

February 14, 2022

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, Jr.\*\*\*, Lige Daughtridge, W.B. Bullock\*\* and Christine Carroll Miller.

\*joining remotely

Staff present: Peter F. Varney, Interim City Manager; Kim Batts, Deputy City Clerk; Elton Daniels, Assistant City Manager; Jessie Nunery, Media Relations Specialist Communications, Marketing and Public Relations, Mark Adcox, Video Production Specialist; Chris Beschler, Director of Energy Resources; Brad Kerr, Public Works Director; JoSeth Bocook, Planning Administrator Department of Development Services; Archie Jones, Director of Human Relations; Gregory Cotten, Chief Technology Officer; Latasha Hall, Director of Business and Collections Services; Tracey Drewery, Assistant Chief of Administration & Planning (Fire Department); Corey Mercer, Fire Chief; Ken Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation; Darwin Moore, Fire Department Division Chief; Brenton Bent, Water Resources Director; Robert Hassell, Police Chief; Robin Cox, Communications Specialist; Cornelia McGee, Interim Community and Business Development Director; Pamela O. Casey, City Clerk and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

*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 7:05 p.m. and requested all to stand for a moment of silent prayer.

*Councilmember Bullock arrived\*\**

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

Mayor Roberson requested the following items be added to the agenda:

- Closed session for matters concerning property acquisition; attorney client privilege and personnel; and
  - Notice of a Special Called Committee of the Whole meeting scheduled for February 28, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. to be held in the Committee Room of the Frederick E. Turnage Municipal Building
- Councilmember Daughtridge requested the agenda be amended to move consideration of item 22 immediately following item 8.

Discussion was held.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Miller, and carried by a roll call vote (5 ayes/2 nays; Councilmembers Knight and Blackwell opposed) that the agenda be amended, as requested.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the minutes of a Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting held January 10, 2022, and a Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting held January 24, 2022, be approved as submitted to the City Council prior to the meeting.

**COMMUNITY UPDATE BY INTERIM CITY MANAGER**

Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney provided the following community update. The Interim City Manager:

- Started his report by thanking the Water Resources Department for the work that they did in repairing a major water main break that occurred on February 6<sup>th</sup>; they began working at 6:30 a.m. and worked 25 consecutive hours until the completion of the job in extremely wet and cold conditions; the repair involved a 16-inch water main that supplies a large area of the city and it was repaired in time to be able to maintain service and Fire Protection Service
- Provided Council with a downtown visitor's guide and stated the purpose of the guide is to highlight downtown restaurants in the area for available for weekend events at the Rocky Mount Event Center
- Stated the Event Center just held its sixth major tournament of the year and welcomed more than 80 cheerleading teams to our area
- Stated work was performed to upgrade the Unity Cemetery website; [unitycemeterync.com](http://unitycemeterync.com) is now live and available and lists activities relative to the cemetery; began cleanup on Friday, February 11<sup>th</sup>; stated the parks maintenance crews are being utilized until park maintenance needs begin in about 6 weeks;
- Reminded everyone that the Alexander Evans signage ceremony is planned for Friday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 p.m. at the Atlantic Avenue and Spruce Street intersection; he stated Mr. Evans was a former city employee who was at the center of the 1978 Sanitation Worker's Strike; he announced the event will be available live on City TV 19 and YouTube
- Advised the City Council he will be providing FYI (for your information ) packages to them to share responses to inquiries received and information that may be of interest

Councilmember Knight thanked Mr. Varney for beginning to have some of the underbrush cleaned up at Unity Cemetery; for using City crews at a time when they are available and for moving forward with documenting the historic park.

Councilmember Joyner also thanked Mr. Varney for his efforts.

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

Mayor C. Saunders Roberson, Jr. read a proclamation proclaiming the month of February 2022, as "Black History Month" in the City of Rocky Mount and presented the proclamation to Human Relations Director Archie Jones and Human Relation Commission Members, Nehemiah Smith and Linwood Williams. The Mayor joined Mr. Jones and the commission members for a photograph.

Councilmember Knight thanked the Mayor for the great proclamation but stated he would like to see the City highlight some of the first African American Rocky Mount town councilmembers. He named Peter Darden, Reverend Spicer, and William Walters as some of the first leaders. He stated he would like to see a dedicated effort

to locate pictures for those individuals so they could be displayed with the other historical photographs throughout City Hall.

