

November 16, 2021

The City Council of the City of Rocky Mount met this day in a Special Called meeting scheduled for 4:00 p.m. in the George W. Dudley City Council Chamber of the Frederick E. Turnage Municipal Building with Mayor C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr. presiding.

*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, 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; 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; Brad Kerr, Public Works Director; Keyana Walston, Program Manager-Management Analyst; Jim Connolly, Water Treatment Superintendent; 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; Robert Hassell, Police Chief; Tracey Drewery, Assistant Chief of Administration & Planning (Fire Department); Darvin Moore, Division Chief; Paula Loftin, Human Resources Manager; Peter F. Varney, Interim Community & Business Development Director; A.B. Bangura, Finance Consultant (The Robert Bobb Group); and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Pro Tem Richard Joyner called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. and stated that Mayor Roberson is on his way. He announced that discussion will begin with the pay and classification plan and there will be no discussion relative to the Community Land Trust at today's meeting.

**CLASSIFICATION AND COMPENSATION PLAN**

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney called on Human Resources Director, Kena Cofield-Jones, to provide a PowerPoint Presentation relative to an overview of the Classification and Compensation study including staff recommendations.

*\*Mayor Roberson arrived*

Ms. Cofield-Jones outlined the recommendations as:

- **Total cost:**
  - Current fiscal year - \$1.71M
  - FY 2021 = \$2.99M
  - \*does not require a tax increase

- **Proposed effective date:**
  - 11/27/2021

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Cost-of-living adjustment (COLA)	3% across the board (one-time for all employees)
Raise lowest pay range to \$15/hour (based on 2080-hour equivalency)	31 employees
Move to pay range minimum	155 employees
5% Market adjustment – retention for certain positions	367 positions
Energy Resources Department Reorganization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adds 5 positions</li> <li>• Flattens organization</li> <li>• More direct supervision of operations</li> <li>• Creates redundancy for highly skilled positions</li> </ul>
Police Department Reorganization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adds 2 majors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Creates division leads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Operations Bureau</li> <li>▪ Support Services Bureau</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Streamlines business and operational needs</li> <li>• Retains function specialization within each division</li> </ul>
Human Relations/Community & Business Development – Department Reorganization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future consideration and not recommended at this time</li> </ul>
Reallocate Assistant to the City Manager for Budget & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistant to the City Manager with oversight of 3 departments</li> </ul>

- **Pay Plan Maintenance:**
  - Quarterly Reviews with Departments at the end of the third quarter beginning April 2022
  - Annual Targeted Market Reviews for Proposed Modifications

Ms. Cofield-Jones invited questions.

Councilmember Knight questioned if employees who worked through the COVID-19 lockdown period and then retired were included in the supplemental pay to eligible employees working through the COVID-19 pandemic (\$1,200 to those eligible employees who worked regular shifts during the COVID-19 lockdown period and \$700 to employees working rotational shifts).

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney responded by stating that she along with Ken Hunter, Assistant to the Manager for Budget & Evaluation, are able to speak with regard to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) guidelines that require employees receiving the supplement pay to be active. She said to do something different would require identifying a different funding source. Mr. Hunter agreed adding that employees had to be active at the time the bonus was distributed. The City Manager responded to a question from Councilmember Knight by stating funding for this allocation would come from the fund balance. Councilmember Knight requested that Council be advised of the amount of additional funding required to compensate those employees who are currently retired but worked through the lockdown period.

Councilmember Joyner questioned if part-time employees were included in the allocation and Ms. Cofield-Jones responded in the affirmative.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Miller, and unanimously carried that:

- \$1.6M be allocated to be expended by June 30, 2022, to provide a 4.5% COLA to all City employees with the remainder as a performance bonus;
- all department restructuring be placed on hold;
- the City Manager work with Gallagher to update the Compensation and Classification Plan to reflect current data by comparing it with other municipalities and utilities within a 50-mile radius;
- Department Heads to be consulted relative to any changes and that Department Heads review changes with staff and provide feedback to the City Manager. Changes should include proposed job titles and reclassifications from non-exempt to exempt; and
- the City Council received a detailed presentation at the March 14, 2022, Committee of the Whole meeting.

Councilmember Blackwell voiced support for the motion and said the entire Council is in lockstep with the Manager's Office to ensure employees are compensated. He said the Council is grateful for the work of employees and recognizes that inflation is rising quickly, that the holidays are close and in addition to providing COVID funding wants to reiterate that Council appreciates employees and is hopeful the COLA will reflect that appreciation. He added the COLA should be provided to every employee, whether they are part-time or full-time. Mr. Blackwell stated that the study has taken three (3) years to complete, and it will take more than two (2) weeks for the Council to understand and digest the information provided. He stated that Council has been talking for a number of years about rolling out an affordable housing bond to also include other initiatives and adding that he is uncomfortable with making big decisions without more conversation. Additionally, Councilmember Blackwell voiced concerns that he has received a lot of calls from employees throughout the City who don't understand the plan. He said if the City wants to contribute to a culture of inclusivity and engagement, Council and employees need to know and understand what they're buying into and receive clarification in the areas they are not comfortable. He said pathways need to be available to gain understanding. Mr. Blackwell stated that he is uncomfortable with adopting the entire plan but is 100% comfortable with the COLA adjustment for the full employee team and comfortable with working together with the Manager's Office on figuring out restructuring needs and engaging employees in meetings.

