

March 28, 2022

The City Council of the City of Rocky Mount met this day in a regular session 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.

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

**Participated remotely*

Staff present: Peter F. Varney, Interim City Manager; Pamela O. Casey, City Clerk; Elton Daniels, Assistant City Manager; Kirk Brown, Director of Communications and Marketing; Robin Cox, Communications Specialist; Mark Adcox, Video Production Specialist; Kena Cofield-Jones, Director of Human Resources; 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; Brenton Bent, Water Resources Director; Tracey Drewery, Assistant Fire Chief; Will Deaton, Development Services; Cornelia McGee, Interim Director of Community Development; Kevin Harris, Downtown Development Manager; Charles Bunn, III, Battalion Chief of Safety and Training; Darvin Moore, Division Chief; Todd Gardner, Transit Administrator; Keyana Walston, Program Manager-Management Analyst; Chynice Chapman, Purchasing Manager; Jayson Dawkins, Policy Analyst, Budget and Evaluation Department; Gregory Cotten, Chief Technology Officer; John Perry, Rehab Specialist; Michael Roupp, Assistant Chief of Operations; Loretta Braswell, Citizen Assistance Specialist, Community & Business Development; Kendra Silver, Community Development Technician; Mableleen Taylor-Jones, HOME Coordinator; Alvina Jenkins, Administrative Assistant, Community & Business Development; Markeitia Brown, Compliance Administrator, Community & Business Development; and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

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

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 3:59 p.m. and requested a moment for individual silent prayer.

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

Mayor Roberson inquired if there are any changes/additions to the agenda.

Councilmember Blackwell requested discussion relative to the recruitment of the City Manager be held at the end of today's meeting.

Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney requested a closed session relative to item 15 as it involves a potential property acquisition.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Walker, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) 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 Committee of the Whole Meeting and regular scheduled City Council Meeting held March 14, 2022, be approved as submitted to the City Council prior to the meeting.

The minutes of the regular scheduled Committee of the Whole meeting are below:

MINUTES OF A REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HELD MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2022, AT 5:00 P.M. IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM OF THE FREDERICK E. TURNAGE MUNICIPAL BUILDING WITH MAYOR PRO TEM T.J. WALKER PRESIDING:

NOTE: Participation limited relative to the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19)

MEMBERS PRESENT:

T.J. Walker, Mayor Pro Tem
 André D. Knight*
 Reuben C. Blackwell, IV
 Richard Joyner
 Lige Daughtridge
 W.B. Bullock
 Christine Carroll Miller
 Mayor C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr.

*Participating remotely

STAFF PRESENT:

Peter F. Varney
 Pamela O. Casey
 Kim Batts
 Robert Hassell
 Mark Adcox
 Abdul Baloch
 Elton Daniels
 Kirk Brown
 Brenton Bent
 Archie Jones
 Greg Cotten
 Chris Beschler
 Ken Hunter
 Latasha Hall
 Corey Mercer
 Brad Kerr
 Kena Cofield-Jones
 Paula Loftin
 Richard J. Rose

OPENING OF MEETING

Mayor Pro Tem T.J. Walker called the meeting to order in the City Council Chamber at 5:00 p.m. He then called on Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney to introduce the first agenda item. Mr. Varney apologized for the elevators being out of service.

Classification and Compensation Study - Peter F. Varney, Interim City Manager

Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney stated that the City Council had tabled a recommendation to adopt a new Classification and Compensation Plan until March 14, 2022. He stated they had also approved a 4.5% COLA (cost-of-living pay adjustment) for all full-time and part-time employees effective November 27, 2021.

Interim City Manager Varney stated he had reviewed the proposed plan and could not recommend adoption of the Gallagher Plan by the City Council for several reasons. He recommended the following course of actions:

1. Recommend funding for a new Classification and Compensation Study in

the FY 2023 budget. The new study would get under way in September-October 2022 so that a new Plan could be adopted in time for budget preparation for FY 2024

2. At the April 11, 2022, Committee of the Whole meeting, recommend the City Council incorporates \$15/hour as the new minimum wage (2080-hour equivalency) into the current pay and classification plan. The pay ranges with pay plan will be adjusted accordingly
3. At the April 11, 2022, Committee of the Whole meeting, recommend that the pay ranges with current pay and classification system be adjusted to include the 4.5 % COLA approved in November and any additional market adjustment
4. Recommend allowing until July 1, 2022, to evaluate the existing career ladder components in the existing pay and classification plan and identify areas where additional career ladders are needed
5. Recommend allowing until July 1, 2022, to identify areas in our existing policy and classification plan where employees are adversely affected by the long-standing problem of pay range compression (hope to recommend adjustments that would enable us to address the major compression issues)
6. Recommend a pay adjustment effective July 2 that would benefit employees until the proposed new Classification and Compensation Study is completed
7. Plan to use the time between April 11th and July 1, 2022, to align the position control system in MUNIS with the position control system in our budget system. These two systems have been out of balance for several years, resulting in delays in processing new hires, promotions, pay for performance and other issues

Councilmember Joyner stated he was concerned about the entry-level jobs and career ladders. He stated he would like to see some of the entry-level workers eventually be in a place of leadership and management.

Councilmember Blackwell stated there has been advancement through career ladders. He stated career ladders were actually one of Rocky Mount's innovative ways introduced to advance equity in the workplace. He also stated he would like to see a demographic analysis when looking to see who qualifies for career ladders to ensure the tiers of leadership are reaching the goals and objectives of creating an equitable and inclusive workforce.