**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:

- ***Tom Harris***
  - Stated in light of recent information in the newspaper, he feels the City Manager or City Attorney should speak on whether the subcommittee small group meetings were in compliance with the open meetings law and other statutes; and
  - Stated in light of transparency and openness he feels the citizens deserve to hear from the City about how these meetings were conducted and if they were in compliance
- ***Crystal Wimes-Anderson***
  - Thanked the Public Works Department for fixing the issue she spoke about recently and thanked the Sanitation Department for their assistance as well;
  - Asked Council to review item 8 on the agenda in order to look more into sustainability;
  - Stated she had offered several solutions to items mentioned on her public petitions sheet including some alternate solutions to the red-light cameras; and
  - Asked if someone could look into sanitation of the podium microphone between speakers
- ***Brenda Cooper***
  - Thanked the Rocky Mount Police Department and Animal Control for gathering the loose animals that have been roaming her neighborhood and for information that can be distributed about what is required and acceptable when you have dogs;
  - Stated there is still a need for property owners/renters to be responsible for care and upkeep of their properties;
  - Stated the property at the corner of Cleo and Davis Streets has been declining for months and said she doesn't understand why the demolition process is only quick in some areas;
  - Said she feels people should be made aware of projects that are going on;
  - Stated there has been talk of community wealth but she cannot get help with repairs to her home because her income is labeled as too high; said extra things happen and can interfere with how you can use your money; and
  - Said she does not feel like the process being used to determine eligibility for grants or loans is the best way
- ***Linwood Williams***
  - Asked for City Leadership and those who attend the meetings to accept a challenge to look at the things that went right with integration;
  - Stated he was the only African American child on the bus when he had to change schools due to integration; said it was not a good situation until a white young man asked him to sit with him and it created a positive movement; and
  - Stated in order to move forward we have to improve race relations and start reflecting on things we got right
- ***Bronson Williams***
  - Stated after looking at the Committee of the Whole this afternoon, he feels the Council should never be about showboating or in the business of having staff read a presentation because to give the appearance someone is working;
  - Said the Council and the community have access to the information online;
  - Stated if the presentation has been reviewed then there should be no need for review/presentation by staff;

- Stated citizens can tell if the City is doing a good job by seeing neighborhoods that are now bright; homes that were not livable now being livable and when the City is successful at distributing information;
  - Stated he appreciates Council's efforts in creating diversity on a board that regulated utilities; and
  - Stated that as we commemorate "Black History Month" it would be a shame to go backwards
- **Samuel Battle**
    - Stated he does not understand why there only Spanish workers working for Precision Cut;
    - Asked when Council approved the contract if it indicated if there had to be a certain amount of Black people Precision Cut needed to have working for them;
    - Asked if Council put a bid out for someone to take care of Unity Cemetery; and
    - Stated he feels Council should have Lois Watkins come talk about what is going on at the cemetery [Unity] since she is the one that is overseeing it
- **John Purcell**
    - Stated the Facebook page for the Rocky Mount Youth Council has not been updated since 2017 and the president listed on that page has graduated from college;
    - Would like to see the individuals that work with the Youth Council to know that young people do not communicate via Facebook; they use Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and TikTok;
    - Asked if the Youth Council meets with the City Council individually or as a whole; and
    - Stated young people needed to be encouraged to stay in the area
- **Troy Davis**
    - Stated in reference to the earlier comments about landowners taking better care of their properties – even if the property is being rented out it is the owner's responsibility to ensure the property is taken care of;
    - Said Rocky Mount needs to take a look at the minimum housing code standards to see what can be done to help improve housing standards and conditions throughout the City;
    - Stated fire reports show that most fires that happen in the winter are due to the types of heat sources being used; and
    - Said improving housing conditions in the City will reduce crime and other things
- **Ron Green**
    - Informed Council he just celebrated his 10<sup>th</sup> year at the Boys and Girls Club and wanted to come speak on the impact the Boys and Girls Club has on the community rather than send in a report;
    - Stated they are inspiring of young people, whether they are African American, Caucasian, or Hispanic, they serve all kids, but especially those who need them most;
    - Stated they want youth to reach their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens;
    - Said there are 3 priority outcome areas: academic success, good character and citizenship, and healthy lifestyle;
    - Stated the City has funded the HERO program at Williford School for a couple of years now and the principal of the school says it has been very beneficial to the students that have taken advantage of it and those students have improved both academically and behaviorally; and
    - Stated the club members that have taken advantage of the program had an overall GPA of 2.07 last year and this year it has improved to an overall GPA of 2.72

Mayor Roberson closed the public petitions portion of the meeting.

