ever-worsening affordability crisis in existing housing stock that is aging and increasingly in need of repair, all to the detriment of the health of the public and the City's economy
  - ***Nehemiah Smith, Jr.:***
    - Said this Council should, without reservation, compose and submit a resolution condemning SB 473;
    - Said accountability and transparency are not foreign concepts to the law and the General Statutes cover the very issues the author of SB 473 says it was written to address however, in his opinion, it is a failed attempt at codifying ethics and in the attempt is vague and does not define "association";
    - Stated it changes the very nature of the Office of the State Auditor from investigation and referral to that of law enforcement;
    - Said Reverend Dr. Lawrence Carter, who was the Dean of the Chapel at Martin Luther King, Jr, Interdenominational Chapel at Morehouse College, told him ethics is about good and bad;
    - Said lately ethics has become about better and worse and anybody that ascribes to ethics that are better and worse are easily manipulated, because that is highly subjective;

- Urged all to say no to this bill and let that opposition be known, adding it is not about a \$47,000 light bill; it is not about a Councilman; it's not about a Director of a three-letter organization – it is about changing the very nature of the powers that the State Auditor and the LGC would have and citizens need to stop that by telling them “We won’t have it”;
  - Said those that ask for and want help are 501(c)(3) agencies and if SB 473 is approved it can be interpreted that if a Councilmember is a member of a church, or part of a fraternity or sorority, they are criminal if they have a loose association with a person or organization and the result will be that nobody gets anything and perhaps that is the desire;
  - Encouraged Council to continue to do the good work they are doing
- **Brandon Higson:**
- Said he is a resident of rural Nash County and stands in unity and solidarity with friends, local communities and allies to oppose SB 473;
  - Called for City and state leaders to likewise oppose and repudiate this harmful bill;
  - Said many see through the smoke screens and hypocrisy of this bill to acknowledge it is truly an attack on Black leadership, voting rights and the progress made by Black communities in this City;
  - Said these leaders ignore the corruption of their own leaders and insist on seeking to dismantle progress in this City, on the backs of Black elected officials, and the progress they have brought for the sake of the entire community, and especially for communities of color, as well as the poor and disenfranchised;
  - Urged citizens not let Rocky Mount become another city where the progress of Black leaders and Black power is lost in history;
  - Quoted Councilman Blackwell saying “come out of the shadows” and urged all to question this bill, question the motives behind it and stand with the Black community of this City
- **Cooper Blackwell:**
- Said he is a part of a united front with the Black Power Coalition;
  - Said they believe that under the guise of transparency and accountability SB 473 is being pushed to give the Auditor more power and it is using the LGC as a tool to stop projects and development in Black neighborhoods;
  - Said the Auditor has spent over 4,058 hours investigating the City and over \$450,000 of taxpayer’s money to find nothing and the City submitted a substantial response to her findings;
  - Said all of the findings of the audit were about Black officials and he has 458 screenshots uploaded into OneDrive, that date back to 2019 from Rocky Mount Concerned Citizens and White supremacists who have colluded to get the Auditor to come to investigate the City and oust Councilman Knight and Councilman Blackwell;
  - Said he has pictures of people that used to work for the City standing in front of the Auditor's office making nasty comments about wishing our Council were wearing orange jumpsuits;
  - Said information was seemingly leaked about the audit before it was even released;
  - Said this fight has been fought for a long time and the evidence is there;
  - Stated the Concerned Citizens, Fighting Crime and Rocky Mount United FB pages have been fighting and a lot of people fighting for the interests of Rocky Mount don't live here or invest here or invest in Black neighborhoods;
  - Said there was a successful event this weekend Downtown at Moe and D’s with Black officers that stood and protected them and there were no altercations;