Mr. Varney stated the proposed career ladders make sense in some places but maybe not in others and they are trying to ensure they are established correctly.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Received information; no formal action

APRIL RETREAT - Peter F. Varney, Interim City Manager

Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney requested to review an outline of items he would like for the City Council to consider during the one-day retreat they had requested at the February 14, 2022, work session. Mr. Varney reviewed the following outline:

- I. Facility Needs
 - Rocky Mount Judicial Center (outgrown currently facility)
 - Rocky Mount Police Department (outgrown current space)
 - Imperial Centre (in need of a lot of maintenance)
 - Booker T. Washington Community Center
 - R.M. Wilson Gymnasium
 - Senior Center

- Energy Resource Operation Center
- Liggett & Myers Operation Center
- Event Center Storage
- Unity Cemetery Office

(Some of the facilities have outgrown their current space and others are in need of maintenance; Imperial Centre needs reroofing)

II. Inner City Redevelopment

- A. Housing incentive Program Update
- B. Community Wealth Building Update
- C. Redevelopment Opportunities
 - Beal Street Redevelopment Plan
 - South Grace Street (Fire Station #2)
 - Happy Hill (Gay Street)
 - Crosstown (Self-Help/RMECDC)
 - Cokey-Redgate-Arlington-Edgecombe
 - South Rocky Mount-Little Raleigh

III. Event Center Update

IV. Downtown Redevelopment Update

V. Metro-Net Broadband

VI. Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Varney stated back in the 2007 timeframe, the Redevelopment Commission acquired some properties in the Beal Street area. He advised that the City entered into an agreement for the construction of the multifamily apartments at the corner of Sunset Avenue and Grace Street. He said there are 36 vacant lots available for development that were acquired with HUD funds. He informed City Council that the Redevelopment Commission has been working on a plan and is looking at beginning to solicit proposals. Mr. Varney stated he thought the City Council would want to see their plan before it moves further in the process.

The Interim City Manager stated there is an opportunity to acquire some of the properties around Fire Station #2 that contain boarded-up houses.

Mr. Varney stated there is a possible redevelopment opportunity for City-owned property on Gay Street because there have been some developers who have expressed interest. He also stated that Self Help Credit Union has indicated a willingness to lead a redevelopment effort in the Crosstown area (Gold Leaf Street/Carolina Avenue) and he has communicated with Rocky Mount Edgecombe Community Development Corporation to see if a three-way partnership would be a possibility in that area.

Mr. Varney mentioned other possibilities for redevelopment being in the Cokey Road, Red Gate and Arlington areas adding he hopes the redevelopment will mainly involve fixing existing boarded-up homes instead of replacing them. He also mentioned reaching out to Peacemakers to see if there could be a partnership opportunity available.

Councilmember Blackwell stated he would like for a conversation around an affordable housing plan and relative to a housing bond added to the agenda. He also stated he would like to see the Workforce Housing Advisory Commission engaged in the conversations.

Councilmember Joyner made a request to look at a process to ensure clarity about the investment of not only resources but skill-based resources to the 14 communities that the City has been working with.

Mayor Roberson suggested setting up a process that allows for Council to receive input from the community in a strategic way. He

stated maybe this would allow focused conversations that could produce an even better final product.

Councilmember Blackwell stated the three groups that have been mentioned are the Workforce Housing Advisory Commission, Redevelopment Commission, and the Neighborhood Presidents. He stated those groups were already working individually but maybe not as strategically together as they could be.

Discussion was held relative to scheduling dates for the City Council Retreat.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the City Council Retreat be held on April 19-20, 2022, at the Rocky Mount Event Center.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. *Received information; Recommended the City Council Retreat be scheduled for April 19-20, 2022, at the Rocky Mount Event Center beginning at 9:00 a.m. and ending at 5:00 p.m.*

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN UPDATE: Kenneth Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation

Kenneth Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation, presented an update on funds allocated by the U.S. Department of Treasury through the American Rescue Plan Act and changes that have been put in place. Mr. Hunter stated that the City received \$11,521,180 and the funds that have been spent at this time were for premium pay for city employees and totaled \$1,267,958. He stated the only other commitment that has been made is for affordable housing at \$3 million dollars and those funds have not been expended at this time, which leaves the funds remaining for future projects at \$7,253,222.

Mr. Hunter stated the funds must be committed by December 31, 2024, and must be expended by December 31, 2026.

Mr. Hunter reminded the City Council the primary categories supported by the American Rescue Plan Funds are as follows:

- Support Public Health Expenditures
- Address Negative Economic Impacts Caused by COVID-19
 - Includes "Exacerbation of Pre-Existing Disparities"
 - Expanded Latitude for Projects in Qualified Census Tracts (HUD)
- Replace Lost Public Sector Revenue
- Provide Premium Pay for Essential Workers
- Invest in Water, Sewer, and Broadband Infrastructure
 - Includes Stormwater
 - State Law prevents expenditures on Broadband

Mr. Hunter stated the categories the City looks at most significantly are those involving addressing negative economic impacts, replacement of lost public sector revenue, providing premium pay for essential workers and investment in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. He informed the City Council that the determination was made that funding stormwater improvements is allowed but the funds cannot be used for broadband investment. Mr. Hunter further informed the Council that state law prohibits any city funds being used for broadband that would be for public use other than for areas such as free Wi-Fi hot spots.

Mr. Hunter highlighted the following recent developments:

- Final Rule released January 6, 2022

- All local governments can claim up to \$10 million of their allocation for revenue loss without needing to show proof (i.e., no calculation required)
 - Most flexible means of use
- "Affordable housing" available for incomes up to 300% poverty level
- No written justification required for capital projects less than \$1 million
- Water, Sewer, and Stormwater projects must align with eligibility of revolving funds
- State ARPA-Funded Water, Sewer & Stormwater Improvements (DEQ)
 - 2 rounds of grants in 2022
 - \$323 million available for Water/ Sewer
 - \$82 million available for Stormwater
 - \$15 million local jurisdiction limit
 (Mr. Hunter informed the City Council that the Department of Water Resources is already working with an agent to pursue funding through this channel. This funding would primarily be for two major stormwater sewer outfall projects that have been discussed in prior CIP's)
- Additional State programs in development
- Local technical assistance available from UNC School of Government, NC League of Municipalities, and Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments

The Mayor asked what the cost would be to provide one big hot spot in Rocky Mount.

Mr. Hunter said the City had done this before in the downtown area and the costs was \$50,000 - \$60,000, but there were many challenges with that, and the hot spot has been turned off since that time.

Councilmember Miller asked if the City had one or more hot spots, who would be the provider, and would the service be significantly better than what is available individually.

Mr. Hunter stated the City would have to be the provider or contract with one of the existing telecom companies. He also stated that unless the area had high speed broadband service the service would be at or below comparability to what they would be able to receive with physical service.

Councilmember Knight asked when the downtown hot spot was turned off because Council was not aware it had been turned off. He also asked what the pitfalls were concerned with the hot spot.

