

November 1, 2021

The City Council of the City of Rocky Mount met this day in a Special Called meeting scheduled for 6:00 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.

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

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

*Councilmember Blackwell participated remotely.

**Councilmember absent: T.J. Walker.

Staff present: Rochelle Small-Toney, City Manager; Pamela O. Casey, City Clerk; Elton Daniels, Assistant City Manager; Jessie Nunery, Interim Director of Communications and Marketing; Mark Adcox, Video Production Specialist; Robin Cox, Communications Specialist; Latasha Hall, Director of Business and Collections Services; Joel Dunn, Parks and Recreation Director; Abdul Baloch, Chief Internal Auditor; Chris Beschler, Director of Energy Resources; Ken Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation; Archie Jones, Director of Human Relations; Robert Hassell, Police Chief; Brad Kerr, Public Works Director; Keyana Walston, Program Manager-Management Analyst; Brenton Bent, Water Resources Director; Kena Cofield-Jones, Human Resources Director; Gregory Cotten, Chief Technology Officer; Jayson Dawkins, Policy Analyst; Will Deaton, Development Services; Corey Mercer, Fire Chief; Michael Roupp, Assistant Chief of Operations; and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

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

CALL TO ORDER

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and announced today's meeting was called for the purpose of holding a public hearing relative to the proposed redistricting of the City's electoral wards. He stated that the three proposed Ward maps are on the City's website and a community-generated map has been provided as a fourth option. He outlined the guidelines for the public hearing, encouraged social distancing and advised that each speaker will be allotted five minutes.

REDISTRICTING/PUBLIC HEARING

The Mayor opened the public hearing relative to the proposed redistricting of the City's electoral wards and recognized the following speakers:

o ***Linwood Williams:***

- Said he is a resident of Ward 7 and will be a candidate for the City Council race in the upcoming election next year in March;
- Said as he considers the various district maps presented, he is concerned that Ward 7 is at risk of losing its political identity;

- Said in his travels throughout Ward 7 he has heard a variety of concerns about the new district maps and there has been a dominating theme - we want to stay together in our ward;
 - Said the proposed district maps (A, B and C) deny Ward 7 citizens the opportunity to stay together and the only map that keeps Ward 7 mostly intact is the one presented by the Community Academy. He stated for that reason, he would like to go on record supporting the community-generated map, providing the map meets the standard criteria tests;
 - He urged the Council to give this matter serious consideration adding that 10 years from now Rocky Mount, Tarboro and Nashville can be powerhouses of economic development and this region can become a greater magnet for business and industry, but healthy communities will be essential whether they are in Nash or Edgecombe County;
 - He said 10 years from now, the current second grade children of Rocky Mount will be approaching voting age and graduating from high school and asked if it would not be good if they could look back at this moment and see that the right thing was done
- **Robert Davis:**
- Said he is a resident of Ward 1 and is here to support the community map;
 - Said his support is based off history;
 - Said you don't have to be a native of Rocky Mount to see the effect of that, because he is not a native of the City;
 - Said when he came to the Rocky Mount, he was disturbed by a tee shirt that one of his co-workers had that said “you have entered Rocky Mount, North Carolina – set the clock back 20 years”;
 - Encouraged cooperation and not separation;
 - Said in the past 20 years the City has begun to move forward and is beginning to be healthy and grow and people are beginning to understand what it means to be a healthy community;
 - Said it is his understanding the City recently received an award for having healthy communities;
 - Said there are people in place now who know what a healthy community is, and they are trying to move the City forward;
 - Said he believes proposed maps A, B, and C will destroy the work to make the City healthy and voiced support of the community-generated map saying it will keep the City together and moving forward;
 - Said the City must continue to move forward which will help everyone

Mayor Roberson acknowledged and welcomed Councilmember Blackwell who is participating in the meeting remotely.

- **Dr. Kim E. Koo:**
- Said she resides in Ward 6;
 - Stated she was surprised to hear there was a special meeting today and is not really prepared to speak;
 - Said last week she went to the Nash County redistricting public hearing adding it was done surreptitiously and did not welcome public comment; she added those present asked for more time from Commissioners and the request was denied and a map that citizens disagreed with was chosen;
 - Said she asked herself “what is really democracy in this country?” questioning if it is just making a little mark every two, four or six years or is it listening to what the people want; said being locked in a two-party system that does not allow for third-party input resulting in running on a treadmill;
 - Stated she thinks City residents have shown an interest in being a part of the democratic process at a very basic level and to the point that they got together and have submitted a community-generated map;

- Said she hopes the community-generated map will benefit the community;
- Said Councilmembers are elected by the community and encouraged them to listen and work with the community as the community learns to self-govern, participate and be a part of the process and to consider adoption of the community-generated map as a true mark of real democracy

○ ***Theresa Alston Stokes:***

- Said she was going to make her comments simple and said “Do the right thing”

No one else appeared and the Mayor declared the public hearing closed noting that written comments will be accepted up to 24 hours after the public hearing in accordance with NCGS 166A-19.24 and comments can be submitted to the City Clerk at pamela.casey@rockymountnc.gov.
(NOTE: no written comments were received within the 24-hour period allotted)

DISCUSSION

Mayor Roberson opened the floor for discussion by Council and invited Councilmember comments.

Councilmember Knight thanked citizens for coming to the meeting and said Council has heard their concerns. He added that no vote on the redistricting maps will occur this evening.

Councilmember Joyner voiced appreciation to citizens in attendance and thanked those from the community who worked to generate the community map. He requested a timeline relative to the redistricting.

City Attorney Richard J. Rose stated it is expected that consideration of adoption of the ward map will be on the November 8th agenda. He said the City must notify the Edgecombe and Nash County Boards of Election as to whether the maps can be delivered by November 7 and, if not, the final date for completion is Friday, December 17.

Councilmember Daughtridge questioned if the community-generated map has been verified relative to the required criteria. Ken Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation, confirmed the map has been vetted, from a population standpoint, and meets the required criteria.

The Mayor thanked all citizens who attended and participated in the meeting.

REGULAR SESSION/ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, and without opposition, the meeting was adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

Pamela O. Casey
City Clerk