- Said a White Officer questioned if they had a sound permit at the event and said their music was too loud; he said the Downtown is a business district and Downtown is thriving;
  - Said he has asked Councilmember Walker to support a resolution in opposition to SB 473 and is asking the rest of the Council to do the same and promise to stand with the Black community in its time of need and uplift Black leaders who have brought the City out of a racist systemic system over the last 20 years
- ***Mysha Lynch:***
- Spoke in opposition to SB 473 saying “kill the bill and stop the intentional attack on Black leadership”;
  - Said the power of the vote is what America is all about and suppression of such votes is just as much a part of American conduct and culture;
  - Said Rocky Mount wasn't always governed by way of wards, and its Council didn't always represent all people that live within the City limits;
  - Said generations of such legislation led to the most disenfranchised members of the community remaining in the state of degradation;
  - Said in 1983 wards were implemented within the government of Rocky Mount to ensure that all members of the communities’ democratic powers of voting were met with equity and direct representation;
  - Said this bill is a direct assault on such things and is trying to take the power of the people, which is the American vote; and actively trying to take away democracy by saying what people ask for is not good enough;
  - Requested Council draft, appeal and put into work a Resolution to stop SB 473
- ***Samuel Battle:***
- Said a lot of people are coming today in opposition to SB 473; said it is mostly White people who sit on boards and they are the ones who will be most affected by the bill;
  - Said the only people who have a problem with SB 473 are in Rocky Mount; and no one is talking about what needs to be done for the kids;
  - Questioned what has to be done to get more funding for the kids;
  - Said no one is speaking on behalf of Herman T. who has been Downtown for 61 years; said most on the Council have had a relationship with him and the City is trying to take his property by eminent domain;
  - Said he does not trust anyone on the Council and he represents the Black and poor people in this community; said his people aren’t getting any money;
  - Said people whose utilities are getting turned off for a \$1 light bill that have to pay \$20 for reconnection need to be asked what they think; said Council is not seen in the Black communities;
  - Said some Councilmembers need to be removed and voiced support for SB 473
- ***Eden Curtiss:***
- Said by now Council has heard many concerns about SB 473 and should know by now why it is a problem;
  - Said she has been thinking about the challenges of being a woman in society and it's hard to live in a world that was created by men for men because over the years there have been constant attacks that threaten the power of nonmen;
  - Said she realizes this feeling is shared by the majority of people in Rocky Mount because until recently, the City has either pushed away Black leadership or has unfairly tried to distinguish it;
  - Said to have a history of attacks on the majority of the City is pathetic, unfair and cruel and it is clear that SB 473 will attempt to limit Black leadership across the state, not only in Rocky Mount, and increase the power of the State Auditor when

fair punishments are already in place adding the bill repeats punishments, proposing them as new solutions;

- Said as a representative of the people in a majority Black city, she is asking Council to do two things: First, please read this bill so that you too can understand the problems that we're all seeing; and Second, help build a City for your city members;
  - Said creating and passing a resolution opposing this bill is not unrealistic or unreasonable and she is asking Council to support their people;
  - Said 90 letters have been sent to North Carolina Congress members and other support to multiple North Carolina Senators;
  - Said since she is not supposed to address specific people, she will just say as a Councilmember so eloquently said at last meeting whatever actions you take will be recorded in history
- ***Quatoshia Hill:***
- Said she spoke at the Council meeting on June 14 of this year and came to explain an event in the Holly Street community and how successful it was and how it brought different people from different areas of the City together and different age groups;
  - Said since the event the park is being used; every day 15 to 20 kids are in the park and they are cooking hot dogs for the kids using their own money;
  - Said this weekend they had snowballs for the kids;
  - Asked the Council to support the community following the rebuilding of Holly Street Park; said she helped rebuild the park and their kids are looking at events being held in other parks and questioning why Holly Street Park is not on the list for events;
  - Asked why it was rebuilt if it was not going to be used and they have been using their own money to show the City they are ready to use the park;
  - Said she sent out a letter and is working with Councilmember Knight and the Mayor to get a movie night in the park;
  - Said the location of a park does not matter to a child and she is trying to get a movie night there because those kids in that community do not have access to parks across town;
  - Said the Police have been awesome and attended their event over the weekend and there is no violence in the park;
  - Said she just left the park and about 20 kids were there and the guys were putting hot dogs on the grill again today and cooking fish;
  - Said they are having a good time and needs the City to stand with them;
  - Said they want to have a basketball tournament;
  - Added they need running water, a bathroom and lights in Holly Street Park
- ***Crystal Anderson:***
- Said she is a new resident to the Rocky Mount area and is from Florida;
  - Said she has been here for about three months and it has been a transition;
  - Said she agrees with the person before her and says she lives in Ward 3 but visits Holly Street Park and the park is beautiful and she enjoys it;
  - Said she always wonders why there aren't many kids there and it does her heart good to know there are more activities going on at the park and kids are coming out;
  - Said she is asking for the same equipment at Holly Street Park as in other parks;
  - Questioned how someone wanting to do work for the City can submit an RFP adding she is glad to see the minority woman's association is going to be having a meeting; said some need assistance with filling out the contracts;