Mr. Hunter stated he did not know any details other than there were security concerns that came about but he said it could be looked into and then they could report back to Council.

Councilmember Daughtridge asked the costs of the two projects mentioned for stormwater and suggested identifying additional projects if there was more funding still available.

Councilmember Knight asked what amount of the American Rescue Funds were earmarked for downtown. He stated he recalled the previous City Manager stating that \$1 million dollars was earmarked. He suggested having conversation with Interim City Manager Varney to give him direction on what the City Council is wanting to accomplish.

Councilmember Blackwell stated he was in agreement with Councilmember Knight in reference to the investment in downtown and he agrees with Councilmember Daughtridge, and he would not want to see the City only utilize \$7 million dollars out of the \$15 million dollars available if there are other projects that could be completed.

Mr. Hunter stated staff can make sure when they come back to Council for approval that they have a more comprehensive plan that best matches this opportunity.

Councilmember Miller asked if there were still projects that needed to be completed from the presentation, they received at the water treatment plant and if the funding could be used for any of those still pending.

Councilmember Joyner asked if any of the funds were earmarked for the land trust.

Mr. Hunter informed Council that they could go back and look at those projects from that presentation to see if they would be eligible for this funding. He also informed Council that the \$1 million that was earmarked for the land trust was part of the \$3 million that was designated for affordable housing.

Mayor Pro Tem Walker stated last year the former Mayor Pro Tem and the Mayor collected from each councilmember what the top projects were that they would like to see done. He said he felt it may be helpful to look back at those to see if they could possibly allocate funds.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Received report; no formal action

CRIME STATISTICS - Robert Hassell, Police Chief

Police Chief Robert Hassell presented a summary of city-wide crime numbers to the City Council for February 2022. It was noted that the presentation covers crime incidents throughout the City currently and in comparison, with the prior year during the same time period. The Council was advised that crime numbers are tracked by the FBI and shared with the Bureau of Justice Statistics for tracking purposes and the presentation includes investigation outcomes for violent crimes and related arrests. The presentation also included maps depicting areas of shots fired, incidences of aggravated assault and murder and highlighted efforts and successes of the Police Department to combat violent crime.

An overview of PowerPoint presentation provided to Mayor and Council 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	February 2021	February 2022	+/-	YTD 2020	YTD 2021	+/-
Total	127	155	+28	287	297	+10

- February 2022 crime numbers for murders, aggravated assault and shooting into occupied building(s)/vehicle(s) (map of locations provided):
 - Aggravated assault cases and investigations:
 - Aggravated assault cases = 10
 - Aggravated assault victims = 24
 - Number cases with multiple victims = 7
 - Aggravated assault arrests = 2
 - Aggravated assault cases cleared = 4
 - Case Dispositions (total = 10):
 - Cases cleared by arrest = 3
 - Exceptionally Cleared = 1
 - Inactive cases = 4
 - Open cases = 2
 - Crime Report:

- Murder, aggravated assault and shooting into occupied building/vehicle: total victims = 26
*Victims with injuries = 9
*Victims without injuries = 17
- ShotSpotter and Citizen calls City-wide:
 - Shots fired = 49
 - Calls resulting in shell casings found = 29
 - Number shell casings found = 227
 - Number of Firearms Seized = 28
 - Number firearms seized (year to date) = 60
 - Weapon violation arrests = 7
- Community Involvement:
 - **Police Athletic/Activity League** - PAL basketball season ended with a tournament game on March 16th and championship win. Corporal Jackson and Senior Police Officer Pardo were the coaches for the Guardians. On March 25th there was a celebration and participants were awarded trophies and parents were acknowledged.

Councilmember Joyner stated the citizens tell him that they do not feel the shots being fired are decreasing.

Chief Hassell confirmed the numbers are correct and have decreased.

Councilmember Daughtridge asked how speeding was being addressed.

Chief Hassell stated sometimes they will work with the Public Works department to perform a study. They will put out their equipment to assess the number of cars passing through an area and review the speeds. He stated that a majority of vehicles are going the designated speed, but there are a few that will go over. He also stated they will sometimes place their radar units up to help bring attention so drivers will know what speeds they are traveling. He said they do sometimes work with the North Carolina Highway Patrol on some of the main thoroughfares in the City.

Councilmember Joyner stated there appear to be a lot of off-road vehicles like four-wheelers and dirt bikes around. He asked if there was somewhere else that could be provided for them to ride other than sidewalks and streets and if they are on the sidewalks and streets, what can be done.

Chief Hassell responded that they do receive a number of complaints about ATV's traveling on the street and the Police Department does work to enforce the City ordinance. The issue they have is that the individuals are able to cut through properties and this makes it very difficult to catch them.

Councilmember Miller asked if drones were used.

Chief Hassell responded they are looking at implementing a drone program, but there is not one in place currently.

Councilmember Knight asked about the cameras that scan license tags that show if a car is stolen, fictitious tags and no driver's license. He stated he knows there are people that are driving right in front of officers that do not have a license and they are not receiving citations. He stated he would like to see the Chief and his staff work on that.

Chief Hassell stated they do have license plate readers (many of them are in the shot spotter locations) and they have received a number of hits and recovered stolen vehicles. He stated they could contact his office or his duty commander if they see someone driving that they know does not have a license. He stated that is a motor vehicle law violation and they do want to deal with those issues.

Mayor Pro Tem Walker asked if there was anything in the City's ordinance that prohibits an ATV park. He stated there will be pushback from citizens when codes are enforced that shut down ATV owners that do not have the space to ride.

Interim City Manager Varney stated that he knew there was some conversation before about an ATV park a year ago, but he is not sure the study was ever completed. He said it could be reopened if that is something City Council wants to be done.

Councilmember Knight stated there was a recent accident where a young guy had an accident on an off-road vehicle that could have been tragic. He said the ATVs that are driving up and down the streets and sidewalks are extremely loud. He stated he feels some of the responsibility needs to be on the parents. He stated they know they need a certain amount of land for their child to ride a four-wheeler. He also stated he feels it could be a liability for the City to have a park such as that.

Councilmember Knight asked Chief Hassell if people were fined for littering.