Councilmember Walker thanked the City Manager and staff for the recommendations and said he appreciated the opportunity to be able to speak with some employees and thinks after doing so, it will help Council to be sure amendments are made to create and adopt the most suitable plan to benefit all.

Councilmember Joyner agreed and voiced appreciation for the opportunity to listen to some employees to work towards a more inclusive process that includes Department Managers and the entire workforce. He

questioned if the decision to not move forward with adoption of the plan today will hinder the process.

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney responded by clarifying that Council has requested that employees receive a one-time 4.5% cost of living adjustment; that staff work more inclusively with departments to better explain how the mechanics of the plan works and identify specific needs of the organization, such as retention and recruitment particularly in areas where there is difficulty. She added that staff will be very clear with the Council, Department Heads, and employees about challenges and recommendations and hear suggestions. She questioned if the request is to utilize \$1.6M or \$1.7M.

Councilmember Daughtridge stated he is willing to modify his motion to \$1.7M in order to include payroll taxes and other deductions and reiterated that the COLA is to be 4.5%. He added it is important for all City staff and the citizens of Rocky Mount to know that Council, along with management, values all employees, recognizes the importance of staff, and understands the City cannot operate without the expertise of City staff. He said he is not accustomed to things taking so long but understands the Compensation and Classification Plan is for a large organization and voiced his hope that the Human Resources Director and staff understand and appreciate the position of Council. He stated he thinks there is a lot of good information in the plan but also thinks there is room for improvement.

Mayor Roberson confirmed that the motion is amended from \$1.6M to \$1.7M and Councilmember Miller supported approval of the amendment.

Councilmember Knight thanked staff for their work on the Compensation & Classification Study and said he is in agreement with his colleagues. He stated that Council requested the plan to be performed in 2019 and it has taken three years to do so, and Council has only had it for a few weeks. He said more time is needed for review of the plan and to address questions. Mr. Knight said that according to the Chapter 16 of the City Code entitled PERSONNEL, Article II, Division 2, Section 16-48, the establishment of classifications for positions is vested in the City Council and it is the role of the Council to consider recommendations of the City Manager in determining the need for a new classification of position(s). He voiced support of the motion made by Councilmember Daughtridge and other Councilmembers who have spoken.

#### **HOUSING POLICIES**

The City Council considered the following proposed policies provided to them by Peter Varney, Interim Director of Community & Business Development, at the October Committee of the Whole meeting:

**1) Housing Repair Program Policies:**

- a) Housing Repair Program - Policy No. II.43 (a)
- b) Housing Repair Program - Workforce Housing - Policy No. II.43(b)

**2) Neighborhood Housing Revitalization Program - Policy No. II.39**

The policies were explained, and the City Council was advised that should funding be available from the General Fund in the current fiscal year in the amount of \$200,000 for Part B [Policy No. II.43(b)] staff could solicit applications from January 3 through February 4, 2022.

The City Manager stated that applications have been provided for Council's consideration.

Councilmember Daughtridge questioned if funding is available, and City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney responded that funding would come from the fund balance. She added she believes funding is available but does not know the exact amount of the fund balance at this time. Ken Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget & Evaluation, reported the current revised budget is currently at \$27,578,691 which is approximately 41% (unassigned). Further discussion was held.

In response to a question from Councilmember Joyner, Interim Director of Community & Business Development, Peter Varney reported that in the past couple of months 59 applications have been received under the Urgent Repair Program and it is expected 25 of those can be assisted; 54 applications have been received under the Matching Rebate Program received and it is expected 32 can be assisted; and 81 applications have been received under the Housing Repair Program and it is expected that assistance can be provided to 40. It was explained that applications will be kept on file for those for which funding is not available and reviewed when funding becomes available.

Mr. Varney responded to additional questions from Councilmembers.

Councilmember Knight stated that additional funding from the Council Incentive grant could be available and urged the Councilmembers to make the full Council aware of any projects they wish to be considered when making allocations for the Council Incentive grants. Councilmember Joyner agreed and requested that Councilmembers provide that information quickly and suggested that funding be leveraged through collaboration and partnership with other community groups to be able to meet more needs.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Walker, and unanimously carried that following Housing Repair Program Policies be approved and that \$200,000 be allocated from the General Fund for FY 2022 for the Workforce Housing policy:

**1) Housing Repair Program Policies:**

- a) Housing Repair Program - Policy No. II.43 (a); and
- b) Housing Repair Program - Workforce Housing - Policy No. II.43(b)

Mr. Varney explained the additional Neighborhood Housing Revitalization Policy recommended for approval and responded to questions from Councilmembers. He advised the City Council that this is not a policy that is expected to be used very often but provides a tool

for the toolbox. In response to a question from Councilmember Miller, Mr. Varney explained that the proposed policy mimics a HUD policy. Councilmember Miller questioned if the HUD policy requires a home of comparable size be built and Mr. Varney stated that recommendation is not a part of the HUD policy.