Councilmember Blackwell thanked everyone who presented and stated their insight and input is appreciated. He congratulated Mr. Green on his tenure and on the work that is done in the Boys and Girls Club. He stated he feels it would be beneficial to receive updates from entities the City works with and helps support. He asked if the Mayor Pro Tem would consider scheduling updates from those entities as he crafts Committee of the Whole agendas throughout the year.

**PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS**

The City Council received the minutes and recommendations from a Planning Board meeting held January 11, 2022. Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Bullock, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that receipt of the Planning Board minutes be acknowledged. The minutes are on file in the office of the City Clerk.

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

**A. PUBLIC HEARING/REZONING REQUEST**

The Mayor opened a public hearing relative to the following rezoning request recommended for approval and found in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan by the Planning Board:

- Request by Frank W. Brown to rezone 20.01 acres of Eastfield Subdivision (Eastfield Drive and Commodore Drive) from R-8CD to revised R-8CD

JoSeth Bocook, Planning Administrator for Development Services, gave an overview of the request.

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

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Walker, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that **Ordinance No. O-2022-12** entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE AND MAP OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT** be adopted.

**APPOINTMENTS**

A motion made by Councilmember Walker to appoint Councilmember Daughtridge to the NCEMPA Board of Commissioners was seconded by Councilmember Bullock.

Mayor Roberson opened the floor for discussion.

Councilmember Knight stated he is currently the voting member for the City on the North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency (NCEMPA) board and was serving on the board faithfully when City Manager, Rochelle Small-Toney, made a request that she be allowed to attend those meetings with the Energy Resources Director. He stated he recently confirmed he would like to continue to serve when asked by Councilmember Walker. He stated some background history is that

Rocky Mount stood with Kinston to fight the monopoly of Progress and Duke Power to take over utilities. He noted that he was the only black member out of 72 people and 32-34 cities in eastern North Carolina. Councilmember Knight stated he would like for the Council to request diversity data from NCEMPA and Electricities in reference to their board membership. He stated there needs to be someone of color, someone who can advocate when it comes to rates, extending rates, raising rates, and decisions relative to nuclear plants and where they are located. Councilmember Knight stated that the City Council just made a proclamation of "Black History Month", and he does not want to see things go back but only forward. He stated he has never encountered while serving on this City Council that a member of a board or commission not be allowed to continue to serve if they requested to do so.

Councilmember Walker stated it is true that the City needs to have representation and have diversity but if our representative is not in attendance then there is no representation, which is what is needed the most. He stated they are not there to just sit on a board but should be there to be a representative. He stated he is trying to move us forward to have representation for people at the table because regardless of color, if you are not at the table then no one is represented. He stated if documents about the history of the board were going to be pulled, he would also like the attendance history pulled.

Councilmember Knight noted that he has missed very few City Council meetings and challenged comments related to attendance. He stated he is participating virtually today even though he is in the hospital. He restated that all he is asking this Council to do is pull the empirical data of who sits on these boards and makes decisions for hundreds of people who are struggling in these small eastern North Carolina cities.

Councilmember Blackwell stated you only have to look back six years ago at your utility bill to see the difference from there to here. He stated the previous city manager requested to be appointed to the primary seat on the board and Councilmember Knight moved into a secondary position. Councilmember Blackwell requested clarity about whether the nomination in question is for the Electricities board or the NCEMPA board stating there is a difference. He stated if the difference was known then it should have been articulated. He noted that NCEMPA is where rates are set, policies are produced, and fiscal approaches are created, and it's been customary for a council member and the manager to be appointed to that board. He stated that the manager has always been secondary, the council member has always been primary and this was only changed because the previous city manager requested it, which is something else to consider. He stated

he was part of the battle to help reduce utility bills when there were many others that felt high rates were a problem for poor black people who didn't fix their houses up. He stated that systemic racism, racial segregation, and housing were not considered. Councilmember Blackwell stated he applauds transparency, progress, and inclusion, but there has to be discussion before it's time to make a motion and vote.