Chief Hassell stated that they are fined but the difficulty is being present when the act is done to issue the citation.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. *Received report; no formal action*

Mayor Pro Tem Walker informed Council that WRAL just posted information related to some funding that may be provided to QVC and they hope to receive some communication about that this evening or tomorrow.

ADJOURNMENT

Without objection, the Mayor Pro Tem adjourned the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

A printed copy of the PowerPoint presentations are on file in the office of the City Clerk.

COMMUNITY UPDATE BY INTERIM CITY MANAGER

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

- Began his report by noting that the City acquired a 55-acre tract of land in December 2020 on Thomas Betts Parkway at its intersection with Peele Road for economic development purposes. He stated over the past year work has been done to collect data relative to the site including an environmental study and information has been assembled about utility availability, electric, gas, water, sewer, stormwater, proximity to rail, airports, seaports and so on. The Council was shown a short video overview of the property and the potential for its use. Mr. Varney noted the 55-acre tract is divided into two parts: the north side which contains a 200,000 square foot shell building and the south side which contains a 100,000 square-foot building. He told the Council this information is available to developers and the City is now in a position to market the property. He added the property is currently zoned I-1 which is Industrial light use and was annexed into the City a few months ago.
- Stated that citizens and the City Council requested the Police Department initiate a speeding enforcement operation. He reported speeding enforcement is beginning on major thoroughfares that will go on for 30 days. He stated travelers may see police cars and radar speed detectors set up to remind people of how fast they're going. He encouraged the public to drive the speed limit.
- Reported that the City has been struggling with some of its live stream broadcasts from the Council Chamber and Committee Room and has ordered a new computer that should have more capacity to avoid interruptions. He added it is hoped the equipment will arrive by the next meeting on April 11. It was noted that a web camera is currently being used to provide filming for the live stream feed today. Mr. Varney stated that recording equipment and

speakers have been ordered for the Committee Room and with that equipment the City should be able to upgrade its delivery of signal and audio force.

- Stated that sometime back in 2012, the City provided Wi-Fi hotspots at the Douglas Block, the Sports Complex, City Hall and the Train Station and later extended coverage to the Imperial Centre, the South Rocky Mount Community Center, Energy Resources Operation Center, and the Business Services Center. He stated poor signal quality has been experienced in all of those areas and the City is planning to budget funds in the coming year budget to upgrade equipment.
- Advised that the City has been named one of three finalists for the 2022 North Carolina Department of Transportation Mobi award in the Urban category. He added that the Mobi Awards recognizes statewide multi-modal transportation projects that include more than one mode of transportation such as rail, aviation, bicycle, pedestrian, highways, and public transportation. He stated the City nominated the Carolina Connector project which is a truck-to-train terminal operated by CSX on the northeast side of the City. Mr. Varney reported that the winning project will be announced at the Mobi Awards Luncheon on May 4, 2022, in Raleigh.
- Reported that the Police Department is undertaking a citizen survey of Police Department Operations Performance. He said the survey is 10-minutes and is anonymous and confidential. Mr. Varney said the Police Department is seeking citizen input relative to how performance can be improved in order to help reduce crime, maintain order, and create a safe environment.
- Reported the Fire Department has initiated a Fire Academy to begin on April 12th and May 17th. He invited all interested in learning about the Fire Department to contact the Fire Department to register for the Academy.
- Stated for many years the City has held Easter egg hunts at Sunset Park during the Easter season and is planning on holding the City's Eggstravaganza for children up to the age of 12 from 2 to 4 p.m. on the afternoon of Saturday, April 9th, which is a week from this coming Saturday. He added carousel and train rides will be available at no cost.
- Stated the City has this afternoon received a proposal from one of the firms interested in the doing the executive search for the City Manager position.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MONTH

Mayor Roberson read a Proclamation proclaiming the month of April 2022 as Community Development Month in the City of Rocky Mount and encouraged all citizens to support community development activities throughout the year because vibrant communities provide the foundation for a high quality of life for residents. The Mayor presented the proclamation to the Interim Director of Community Development, Cornelia McGee, and the following Community Development staff: Mabel Taylor-Jones; John Perry; Kendra Silver; Loretta Braswell; Markeitia Brown; and Alvina Jenkins and joined staff members for a photograph.

DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY DAY

The Mayor read a Proclamation proclaiming April 4, 2022, as Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Day in the City of Rocky Mount in recognition of the 75th anniversary of the Rocky Mount Alumnae Chapter chartered on April 4, 1947. The Mayor presented the proclamation to the members in attendance and, along with members of the City Council, joined the members for a photograph.

It was noted the Chapter has a meeting scheduled for this evening and members will need to leave the meeting.

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:

- ***Adrienne Copland:***
 - Said she was going to talk about item 11 which is the sale of 206 and 210 North Pine Street and 114 S. Tillery Street;
 - Said she thinks it is a great idea to sell City-owned property and has some suggestions;
 - Said the public notices for these sales include restrictive covenants requiring houses to be occupied by individuals whose income is not more than 80% of the area median income for at least ten (10) years;
 - Said it appears the City is not willing to waive fees for demolition and weed assessments when someone is purchasing property unless there is an agreement for the property to be used as affordable housing;
 - Said this process restricts growth and deals made to sell City-owned property should allow an option for the property to be purchased outright or perhaps, if the purchaser is agreeable to using the property as affordable housing, the City be willing to waive the purchase price;
 - Said to require the property to only be used for affordable housing says to the public that the City would rather see them sit blighted and deteriorated;
 - Recommended the sale of City-owned property be restricted; and
 - Said she has lived in many cities throughout the country and commended the City for having some of the nicest employees adding every employee she has met has been friendly and nice