Councilmember Daughtridge questioned if landlords will qualify for the policy and Mr. Varney responded that owner/occupant is what is proposed.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell, and unanimously carried that the following Neighborhood Housing Revitalization Program Policy be approved:

**2) Neighborhood Housing Revitalization Program - Policy No. II.39**

*Note: No resolutions were provided with the agenda items and the above policies will be filed in the Administrative Policy Manual.*

**TEMPORARY STREET CLOSINGS**

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney advised the City Council that the following requests for temporary street closings have been received:

- 1) Request from Mayor Pro Tem Joyner, on behalf of the Community Action Committee, for permission to close 544 Ambler Avenue on Saturday, November 20, 2021, from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. for a Community Action Event; and
- 2) Request from Pastor Mack E. Battle, on behalf of East End Missionary Baptist Church, for permission to close 928 E. Highland Avenue (block) on Saturday, November 20, 2021, from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. for a Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Knight, and unanimously carried that the request to close 544 Ambler Avenue on Saturday, November 20, 2021, from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. for a Community Action Event be approved.

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried that the request to close 928 E. Highland Avenue (block) on Saturday, November 20, 2021, from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. for a Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic be approved.

**COUNCIL CHRISTMAS CARDS/DONATIONS**

Mayor C. Saunders Roberson, Jr. opened discussion relative to consideration of sending out City Council Christmas cards versus donations to non-profits and called on Councilmember Daughtridge.

Mr. Daughtridge stated that it is his opinion that City funds should not be expended to send out holiday cards from the Mayor and City Council adding at the last City Council meeting he made a motion that the funds allocated for holiday cards be donated to Meals on Wheels or United Community Ministries because of the season. He told the Council he thinks sending holiday cards sets a bad precedent and seems like self-promotion, especially in light of the upcoming election. He told

the Council he might think differently if the cards were coming from the entire City staff. Councilmember Miller concurred.

Councilmember Knight told the Council he provided information at the last meeting of how the idea of sending Christmas cards came about. He added that for those who are Christians, Christ is the reason for the season. He stated the comment is not meant to disrespect any other religion and added he does not think sending out Christmas cards is self-serving. He said Councilmember Daughtridg has suggested donating the funding for producing/sending the cards to a nonprofit and said there are a lot of organizations who have done and are doing great work in this City, and he has no problem with eliminating sending Christmas cards. Mr. Knight told the Council sending cards has nothing to do with the upcoming election. He said if a vote is going to be taken today to donate the allocated funding to an organization, he would like for other organizations to also be considered adding he has with him a list of nonprofits with him this evening and named of few of the organizations on the list. He stated it needs to be determined how much the allocation would be.

Mayor Roberson offered a compromise to be considered that each individual Councilmember elect whether or not to contribute to the charity of their choice or to send Christmas cards to their constituency.

Councilmember Joyner responded by saying he likes the idea for Councilmembers to have the opportunity to make individual decisions based on their Ward.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridg that in lieu of sending out holiday/Christmas cards that each Councilmember suggest a legally approved nonprofit to which a donation be made in an amount to be determined that would equate to the cost of sending cards.

City Attorney Richard J. Rose stated the word donation is incorrect adding that what is actually being proposed is giving public funds to a nonprofit to carry out a public purpose that the City itself could carry out. He stated there would need to be a short agreement with respect to the nonprofits as to what they will do with the funds and the nonprofit should provide a report to Council as to how the funds were used.

Further discussion was held relative to the amount of the funding allocated for use by Council and the City Manager reported the amount allocated for each Councilmember is roughly \$3,000. Councilmember Knight recommended that \$5,000 be allocated for each Councilmember to be provided to a qualifying organization, chosen by the Councilmember, and that the funding already allocated (approximately \$3,000) be used by Councilmembers for Ward activities/programs or however each member should decide.

Councilmember Daughtridg stated that each Councilmember received an email questioning if they wished to send out Christmas/holiday cards and he struggles with setting this as a precedent. He said he is willing to withdraw the motion and wants the community to be able to know that Councilmembers are good stewards of taxpayer money.

Without opposition, the motion was withdrawn.

Councilmember Miller stated that individuals can spend their money any way they wish but City funds should be spent for City needs and questioned in what meeting Council was told that funds had been allocated in the prior year for Christmas or holiday cards. She said she would have been embarrassed for City funds to have been spent on a card and postage with her name.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, and without opposition, the meeting was adjourned at 4:51 p.m.

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Pamela O. Casey  
City Clerk