- Asked that the City offer more timeframes for submitting bids so individuals that are working and don't have the availability to come early in the morning can come in the afternoons to the mandatory meetings
- **Bronson Williams:**
  - Said on May 1, 1992 a man in California asked “why can't we all just get along?”;
  - Said he has no issues in regard to transparency in public government but believes there should be some checks and balances; said SB 473 takes away checks and balances and gives the State Auditor new authority with zero checks and balances except through the court system;
  - Said while he personally believes the verbiage of the bill is not racist, he believes the spirit of the bill was undergirded by those who are not fans of how the City is directing dollars to areas once neglected and the fight of the City is long overdue;
  - Said when it is said the bill will not affect those people who are not sitting on boards because of their skin color makes zero sense because a lot of nonprofits are benefited by everybody, not just Black folks, not just the White folks, but everybody;
  - Said if a nonprofit does not have the opportunity to meet their financial obligations because of the lack of support received from cities and towns across the state that is a problem;
  - Said they say when you're digging one ditch, be sure you dig another because the one you dig just might be for you;
  - Encouraged the City Council without any reservation to demand the House to modify the bill because it makes zero sense, especially when it uses words like association and no clear understanding or definitions is given for what it means;
  - Said if you have an Auditor who can give a response and because her evidence is irrefutable gives evidence as to why the bill is flawed;
  - Asked the Council to ask other cities and municipalities across the state to also join in this fight because it's a state issue, not just a City of Rocky Mount issue because it's having impact across the state;
  - Said the North Carolina League of Municipalities should be speaking out against the bill because it will do harm to everybody in the City of Rocky Mount and in the state

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

#### **CONSENT AGENDA**

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

- Request from the City of Rocky Mount Public Works Department for permission to close the following streets for the Rocky Mount Fire Department's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary from 6:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. on Saturday, July 17, 2021 (*ordinance adoption requirement of NCDOT standards*):

South Church Street (US 301 Business) from Andrews Street to Nash Street, Hammond Street from South Franklin Street (US 301 Bus) to SW Main Street, SW Main Street from Hammond Street to a point 200 feet north of Hammond Street and Coastline Street

##### **B. GRANT/EDWARD BYRNE MEMORIAL JUSTICE ASSISTANCE (JAG 2021) (recommended for approval):**

The City Council was advised that the City is eligible to receive \$38,909 through the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance, in the form of the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) for 2021. They were

further advised that these funds which are normally received each year are typically used by the Police Department to purchase equipment items that it is unable to acquire through normal budgetary channels and, if awarded, the funds will be shared with the Nash County Sheriff's office in a 60/40 split (Nash County share = \$15,563.60; City share - \$23,345.40). The City Council was notified that funding can be used to purchase equipment and supplies and the planned use is to purchase community engagement software.