- ***Dr. Kim E. Koo:***
 - Said on March 24th the *Rocky Mount Telegram* published an article entitled “City's Proposed Compensation Plan Set Aside” which was based on an interview with the Interim City Manager as well as remarks made at the March 14th City Council work session;
 - Said there was an inaccuracy in the article that stated according to the website GovDocs.com only California presently has a \$15 an hour minimum for employers with 26 or more workers, but several states have scheduled minimum wage increases to reach the \$15 an hour mark in the coming years;
 - Said she contacted a representative of the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union, UE Local 150, and posed the question of wages to him and according to the International representative, the public service workers, especially city workers across North Carolina, who belong to UE 150, all made at least \$15 an hour as far back as three years ago;
 - Said Winston Salem and Chapel Hill city workers have been paid \$15 an hour minimum for the past two years, Charlotte city workers receive \$18 an hour, Raleigh city workers are paid \$17 an hour while Durham city workers make over \$16 an hour currently. All these public service workers are union members under UE Local 150, which has been organizing over many of the major cities in North Carolina. She said she was also told that all state employees including those that live and work in Rocky Mount, have earned at least \$15 an hour minimum wage for over three years;
 - Said we are all living under the crushing weight of rising inflation, debts, stagnant wages, and social moral decay with violence as an answer to every problem and our tax money is being used increasingly to fund adventurist wars overseas;
 - Said she feels the report in the *Rocky Mount Telegram* is misleading and somewhat reprehensible. She stated people living under current economic hardships should not be told to wait more years before being paid survivable wages. By that time, given the current rate of inflation and rising cost of living workers would need at least \$25

an hour to be able to survive without having to need side jobs, another part-time job or even a full-time job;

- Added the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the inflation rate in February of 2022 was 7.9%, the highest since January of 1982, with energy being the biggest contributor; and
- Said even if City employees are given a 4% cost-of-living raise, it would barely cover the inflation

○ ***Nehemiah Smith:***

- Said each day on the morning show at around 8:32 a.m. they do something called the word of the day;
- Said the word of the day for today's show was extemporaneous but after looking at this agenda he sees that the Council and the citizens need another word so the word is okey-doke. He added okey-doke with an ed ending which as a verb means to be bamboozled or tricked and getting somebody to go along with something that often does not serve their own best interest;
- Said Ms. Minges has been coming to this Council for months talking about the condition of the old Ebony and Ivory building and the progressive deterioration of that property and how nothing has been done that is of substance, but now according to number 15, on the agenda, it has become a priority, and a \$500,000 priority. He added if the grant is matched it will be a \$1M priority;
- Questioned why the City would purchase a property from a derelict property owner saying it seems as though a scheme is afoot;
- Said if some political favors need to be paid off, it should be done with private funds and should not be on the taxpayers;
- Said to give a hypothetical example, on the one hand, someone is allowed to bid on property and given up to 18 months to fix up the property to make it look better and on the other hand, that person has a property that's derelict that they haven't taken care of and is going to be paid \$100,000 for that property;
- Said on one hand, they will have 18 months to fix up a property over here but have a property over there that they have neglected for more than a year;
- Questioned if the City is going to pay \$100,000 for the property and receive another \$100,000 to clean the property up;
- Said the current owner has had an opportunity to clean up the property and he should foot the bill and clean up the property;
- Said people should not be paid for being derelict about taking care of their property;
- Said the City sends everybody else a notice saying clean up your yard, cut your grass, and the owner should be made to clean the property up;
- Said the City should not buy the property from him, and he has had enough time to fix it up;
- Added when Ms. Brenda Cooper is talking to Council about what's going on in South Rocky Mount with that warehouse nothing has been done down there and questioned why the City would consider addressing the Ebony and Ivory building that is continuously deteriorating while the owner has shown no signs of fixing the property up; and
- Said now all of a sudden, the owner of that property is going to get \$100,000 for the property and make a profit while the City spends another \$100,000 to tear it down

○ ***Theresa Stokes:***

- Said she was excited while heading into Rocky Mount today and seeing a billboard saying: "Visit Downtown, Eat, Shop and Enjoy" until she saw the picture on the billboard;
- Said there was nothing appealing about the picture;
- Said if the City wants to entice people to come to Downtown Rocky Mount the billboard should be more enticing and questioned how Downtown can be mentioned

without mentioning the Event Center and the Downtown businesses, because they matter;

- Said some of the material that has recently been released by the City mentions Rocky Mount is a two-time all-America city and though that is true those awards were given in 1969 and 1999; and
 - Said since Rocky Mount recently was one of 10 cities in the United States to win the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize award, she hopes the City will consider adding that positive information in its description
- ***Bronson Williams:***
- Said he shares some concerns relative to Item 15 on today's agenda;
 - Said when hearing that the City Council is considering going into closed session for that matter, he looked at NCGS 143-318 relative to the permitted purposes for closed sessions and while he did not go to law school, he does not think discussion relative to this matter would be a permitted reason for the Council to go into closed session;
 - Added that sometimes it appears the City has a knee-jerk reaction to things rather than an actual plan; and
 - Said there's a serious issue going on between the counties relative to looking at the school demerger. He said a community meeting is being planned for April 18th at 6 p.m. at the OIC auditorium to have conversation about the situation and going back to look at the history and the benefits vs. the cons of the current situation? He said he thinks every City Councilmember should attend the meeting adding they all have constituents with children who will be impacted. He stated this is a very serious issue and they will be looking at how funds have not been used according to the general statutes and may find that perhaps Nash County might have been breaking some laws. He added it could maybe result in some lawsuits and perhaps they can figure out how to better serve the community as a whole
- ***Samuel Battle:***
- Said a bomb may have been dropped today but everyone knows this is Kevin Jones' property and the property was going down before he bought it;
 - Said Ms. Brenda Cooper has been talking about the roof on the South Church Street warehouse and nothing has been done about that;
 - Said Holland School in the Little Raleigh Road community is historical and is decaying and going down and was one of the historically black schools in the community; said nothing has been done about that and it seems Council helps those they want to help;
 - Said he recently did a video at the Booker T. Washington gym and there was mold in the bathrooms, the floor is buckling up and the gym still does not have air conditioning and it is too hot for kids to play there;
 - Said funding should be allocated for the Booker T. Washington gym;
 - Said someone needs to think about the kids in Edgecombe County;
 - Said nothing is going on in Edgecombe County; and
 - Said there have been 3 murders in Ward 3 in the past couple weeks and a good Christian brother was shot in the face; and someone needs to do something about crime

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

CONSENT AGENDA

A. AD VALOREM TAX RELEASES (recommended for approval):

The City Council received the following schedule of ad valorem taxes recommended for release and/or refund:

SCHEDULE B - approve release and/or refund of the following taxes over \$100:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>BILL NO.</u>	<u>NAME/ADDRESS</u>	<u>TAX</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	
<u>EDGEcombe COUNTY</u>					
2020	146	OBU, PETER CHIDI DBA CHIDI TRUCKING 900 BRANCH ST ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27801	212.35 21.24 29.20	CITY PEN INT	DUPLICATE BILL
		TOTAL RELEASE:	262.79		
2021	31	OBU, PETER CHIDI DBA CHIDI TRUCKING 900 BRANCH ST ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27801	191.12 19.11	CITY PEN	DUPLICATE BILL
		TOTAL RELEASE:	210.23		
<u>NASH COUNTY</u>					
2021	1000925	PLATT, JAMES EARL 1530 WINTERBERRY DR ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27804	240.88 8.43	CITY INT	PERSONAL PROPERTY LOCATED OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS
		TOTAL RELEASE:	249.31		
2021	1001040	PLATT, JAMES EARL 1530 WINTERBERRY DR ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27804	147.96 5.18	CITY INT	PERSONAL PROPERTY LOCATED OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS
		TOTAL RELEASE:	153.14		

B. FY 2021-2022 PROJECT ORDINANCE AMENDMENT: (recommended for adoption)

The City Council was advised that on February 28, 2022, a Grant Agreement was adopted for receipt and distribution of a One North Carolina Grant for Hubbell Power Systems (formerly Project Fusion 2) in the amount of \$200,000 and a Project Ordinance is required for the City to appropriately receive and distribute the funds in accordance with the Grant agreement.

C. TEMPORARY STREET CLOSING (recommended for approval):

Consideration was given to a request by Emmanuel Health Education, Inc. for a temporary street closure of the 100 block of South Washington Street from Hill Street to Tarboro Street on June 25, 2022, from 5 a.m. to 3 p.m. in support of the "We Are One Prostate Cancer Bike Walk Run Ride."

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the Consent Agenda be approved inclusive of approval of the tax releases; and adoption of the following:

- a) **Ordinance No. O-2022-19** entitled **GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT "FUSION 2"** - appropriates funds to be received by the City from the North Carolina Department of Commerce's One North Carolina Grant for Project Fusion 2 (Hubbell Power Systems) - \$200,000; and
- b) **Resolution No. R-2022-11** entitled **RESOLUTION TEMPORARILY CLOSING THE 100 BLOCK OF SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET FOR THE "WE ARE ONE PROSTATE CANCER BIKE WALK RUN RIDE"** event.

BUDGET REVIEW FY 2022

The City Council received the following proposed schedule for FY 2022 budget review and work sessions:

Date & Time	Description	Topics Covered	Location
Monday, May 16 th	City Manager Proposed FY 2022-2023 Budget Delivered to Council		
Monday, May 23 rd , 4 p.m.	Presentation of City Manager Proposed FY 2022-2023 Budget	General Presentation	Council Chamber
Wednesday, May 25 th , 4 p.m.	Council Worksession	Revenue Overview General Fund	Committee Room
Wednesday, June 1 st , 4 p.m.	Council Worksession	Enterprise Funds Other Funds	Committee Room
Monday, June 6 th , 4 p.m.	Council Worksession	Additional Discussion and Guidance to City Manager	Committee Room
Wednesday, June 8 th , 4 p.m.	Council Worksession	Additional Discussion (If Necessary)	Committee Room
Monday, June 13 th , 7 p.m.	Budget Public Hearing (during Regular Council Meeting)	Public Hearing	Council Chamber
Wednesday, June 15 th , 4 p.m.	Council Worksession	Additional Discussion (if necessary)	Committee Room
Monday, June 27 th , 4 p.m.	Budget Adoption (during Regular Council Meeting)	Adoption of Budget Ordinance	Council Chamber

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the budget review work session schedule be approved, and budget review sessions scheduled, as recommended.

HOUSING INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM AGREEMENTS

The City Council was provided with a recommendation for the following housing incentive grant program awards:

- a) **Ripple Effects Group - \$25,000 - (C-2022-12)**: for roof replacement/repairs for duplex unit at 443 Arrington Avenue; single-family unit at 1210 Cypress Street; and community building at 900 Forest Hill Avenue;
- b) **Peacemakers of Rocky Mount, Inc. - \$25,000 - (C-2022-13)**: for ownership program to assist ten (10) residents with debt relief and down payment assistance up to \$2,500 per resident; and
- c) **Bland Premier Properties, LLC - \$40,000 - (C-2022-14)**: for rehabilitation of two (2) duplex units at 507/509 Eastern Avenue and 716/718 Pennsylvania Avenue

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker and seconded by Councilmember Joyner that the grant agreements be approved and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the agreements on behalf of the City.

Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney noted amendments to the agreements with the Ripple Effects Group and Peacemakers of Rocky Mount relative to the funding schedules.

A substitute motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Walker, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0

nays) that the grant agreements be approved, as recommended, inclusive of the noted amendments to the funding schedules and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the agreements on behalf of the City.

Councilmember Daughtridge stated that a subcommittee was originally appointed by Council in 2008 and since that time the Councilmembers have changed. He noted the makeup of the subcommittee has not been voted on by Council since that time and suggested there be discussion relative to grants at the upcoming City Council retreat. Mr. Daughtridge asked for clarification of the City's administrative procedure for grants.

Interim City Manager Varney explained there are provisions in the grant agreements that require certain documentation to be submitted and staff works to ensure the documentation relative to grant awards is complete and accurate to ensure the funds are used in the way intended and in compliance with the accounting standards used by the City's auditors.

Councilmember Blackwell asked for confirmation that this is standard procedure in the City's administration of grants.

Councilmember Blackwell questioned if there have been widespread complaints about properties being developed in communities that have been neglected for decades and Mr. Varney responded that the only complaints are that more funding is needed. Councilmember Blackwell stated he wants to clear up suspicions of ill will from those who do not live in the communities where work is being done and to verify that projects are vetted by City staff. He added the Council has a right to determine what projects they would like to see in their Wards and Council should deliberate and vote their conscience adding that some Councilmembers live in the Wards where work is being done and know the work being done and the people in the community and said he finds it offensive when comments are made by those who do not live in the community. He said he wants to look at the production and the outcome and sees no need to change the current process.

