

April 11, 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; Mark Adcox, Video Production Specialist; Chris Beschler, Director of Energy Resources; Joel Dunn, Parks and Recreation Director; Brad Kerr, Public Works Director; Will Deaton, Director of the 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; Michael Roupp, Assistant Chief of Operations; Ken Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation; Kevin Harris, Downtown Development Manager; 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: 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 6:59 p.m. and requested all to stand for a moment of silent prayer.

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

Mayor Roberson stated he had received a request to remove item 11 from the agenda and requested the following item be added to the agenda:

- Designation of Federal Legislative Project Priorities and Appropriations

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and carried by a roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays); that the agenda be amended, as requested.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Walker, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the minutes of a Regular Scheduled City Council

Meeting held March 28, 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:

- Reported that the City has been working on a Natural Hazards Resiliency Plan and what has been done so far will be shown tomorrow night in the Council Chamber between the hours of 4 pm to 6 pm. The plan will be shown in person and virtually (the virtual link can be found on the City's website)
- April is Community Development month – there are videos on the website under the Community Development webpage, on YouTube and City TV19
- He stated there has been a fair amount of attention about a warehouse on South Church Street. He shared the following:
  - Property address is 1515 South Church Street, and it is owned by B & B Associates that has a post office box located in Rocky Mount
  - tax valuation of the land is \$48,400; tax valuation of the building is \$23,600
  - the warehouse contains 99,650 square feet and sits on a lot that is about 118,000 square feet
  - There are unpaid taxes (city and county) and some other assessments on the property
  - Estimated cost of demolition is somewhere in the range of \$350,000 to \$400,000

**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:

- ***Nathlyn Ohree***
  - Stated she was present to advocate for all City employees to make no less than \$15-\$16 per hour
  - Stated she would like the City to do job fairs at the high schools
- ***Muntaz Shaik***
  - Stated she was present to support a minimum wage of at least \$15 per hour for all City employees
- ***Dr. Kim Koo***
  - Stated she was present to request again that the City Council raise the minimum wage for all City employees to \$15 per hour
  - She thanked City Council for their consideration of the matter

Interim City Manager Varney explained that a discussion had been held in the Committee of the Whole meeting and there was no opposition from City Council to the pay increase. He also stated it would come back before City Council on an agenda for approval.

- ***Linwood Williams***
  - Stated he realizes the City is hiring professionals to assist in the process of hiring the next City Manager
  - Stated he would like for the applicants to be asked two questions. 1) Do they know power and 2) If they know compromise
  - He stated for a City Manager to be effective they need to know power and compromise
- ***Troy Davis***
  - Stated he received a call from a lady who was terminated from Parks and Recreation

- Stated he made a public records request for that department to look at racial and gender makeup
- Stated the information showed out of 57 employees there were 17 white employees that make over \$50,000 and only 8 African American employees that make over \$50,000
- Stated the City is 65-70 percent African American and there needs to be more people hired that look like the people that live in the community
- Stated he wants City Council to look at policies and procedures for departments
- Stated he feels he has become a target recently and he feels the people giving out grants do not know how to type up agreements and are purposefully putting misleading information into the packets

#### **FAIR HOUSING MONTH**

The Mayor read a Proclamation proclaiming the month of April 2022 as Fair Housing Month in the City of Rocky Mount. The Mayor presented the Proclamation to Human Relations Director Archie Jones and the Interim City Manager joined the Mayor and Mr. Jones for a photograph.

#### **COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS**

Councilmember Blackwell requested time to address Mr. Davis' comments during the public petitions portion of the meeting. He thanked Mr. Davis for the commentary and stated the City Council hires only three employees, the City Manager, the City Clerk, and the City Attorney. He stated City Council works to set goals, policies, approve budgets, and tries to direct activities on a macro basis. He stated he has been on Council for a long time and has been addressing what the team looks like, not just in skin color, but in reflecting the diverse nature of the community such as age, gender, and orientation. Councilmember Blackwell stated the conversations today were related to fixing the salary issues and ensuring that City leadership is being appropriate, fair, and equitable in hirings, promotions, salaries, and wages. He stated even people of color can maintain systems of oppression. He stated skin color and race is important and if issues are not dealt with then it creates issues down the road. He stated he hopes the next leader that comes into Rocky Mount will place equity at the top of their priorities. Councilmember Blackwell stated he also advocates for strong measurement systems around the reflection that our workforce looks like the community we live in and serve because he feels that is very important.

#### **PLANNING BOARD MINUTES/RECOMMENDATIONS**

The City Council received the minutes and recommendations from a Planning Board meeting held March 8, 2022. Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, 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.

*\*Note: No Public Hearing was scheduled relative to the recommendation for the rezoning request due to no legal description being provided by the applicant*

**CONSENT AGENDA****A. TEMPORARY STREET CLOSINGS (recommended for approval):**

Consideration was given to the following requests for temporary street closures:

- 1) Request from Laverne Bullock - temporary closure of NW Main Street from W. Thomas Street to Sunset Avenue - Saturday, May 7, 2022 - 3 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. for Karen Jones' Memorial Block Party; and
- 2) Request from East End Missionary Baptist Church - temporary closure of the 900 Block of East Highland Avenue - Saturday, April 16, 2022 - 12 noon to 6 p.m. for Easter Blast event

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

The City Council was advised that the City received a Museum Grassroots Grant in the amount of \$75,000 for exhibit funding at the Children's Museum. The amount is \$35,000 greater than projected for the current budget year. A budget amendment is required to appropriate the additional funds for the intended purposes.