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the Consent Agenda be approved and that **Ordinance No. O-2021-59** entitled **ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT DECLARING A TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE FOR THE ROCKY MOUNT FIRE DEPARTMENT'S 125<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY** be adopted; that staff be authorized to submit the grant application for the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Grant; and that the Mayor, City Clerk and/or appropriate staff be authorized to execute any required documentation, including the final application and subsequent grant agreement, certifications and assurances on behalf of the City.

**PUBLIC HEARING/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The City Council was provided with an Economic Development Incentive Agreement with Ripe, Inc. (Ripe Revival). The Council was advised that Ripe Revival is a local organization operating a fresh produce order and delivery business supporting family farmers and providing access to fresh produce through delivery and distribution of produce boxes to the Rocky Mount community. The Council was further advised that the company has requested assistance with the cost of connecting their facility at 161 English Road with the City sewer in order to expand its operations to continue to serve the needs of the community as well as to create additional jobs from expansion of on-site production.

It was noted that the incentive agreement establishes that the City will pay Ripe Revival an amount not to exceed \$22,564, which includes: \$5,080 in sewer main capacity fees and \$17,484 for connection of the facility to the City's sewer main. Additionally, Ripe Revival agrees to hire at least four (4) additional staff to work at the facility for at least two (2) consecutive years.

Council was advised that a public hearing is required. Mayor C. Saunders Roberson, Jr. opened a public hearing relative to the economic incentive agreement. No one appeared and the Mayor closed the public hearing.

Notice of the intent of the City Council to consider entering into an economic development incentive agreement with Ripe, Inc. (Ripe Revival) was published in the Rocky Mount Telegram on July 1, 2021.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the Economic Development Incentive Agreement with Ripe, Inc. (Ripe Revival) be approved and that the Mayor be authorized to execute the agreement **(C-2021-23)** on behalf of the City.

**CDBG FUNDING/THE WRIGHT'S CENTER ROOF REPLACEMENT**

The City Council was advised that The Wright's Center is an adult day care facility located at 513 W. Raleigh Boulevard that has been closed for more than a year due to the COVID pandemic. They were further advised that in preparation to re-open the facility it was discovered that the roof is leaking and quotes have been obtained from three (3) roofing companies.

Interim Director of Community & Business Development Peter Varney reported that the facility has requested funding assistance from the City to cover the cost of replacing the roof. He advised that CDBG funding is available from FY 2018, 2019 and 2020 that could be allocated for this purpose and recommended that an allocation of \$33,000 be provided for the roof replacement with a contingency of \$12,000 to cover the cost of any unforeseen work that may be discovered when the existing roof is removed.

The City Council was provided with an agreement with The Wright's Center, Inc. for roof replacement.

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the agreement for repair of a community facility (The Wright's Center) using CDGB public facility funds of \$45,000 (\$33,000, plus a \$12,000 contingency) be approved, as recommended, and that the City Manager and City Clerk and such other staff as necessary be authorized to execute the agreement and any other necessary documentation **(C-2021-24)** on behalf of the City.

**GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCES/FORFEITURE FUNDS**

The City Council was advised that the City receives drug forfeiture funds from federal and state agencies and historically these funds have been reported in a fiduciary (custodial) fund. They were further advised that pursuant to Governmental Accounting Standards, these funds no longer qualify as fiduciary funds and may be reported in a special revenue fund.

The Council received Grant Project Ordinances relocating the funds from the fiduciary fund to the public safety special revenue fund.

Motion was made by Councilmember Miller, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the following ordinances be adopted:

- a. **Ordinance No. O-2021-60** entitled **GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE/STATE FORFEITURE FUNDS (\$32,000)**;

- b. **Ordinance No. O-2021-61** entitled **GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE/FEDERAL FORFEITURE FUNDS (\$257,000)**; and
- c. **Ordinance No. O-2021-62** entitled **GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE/TREASURY FORFEITURE FUNDS (\$80,000)**.