Councilmember Knight said he was on the City Council when grants were initiated in order to help people in the community, and it seems to him there is an issue when Black people and people of color start to benefit from grants. He said some of the grants have been used to transform properties in some communities that have been sitting idle and dilapidated. He stated the program is working fine and he supports it 100% assuming receipts are being received and the recipients held responsible for grant funds. He said he would support more funding for grants and recognizes code words like "transparency."

PROPERTY DISPOSITION/HOME PURCHASE AGREEMENT-206 and 210 NORTH PINE STREET AND 114 S. TILLERY STREET

Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney advised the City Council that an offer of \$24,000 from Kevin Jones to purchase 206 and 210 North Pine Street and 114 S. Tillery Street was advertised for upset bids pursuant to G.S. 160A-269 and no upset bids were received.

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that **Resolution No. R-2022-12** entitled **RESOLUTION ACCEPTING OFFER TO PURCHASE PROPERTY** be adopted.

The resolution authorizes the Mayor and City Clerk to execute the Right to Purchase and Affordable Housing Agreement and provides for the City to sell the property to Kevin Jones for the agreed-upon amount and to execute the deed transferring ownership of said property upon fulfillment of the obligations contained in said Agreement.

HOME PROGRAM COMMITMENT AGREEMENT/SOUTH EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (SENCCDC)/SECOND AMENDMENT

The City Council was advised that the Three-Year Consolidated Plan provides that the City partner with the South Eastern North Carolina Community Development Corporation (SENCCDC), a local certified Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO), for the construction of eight (8) single-family homes for low-income residents in Rocky Mount. Council was further advised that due to the rise in construction cost and materials, the City negotiated a first amendment to the agreement between the City and SENCCDC which authorized additional funding in the amount of \$129,000 to support the construction of eight (8) single-family homes in the 1900 block of Vance Street.

It was further explained that a second amendment has been negotiated due to the rise in construction cost and materials which authorizes additional CHDO funding in the amount of \$12,000 to support the water tap fees (\$1,500 per unit) for eight (8) single-family homes in the 1900 block of Vance Street. It was noted that three (3) of the HOME assisted units will be funded in the amount of \$379,000 through CHDO funds.

Funding sources for the Vance Street Homes Project were identified as:

FUNDING SOURCE	AMOUNT
NC Housing Finance Agency	\$ 600,000
Federal Home Loan Bank	747,000
Rocky Mount Housing Authority	565,087
Down East Home Consortium (CHDO)	391,000
SENCCDC Equity	74,000
City of Rocky Mount Housing Incentive	150,000
Edgecombe County Land Donation	38,000
TOTAL	\$2,575,087

It was noted that under the terms of the agreement, it is expected that construction will be completed by October 31, 2022; that a Certificate of Occupancy would be issued by November 30, 2022; and that the property be fully leased by December 31, 2022. Council was advised that SENCCDC agrees to submit quarterly reports to the City.

Consideration was given to a Second Amendment to the Home Program Commitment Agreement with South Eastern North Carolina Community Development Corporation (SENCCDC) for the construction of eight (8)

single-family homes for low-income residents in the 1900 block of Vance Street.

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the Second Amendment to the Home Program Commitment Agreement with South Eastern North Carolina Community Development Corporation (SENCCDC) be approved and that the Mayor, City Clerk and Finance Director be authorized to execute the same on behalf of the City. The amendment shall be filed with the original Agreement and first amendment identified as **(C-2021-13)** in the Office of the City Clerk.

BID/ONE (1) 2022 FORD F-450 CREW CAB AND ONE (1) 2021 FORD EXPEDITION XLT

The City Council received a recommendation to purchase the following Fire Department vehicles in accordance with Statewide Vehicle Contract and State of North Carolina Term Contract [NCGS 143-129(e) (9)] which allows purchasing against the Statewide Vehicle Contract and State of North Carolina Term Contract without seeking competitive bids:

- Fire Department:
 - 1) One (1) 2022 Ford F-450 Crew Cab - award to Piedmont Truck Center @ a total cost of \$53,361.00; and
 - 2) One (1) 2021 Ford Expedition XLT - award to Performance Ford @ a total cost of \$44,679.18

The total cost of the vehicles is \$98,040.18 and the vehicles are being purchased against Statewide Term Contract 070A - Vehicles and North Carolina Statewide Vehicle Contract No. 202100002, pursuant to NCGS 143-129(e) (9).

Motion was made by Councilmember Miller, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the purchase of the 2022 Ford F-450 vehicle and 2021 Ford Expedition XLT vehicle be approved and that the Purchasing Division be authorized to issue a purchase order(s) for the vehicles in accordance with the Council's award. The bid documentation for this purchase is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2022-11**.

BID/TWO (2) 2021 25-FOOT LIGHT TRANSIT VEHICLES (LTV) WITH LIFT COACH AND EQUIPMENT METAL BODY AND THREE (3) 2021 FORD RAISED ROOF LIFT VANS

The City Council received a recommendation to purchase the following vehicles in accordance with Statewide Vehicle Contract and State of North Carolina Term Contract [NCGS 143-129(e) (9)] which allows purchasing against the Statewide Vehicle Contract and State of North Carolina Term Contract without seeking competitive bids:

- Tar River Transit:
 - 1) Two (2) 2021 25-Foot Light Transit Vehicles (LTV) with Lift Coach and Equipment Metal Body - award to Interstate Transportation Sales & Service @ a total cost of \$141,846.62; and
 - 2) Three (3) Ford Raised Roof Lift Vans - award to Ilderton Conversion @ a total cost of \$194,043.00

The vehicles are being purchased against Statewide Term Contract 070A - N.C. Department of Transportation/Public Transportation Division.

The two (2) 2021 25-Foot Light Transit Vehicles (LTV) with Lift Coach and Equipment Metal Body will be purchased from Interstate Transportation Sales & Service at a total cost of \$141,846.62 and the Three (3) Ford Raised Roof Lift Vans will be purchased from Ilderton Conversion at a total cost of \$194,043.00, pursuant to NCGS 143-129(e) (9).