Councilmember Daughtride stated he appreciates Councilman Walker's nomination. He said he attended a meeting in Raleigh when he was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, along with Councilman Blackwell and representatives of Rocky Mount, Nash, and Edgecombe Counties to appeal to the Utility Commission about the utility rates and how they were adversely impacting all the citizens of Rocky Mount, white, black, poor, and wealthy. He stated he appreciates the efforts that were made by all involved with the Duke asset purchase. Councilmember Daughtride stated the meeting minutes of the board reflect a representative from Rocky Mount in attendance only twice since 2012. He stated during the last meeting, there was a wholesale rate change that was voted on and Rocky Mount had zero representation at that meeting. He stated representation is needed to represent all of Rocky Mount.

Councilmember Knight stated he was a member of the ElectriCities Board in the past but Rocky Mount was blocked from serving on the board because he was Black and vocal. He stated this body did not have the authority to appoint anyone to the ElectriCities Board and only NCEMPA can choose who is on that board.

Mayor Roberson restated the motion made by Councilmember Walker and seconded by Councilmember Bullock and the motion unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that Councilmember Lige Daughtride be appointed to the NCEMPA Board of Commissioners. Councilmembers Knight and Blackwell stated their affirmative votes were for the purpose of unity.

Councilmember Daughtride made a motion to appoint Councilmember Richard Joyner as the primary member to the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments and Councilmember T.J. Walker, Jr. as the alternate member. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Miller and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays). Councilmember Knight stated his affirmative vote was for the purpose of unity.

The following nominations were received for the Braswell Memorial Library Board:

- Bob League nominated by Councilmember Bullock
- Debora Lightfoot nominated by Councilmember Walker - *contingent upon receipt of personal history form*

Nominations were approved as stated by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays).

*Councilmember Walker left the meeting.\*\*\**

**POLICY AMENDMENT/WATER AND SEWER CONNECTION FEES**

The City Council was provided with revised Administrative Policy No. X.2.9 entitled "Policy: Water and Sewer Connection Fees." The Council was advised that the amended policy will provide some cost mitigation for non-profit organizations converting an existing non-single/duplex structure from well and septic when a street cut or bore is required.

Councilmember Joyner requested Interim City Manager Varney provide additional details.

Interim City Manager Varney stated the city's policy provides that the city is equipped to make taps of a certain limited size. He stated in some cases the City is not equipped to make the tap and it requires a private contractor. Additionally, if a bore is required, that also requires a private contractor. He stated this would be an expensive undertaking for nonprofit entities such as churches. He stated the recommended changes to the policy would provide that the nonprofit would pay the normal line and connection fees for the service. The nonprofit would then be required to obtain three quotes from private contractors for the tap and the bore and the city would reimburse the actual cost to nonprofit entities only. He stated it does not happen very often.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that **Ordinance No. O-2022-13** entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY NO. X.2.9 ENTITLED "POLICY: WATER AND SEWER CONNECTION FEES"** be adopted. The vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75).

**2021 GENERAL AND PROGRAM MUNICIPAL RECORDS RETENTION AND DISPOSITION SCHEDULES**

City Clerk Pamela O. Casey advised the City Council that the Records Retention and Disposition Schedules, published by the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, provide guidance to municipalities in the retention and disposition of records. The State Archives publishes new schedules when necessary and requests that the schedules be approved by the Governing Board of each municipality. New 2021 General and Program Municipal Records Retention and Disposition schedules have been published and are now in effect.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75) that the Municipal Records Retention and Disposition Schedules described above be approved and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the approval document on behalf of the City.



**AWARD OF DUTY SIDEARM**

The City Council received a recommendation for the award of a duty sidearm and badge to Sergeant Monty Spencer who will retire from the Rocky Mount Police Department on March 1, 2022, with 30 years of service.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75) that the award of duty sidearm and badge be approved.

**K-9 RETIREMENT**

The City Council received a recommendation from the Chief of Police for the retirement of K-9 Police Dog, Taz, and for donation to a qualified rescue group specializing in retired public service animals pursuant to NCGS 20-187.4.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75) that the recommendation of the Chief of Police be approved, and that K-9 Police Dog Taz be retired and released to a qualified rescue group specializing in retired public service animals in accordance with the provisions of NCGS 20-187.4.