**SOLE-SOURCE PURCHASE/FUSUS SOFTWARE PLATFORM**

The City Council received a request for approval for a sole source waiver of competition to purchase the Fusus Software Platform. It was noted that TEI Innovation is the sole distributor for Fusus. Council was advised that the initial purchase will include five (5) FususCORE appliances to support up to thirty (30) cameras per FususCORE and the Purchasing Division recommends the waiver of competition in accordance with the "sole-source" purchase pursuant to G.S. 143-129(e) (6) based on standardization or compatibility. The information furnished by the Purchasing Division supporting the recommendation will be placed on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2021-12**.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge seconded by Councilmember Walker and unanimously carried that the "sole-source" purchase for the Fusus Software Platform from TEI Innovation at a total cost of \$195,000 over a three-year term (\$65,000 first year) be approved and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the bid contract on behalf of the City.

**ELECTRIC SERVICE AGREEMENT/LOWE'S HOME CENTERS, INC.**

The City Council received an electric service agreement with Lowe's Home Centers, LLC that outlines the terms and conditions for the purchase of electric power and supersedes the agreement approved by Council on May 27, 2008.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried that the electric service agreement with Lowe's Home Centers, LLC (**C-2021-25**) be approved and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the same on behalf of the City.

**APPOINTMENT**

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that Keisha Spivey be reappointed to the Workforce Housing Advisory Commission as the Ward 4 representative for a term to expire June 30, 2024.

**COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS**

Upon request, Mayor Roberson recognized Councilmember Blackwell for comment.

Councilmember Blackwell said that he appreciates everybody who comes to hear and participate in the conversation and appreciates their presence and involvement. He added he would like to address two things. A summary of his comments are:

- 1) Investing in Young People: Mr. Blackwell told those present that all anyone has to do is to stay for a Council meeting and see the

number of activities Council funds through numerous nonprofits and organizations across the City and see the activities that are taking place. He stated if one looks at the budget of Parks and Recreation, which is solely dedicated to uplift and build up young lives, middle aged lives and senior lives throughout the entire City and to look at the parks that Council has been very intentional about investing in to see that people are at the forefront of the minds of the City Council. He stated that all one has to do is compare what Rocky Mount did look like to what it is today and what it continues to be to know where this Council stands on people and all people.

- 2) SB 473: Mr. Blackwell said he especially wants to actively embrace the opposition to SB 473 and requested that the City Manager draft something for Council to review so they can weigh in on and vote on this matter. He said he has a problem with SB 473 because it is calling some Rocky Mount elected officials corrupt and it was inspired by an investigative report by the State Auditor. He said he takes umbrage to that because he remembers when the Town Manager in a neighboring city literally stole hundreds of thousands of dollars and there is no bill in that person's name. Mr. Blackwell stated until 20 years ago, the Planning Board in Rocky Mount was comprised of almost solely developers until the people had an opportunity to elect individuals that reflected their perspectives. He stated that at almost every Planning Board meeting, people had to recuse themselves because they all had developments in place and nobody talked about transparency and accountability then. Mr. Blackwell said it is real interesting how nomenclature around Black elected officials and Black appointed officials and concerns about the kind of food they eat and where they sleep is only an issue when certain people are in certain in seats. He said everybody sits back and thinks that's okay and that is a result of internalized oppression and the normalizing of slavery and for people to have conversations to say "you can't talk about what actually happened", indicates there is a real sickness in our City and in our nation. Councilmember Blackwell stated because he is in healthcare, he doesn't like to be sick and stay sick, but likes to get well and the only way to get well is to apply healing and a change in behavior to those things that make you sick. He said one of the things that makes him sick is unsubstantiated allegations that some people like to say are facts and truth. He added that audits are opinions and are established by individuals who are supposed to be governed by standards of proof. He stated because Councilmembers disagree with an opinion, but still bring benefit, change and improvement to process does not make them corrupt. He said corruption to him is saying it's okay to invest on one side of the street and not okay to invest on another side of the street. He stated corruption is clear you when someone has lunch with a person with a political perspective and then codifies those concepts, beliefs and opinions into a format that brings collusions of guilt and it is also not transparent.