Motion was made by Councilmember Miller, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the purchase of the two (2) 2021 25-Foot Light Transit Vehicles (LTV) with Lift Coach and Equipment Metal Body and the three (3) Ford Raised Roof Lift Vans be approved and that the Purchasing Division be authorized to issue a purchase order(s) for the vehicles in accordance with the Council's award. The bid documentation for this purchase is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2022-12**.

BIDS/BATTLE PARK GREENWAY RENOVATIONS

The City Council received the tabulation of bids received for Battle Park Greenway Renovations. Bids were received and opened on March 10, 2022, after all necessary legal procedures had been implemented, including newspaper advertising and the bid tabulation is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2022-13**. The solicitation was also posted on the City's purchasing webpage, the HUB website and on the North Carolina Interactive Purchasing System website.

Motion was made by Councilmember Miller, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the bid be awarded to Weaver's Asphalt Maintenance Co., Inc. at a total cost of \$209,150 and that the Purchasing Division be authorized to issue a purchase order in accordance with the Council's award.

APPOINTMENTS

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

CITY MANAGER SEARCH

Mayor Roberson called on Councilmember Blackwell for comments.

Councilmember Blackwell stated he was interested to learn from a newspaper article about the schedule for the City Manager's recruitment and questioned if he had missed something.

Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney stated the schedule had been included in a package of information sent to Council. He added that a request for proposals had been published and one RFP has been received today.

Councilmember Daughtridge reiterated that the schedule of meetings had been included in a package provided to Council at the last meeting and is also posted on the City's Purchasing website page. He noted he recently held a Ward 5 meeting and information provided in that meeting was published by the newspaper and a video is posted on YouTube.

COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS - BOOKER T. WASHINGTON (BTW) GYM

Councilmember Knight stated he wished to respond to a comment made during the public petitions portion of the meeting relative to the BTW gym. He said:

- a false propaganda video was put out saying the BTW gym was the OIC gymnasium which that is not true;
- the BTW gym is City of Rocky Mount property - both the gym and the recreation center

Mr. Knight requested that the Interim City Manager speak to the fact that some Councilmembers have been advocating for a total renovation of the BTW Community Center and a few years ago advocated for the South Rocky Mount Recreation Center. He said Council recommendations are folded into a schedule in the Consolidated Improvement Plan (CIP) and a lot of renovation to the Booker T. Washington Recreation Center has been recommended, which includes upgrading the infrastructure in the gym, and doing something to the recreation room. He said he has always felt since the BTW facility was the City's first Community Center, the next project should be to redevelop the Booker T. Washington Community Center, especially with the historic significance of it being the site of a speech by Dr. King. He said he does not know if the project has been moved down in the CIP, but it has been discussed year after year. He noted that renovations to the BTW Recreation Center and the South Rocky Mount Community Center could not be done at the same time due to the expense.

Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney stated that discussion relative to renovating the Booker T. Washington High School property has been discussed many times over the years. He noted a retreat is scheduled for April 19th and 20th to talk about a number of things and one of the things on the agenda is facilities. He said the three main facility needs to be discussed are: 1) replacement of the Judicial Center; 2) crowded conditions in the Police Department; and 3) the Booker T. Washington complex.

Councilmember Joyner stated that he expects Mayor Pro Tem Walker to be providing forms for Council initiatives to the Councilmembers soon and it is important that they be completed and returned. He added he has been serving on the subcommittee and each Councilmember has an opportunity to look at their Ward and make recommendations.

Councilmember Blackwell thanked Councilmembers for their comments adding he has been advocating for renovation of the Booker T. Washington complex since he has been on the City Council and the challenge has always been where to put the dollars. He said this and previous Councils have deliberated about where to put money for Parks and Recreation and the recommendation from City staff, after hearing from the South Rocky Mount community feeling that nothing had been done in their community for generations, guided the decision to invest in South Rocky Mount Community Center. He said at the same time the City had debt service

issues with the Rocky Mount Event Center and a certain debt capacity and were unable to make widespread renovations to the Booker T. Washington complex. He stated that OIC has been an anchor institution since 1969, when integration occurred and that's a long history that some folks might not even understand. He stated OIC came about through collaboration with the St. Augustine Educational Talent Search to save Booker T. Washington from being torn down and even as recent as the previous administration, there was a move afoot to tear down Booker T. Washington and rebuild it. He said there was conversation about it being cheaper to rebuild than to fix it and that's when conversations were had and OIC anchored that community and invested its own money in addition to leveraging whatever investment the City of Rocky Mount made. He stated OIC anchored the neighborhood, and the community is called "the neighborhood." Mr. Blackwell said he is fully advocating that before any other dramatic renovations are made anywhere that the Booker T. Washington High School complex be brought back to full operational standards for the community where it serves as a place of significant history, even beyond Dr. King's famous speech.

CLOSED SESSION (ADDED IN OPEN MEETING)

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Miller, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the City Council enter into Closed Session at 5:08 p.m. for discussion relative to matters concerning attorney-client privilege, economic development/property acquisition. The minutes of the Closed Session shall be filed as a part of ESM-599 at the end of Minute Book No. 38 upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

REGULAR SESSION

The Mayor convened the meeting in regular session at 5:40 p.m.

GRANT/2022 NORTH CAROLINA ATTORNEY GENERAL'S ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT

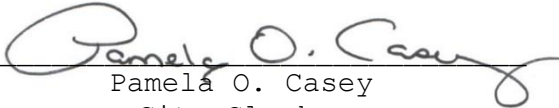
The City Council considered a Letter of Intent to apply for the North Carolina Attorney General's Environmental Enhancement Grant. The Council was informed that, if awarded, the grant would allow the City to purchase dilapidated properties on N. Church Street that are located within the Hornbeam Branch Floodway and Floodplain. It was noted the eligible grant amount is capped at \$500,000 and the letter of intent is due on March 31, 2022, with the grant application being due on May 26, 2022.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the Letter of Intent to apply for the North Carolina Attorney General's Environmental Enhancement Grant be approved for use based on the criteria established by the City Council; that City staff be authorized to submit the grant application; and that the Mayor, City Clerk, City

Attorney and other appropriate staff be authorized to execute any required documentation, certifications and the subsequent grant agreement on behalf of the City.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Council meeting was adjourned at 5:42 p.m.


Pamela O. Casey
City Clerk