**C. TAXICAB LICENSE (recommended for approval):**

The City Council received a recommendation from Chief of Police Robert A. Hassell for the award of two (2) new taxicab licenses Denise A. Hunter, Rocky Mount Cab Company.

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 taxicab licenses; and adoption of the following:

- **Resolution No. R-2022-13** entitled **RESOLUTION TEMPORARILY CLOSING NORTHWEST MAIN STREET FROM WEST THOMAS STREET TO SUNSET AVENUE "Karen Jones Memorial Block Party"** - Saturday, May 7, 2022 - 3 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.;
- **Resolution No. R-2022-14** entitled **RESOLUTION TEMPORARILY CLOSING THE 900 BLOCK OF EAST HIGHLAND AVENUE** - April 16, 2022, 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.; and
- **Ordinance No. O-2022-20** entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET ORDINANCE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 FOR MUSEUM GRASSROOTS GRANT** - appropriates funds to the General Fund for expenses associated with a Museum Grassroots Grant - \$35,000.

**OPTION TO PURCHASE UNIMPROVED REAL ESTATE ADDENDUM - DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INITIATIVE (DFI)/TARBORO STREET REDEVELOPMENT**

The City Council was provided with a Resolution to extend the closing date of an option to purchase City-owned real estate on Tarboro Street with Five Points Crossing Limited Partnership (WODA Cooper Communities II, LLC). It was explained that the City has been in partnership for the redevelopment of the Five Points/Tarboro Street site for affordable workforce housing. The Council was advised that Denis Blackburne, Senior Vice President for Development of the WODA Companies, Inc. is requesting to extend the closing date for the purchase of the land at Five Points until no later than April 30, 2022.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that **Resolution No. R-2022-15 RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE CLOSING DATE OF AN OPTION TO PURCHASE CITY-OWNED REAL ESTATE ON TARBORO STREET TO BE DEVELOPED FOR AFFORDABLE WORKFORCE HOUSING BY FIVE POINTS CROSSING LIMITED PARTNERSHIP UNTIL APRIL 30, 2022**, be adopted. The Resolution states the Option to Purchase Unimproved Real Estate Addendum is approved, and that the Mayor be authorized to execute the same on behalf of the City. The addendum will be filed with the original Memorandum of Understanding (C-2020-20) in the office of the City Clerk.

**FY 2022 LEASE FINANCING/REIMBURSEMENT RESOLUTION**

This item was removed from the agenda.

**BID/DESIGN OF DOWNTOWN DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS - PHASE 2**

The City Council received qualifications for the Downtown Drainage Improvements - Phase 2. Bids were received and opened on April 7, 2021, after all necessary legal procedures had been implemented and the bid tabulation is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2022-14**.

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the bid be awarded to W.K. Dickson, at a total cost of \$467,842 for Phase 2; that the Mayor be authorized to execute Amendment to Owner-Engineer Agreement on behalf of the City; and that the following budget ordinance be adopted:

- **Ordinance No. O-2022-21** entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET ORDINANCE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 FOR DOWNTOWN DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS - PHASE 2 (\$467,842)**.

**SOLE-SOURCE PURCHASE/TOLEMI BUILDINGBLOCKS CLIENT CODE ENFORCEMENT PLANNING SYSTEM**

The City Council received a proposal for the "sole-source" purchase for a Client Code Enforcement Planning System pursuant to G.S. 143-129(e)(6) based on standardization or compatibility. The information furnished by the Purchasing Division supporting the recommendation will be placed on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2022-15**.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the "sole-source" purchase for the Tolemi BuildingBlocks Client Code Enforcement Planning System be awarded to OpportunitySpace, Inc. (d/b/a "Tolemi") @ a cost of \$24,600 for 12-month subscription - agreement automatically renews unless 30 days written notice of intent to cancel is given (includes one-time implementation fee @ \$5,400; 1 year BuildingBlocks subscription @ \$18,000 and ten (10) one-year user subscriptions @ \$1,200); be

approved and that the Mayor be authorized to execute the contract on behalf of the City.

**APPOINTMENTS**

The Mayor made the following nominations for the Human Relations Commission:

- Ray Green - unexpired term to expire 6/2023; and
- Terrence Taylor - term to expire 6/2025

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Walker, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the nominations be accepted, and appointments made, as recommended.

**FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE APPROPRIATIONS PRIORITIES (added in open meeting)**

The City Council received information during the April 11, 2022, Committee of the Whole meeting relative to the City's Congressional Delegation accepting applications for Federal Legislative Appropriations for inclusion in the Fiscal Year 2023 Federal Budget. The deadline for submitting priorities for consideration to Congressman Butterfield is April 14, 2022. Council was informed that the priorities identified were:

- Downtown Pedestrian Bridge (\$5,000,000)
- New Judicial Center (\$20,000,000)
- Workforce Housing (\$5,000,000)

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell and seconded by Councilmember Joyner and the priorities be approved as identified.

Councilmember Knight stated he would have liked to see more funding for Workforce Housing. Discussion was held.

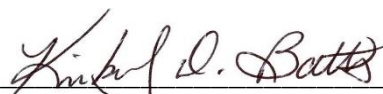
The priorities were modified to reflect the following amendments:

- Downtown Pedestrian Bridge (\$5,000,000)
- New Judicial Center (\$20,000,000)
- Workforce Housing (\$10,000,000)

Councilmember Blackwell amended his motion to reflect approval of the recommended priorities including the funding increase in Workforce Housing and the Motion, as amended, was seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried by roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays).

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, by consensus, the meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.




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Kimberly D. Batts  
Deputy City Clerk/  
Acting City Clerk