Councilmember Blackwell said corruption is looking on social media and knowing what the Auditor was getting ready to do before she came here and did it and then saying it is a fair report. He said what happened in Rocky Mount has happened all across the state and when conversations are held with Black elected officials from the mountains to the coast, they report of their interaction with the State Auditor's Office and once can begin to see a strand and a connection that not transparent, accountable or objective.

He thanked those present and the voices of support saying the way that people have stood up is appreciated and he appreciates the opportunity for them to make their perspective known and bring some equity and parity into this conversation.

He stated SB 473 might roll through the General Assembly but what happened in 1898 will not happen without opposition this time and will not happen without truth being called to power. He said Councilmembers speak truth to the power in the General Assembly while the Governor is sitting back watching and waiting for something to hit his desk. He asked Governor Cooper to be ready to veto on behalf of the Black and Brown people that helped elect him.

Mayor Roberson recognized Councilmember Knight.

Councilmember Knight appreciated Ms. Hill for the work she is doing at Holly Street Park. He said he is hopeful that Assistant City Manager Elton Daniels and Parks and Recreation Director Joel Dunn will look into planning activities at Holly Street Park.

He acknowledged Councilmember Blackwell, Ms. Mae Parker and others who have been on the forefront of advocating for Holly Street Park for a long time and said the activities going on there now are appreciated and voiced hope that the interest in the park can be sustained by having other activities similar to those throughout the City.

Mr. Knight said that people have been texting and calling him to tell him not to say anything. He asked if those present have ever known him not to say anything. He said when he was elected he said he was "unbossed" and "unbought" and regardless of how his character is being attacked, how he is being framed and regardless of someone wanting to make a bill retroactive to put someone in jail, there is no evidence of the claims. He said the bill that was inspired by a Senator inspired him to do some research. Mr. Knight said in 2013, the same person that was inspired to introduce SB 473 had a family member that was indicted for fraud. Mr. Knight said he wants to say to his constituents and to the City that Reverend Lee, who was the NAACP president for over 40 years, said he came to Rocky Mount to die. He said he is from here and came here to die wants to die with the people knowing he is serving them.

He said he denounces what was put in the Auditor's report adding he is not the person the media has tried to stereotype him as along with other Black elected officials. He said he wants the citizens to know his character.

He said more than nine or ten people, especially young people, and also Susan Perry Cole helped litigate the ward system in Rocky Mount so that the Councilmembers can sit on this dais and govern this City.

He thanked Susan Perry Cole, Naomi Green and others and the young people who have asked Council how to oppose SB 473. Councilmember Knight said even if the bill is passed these people will be on the right side of history. He added that the bill may not particularly say that it is racist, but everyone knows Councilmembers were targeted. He said it is not just about Rocky



Mount but about all audit reports across eastern North Carolina and one can connect the dots and see why cities with a majority rule by people who don't look like him don't have bills inspired by them, or have had their name smeared, or cartoons written or drawn about them. He stated that he opposes SB 473 and will continue to fight the fight.

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

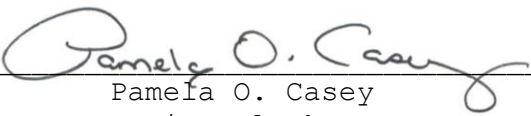
A closed session was requested for matters concerning attorney-client privilege and personnel.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the City Council enter into Closed Session at 8:07 p.m. The minutes of the Closed Session shall be filed as **ESM-583** at the end of **Minute Book 37** upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

\*\*\*\*\*

**OPEN SESSION/ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the City Council return to open session at 8:52 p.m. and there being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Pamela O. Casey  
 City Clerk