**MATCHING GRANT/AKC REUNITE ADOPT A K-9 COP**

The City Council was advised that staff wishes to apply for a \$7,500 grant through the AKC Reunite Adopt A K-9 Cop Grant to be used to assist with funding the cost to replace a retiring police canine. Council was advised that the cost to replace a canine is approximately \$10,000. It was noted that, if received, the grant requires a local match and funding in the amount of \$2,500 is available for the match.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Miller and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75) that staff be authorized to submit a grant application; that the Mayor, City Clerk or appropriate staff be authorized to execute required documentation, including the grant application, subsequent grant agreement and any certifications and/or assurances on behalf of the City.

**AUDIT CONTRACT**

The City Council received a proposal from Martin Starnes & Associates to perform the Fiscal Year 2022 audit for a cost of \$63,200, a 9% increase from the prior year with an additional \$17,500 for financial statement drafting for a total cost of \$80,700. The City Council was advised that the firm has performed

the independent audit for the past fifteen (15) years and has provided excellent service both during the audit engagement and during the year as assistance is required related to financial matters.

Councilmember Daughtridge expressed concern that the City has used the same firm for 15 years. He stated he feels there should at least be a new lead auditor as recommended under the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. He asked if the lead auditor has changed or would change. He also suggested the audit contract be put out for bid for the upcoming year. Councilmember Daughtridge additionally requested a more in-depth budget presentation as well as receipt of the budget in time to properly review.

Councilmember Bullock stated he understands the bid has been open to other firms. He stated the same firm has made a proposal each year and he feels they are a proper fit.

Councilmember Blackwell stated his comments are similar to Mr. Bullock's. He stated his questions are:

- Has the City adhered to the requirements to put the bid out in the open marketplace for people to respond?
- Have all the respondents met the qualifications and requirements that the State Treasurer and the State Auditor's Office requires?
- Is there any evidence that the City has colluded with or supported this organization without them going through an independent objective review?

Councilmember Knight concurred with Councilmember Blackwell's comments.

Interim City Manager Varney responded by saying that the City's audit contract should be bid out every 5-7 years and it is overdue. He stated that changing the lead auditor would be the next best solution at this stage. He informed Council that Carrie Dunlap, the lead auditor for the last 6 years, is willing to step aside so a new lead auditor can manage the audit for this upcoming year. He stated if staff is instructed to bid out the service this coming fall then a contract could be in place for the next audit year.

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge, and carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75) that the proposal of Martin Starnes & Associates be accepted and that the Mayor and Director of Finance be authorized to execute the audit contract (C-2022-4) on behalf of the City.

**TRAFFIC ORDINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The City Council received the following recommendations from the Traffic Engineer as submitted by the North Carolina Department of Transportation for concurrence by the City:

- ADOPT: 45 MPH on Fenner Road (SR 2340) between Jeffreys Road (SR 1541) and Thomas A. Betts Parkway (SR 1613);
- REPEAL: 55 MPH on Fenner Road (SR 1538) from a point 0.09 miles north of Instrument Drive (SR 1539) northward to Wesleyan Boulevard (US 301); and
- REPEAL: 45 MPH on Fenner Road (SR 1538) from Jeffreys Road (SR 1541), northward to a point 0.09 miles north of Instrument Drive (SR 1539)

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell, and unanimously carried roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75) that **Ordinance No. O-2022-14** entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING THE TRAFFIC CONTROL ORDINANCE MAP OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT** be adopted.

**WATER ASSESSMENT CONTRACT**

The City Council received a water assessment contract with Danny O. Allen and Mary J. Allen for water service to 1246 Cox Avenue. Council was advised that the connection fees for this property are \$4,265, that the customer has prepaid \$1,000 and the contract requires the remaining fees of \$3,265 to be assessed against the property.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75) that the assessment contract with Danny O. Allen and Mary J. Allen for water service to 1246 Cox Avenue (**C-2022-5**) be approved and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the same on behalf of the City.

**SURPLUS PROPERTY DISPOSAL/DETERIORATED UTILITY POLES**

The City Council received a request for 300 deteriorated utility poles to be declared surplus pursuant to NCGS 160A-266(d). The request would allow entities and the public to take the poles for private use upon execution of a Release and Indemnity Form. The memo and form shall be placed on file in the Office of the City Clerk as **BD-2022-5**.

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75) that **Resolution No. R-2022-7** entitled **RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE DISPOSITION OF CERTAIN PERSONAL CITY-OWNED PROPERTY** be adopted.

**GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT "BULLDOG" (SEPRO)**

The City Council was advised that the City was awarded a building reuse grant from the North Carolina Department of Commerce's Building Reuse Program for \$190,000 for Project "Bulldog" (SePro). The grant was awarded upon the commitment of the project to create 20 jobs. It was noted that no additional matching funds are required for this allocation.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75) that **Ordinance No. O-2022-15** entitled **GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT "BULLDOG"** be adopted.

**SIGNATORY APPROVAL PROCESS**

The City Council received information relative to signatory recommendations that were approved on January 13, 2020, and February 22, 2021. These recommendations authorized the Mayor and City Manager to execute all HUD related CDBG and HOME documents (inclusive of grant agreements, vouchers, and applications) and granted signatory authority to the Mayor and City Manager for all documents related to projects approved by City Council.

Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney requested to return to the process of agreements, contracts, applications, etc. being presented to the City Council for approval with the recommendation authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute the relevant documents. He stated this process would ensure the City Clerk's office was in position to retain the documents necessary for record keeping.

Councilmember Blackwell asked for clarification if the request was to go back to another process or if the process being presented is better for legal reasons or for best practices.

Interim City Manager Varney stated he is recommending returning to the way he believes it was done for a long time. The City Clerk's Office is responsible for the retention of records/documents that are approved by City Council and this process will ensure the documents end up in the right place at the end of the day.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75) that the City Manager follow the signatory process outlined above.

**ADVANCE OF SICK LEAVE TO CITY EMPLOYEES**

The City Council was advised by Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney of a request from two (2) City employees for the advance of sick leave pursuant to Section 16-130(g) of the Code of the City of Rocky Mount. Council was further advised that the employees have been

sick and have exhausted their accrued sick leave and that Section 16-130(g) of the Code states: "The city council may, on the recommendation of the city manager, advance sick leave to an employee of with five (5) years of service who has exhausted his sick leave because of major operation or illness. However, in no case shall sick leave be advanced in excess of two (2) working days per calendar year of service of the employee." It was noted that Chalita Williams began work on March 9, 2009, and Randy Murphy began work on July 21, 1997, and both are expected to return to work soon and will "repay" the numbers of hours actually advanced. This advancement would enable them to continue to receive income.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75) that the sick leave be advanced to the two (2) employees as recommended.

**BID/CITY-OWNED GENERATOR SUBSTATION 9**

The City Council was informed that proposals were received and opened on December 28, 2021, for the repair of a city-owned generator that was damaged at substation 9 after all necessary legal procedures, including newspaper advertising, had been implemented. The solicitation was also posted on the City's purchasing webpage, the North Carolina Historically Underutilized Businesses website, and the North Carolina Interactive Purchasing System website. The bid tabulation is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2022-6**.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays; the vote for Councilmember Walker was recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75) the bid contract be awarded to Gregory Poole Equipment Company at a total cost of \$148,718.48 (base bid = \$120,139.17 plus optional 5-year extended service coverage = \$28,579.31) and authorize the Purchasing Division to issue a purchase order and execute bid documents in accordance with Council's award.

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

A closed session was added to discuss matters concerning property acquisition; attorney-client privilege and personnel matters. The minutes of the closed session shall be placed on file as **ESM-597** at the end of Minute **Book No. 38** upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell, and unanimously carried that the City Council enter into closed session at 8:37 p.m.  
Councilmember Bullock\*\* left at 9:15 p.m.

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REGULAR SESSION/INTERIM CITY MANAGER/ADJOURNMENT

The Mayor convened the City Council in regular session at 9:50 p.m.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight and seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays; the votes for Councilmember Walker and Councilmember Bullock were recorded in the affirmative pursuant to NCGS 160A-75) that the Interim City Manager position be extended to Peter F. Varney.

There being no further business for regular session the meeting was adjourned at 9:58 p.m.

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Kim Batts  
Deputy City Clerk/  
Acting City Clerk

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